

TOTAL COMMUNICATION APPROACH: A QUICK GUIDE FOR SLPS

What is Total Communication (TC)?

A flexible, **multimodal approach to communication** that integrates **all available methods** to support understanding and expressions. These can include: speech, ASL, gestures, facial expressions, PECS, AAC, written language, etc.

Core Principles of TC:

- Multimodal, not single mode
- Individualized
- Dynamic (i.e., modalities may shift over time)
- Functional

Who benefits from TC?

- Individuals w/ complex communication needs
- Children dx with autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, apraxia, developmental delays, etc.
- Individuals w/ hearing loss
- Children in early education

SLP's Role in TC:

- Assess and support all available modalities
- Model use of multiple communication modes
- Educate and coach families, caregivers, and educators
- Collaborate with interdisciplinary teams to promote consistency
- Advocate for inclusive communication environments

Benefits of TC:

- Reduces frustration by giving multiple ways to express needs
- Encourages language development and comprehension
- Increases communication opportunities
- Promotes independence

