

Let's All Talk: Conversation and Resources

Background

Communication is about connecting with others, and there's no one "right" way to do it—what matters most is finding a way that works.

People with disabilities may communicate in many different ways, depending on their needs and abilities. Some individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing might use sign language, lip reading, or written notes to communicate. Others who have difficulty speaking might use devices that produce speech, apps that display words or pictures, or simple gestures and facial expressions. These tools and methods are part of what's called augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), and they help people share their ideas, needs, and feelings in ways that work for them.

For people who are blind or have low vision, communication might involve using Braille, screen readers, or audio formats. Individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities may also benefit from simplified language, visual supports, or extra time to process and respond. Everyone communicates differently, and making sure that each person's preferred method is understood and respected is key to inclusion and accessibility.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) helps protect the right to effective communication for people with disabilities. This means that public places like schools, hospitals, and government offices must provide the tools and support needed to ensure that communication is clear and accessible. For example, this might include providing sign language interpreters, written materials in large print or Braille, or assistive listening devices. The ADA requires these accommodations so that everyone has a fair and equal chance to understand and be understood.

To learn more, visit:

ADA.gov's [Communicating Effectively with People with Disabilities](#)

The Perkins School for the Blind's [How the Braille Alphabet Works](#)

The National Association of the Deaf's [Learning American Sign Language](#)

Conversation Guide

When speaking to children about different ways a person with a disability might communicate, it is important to convey the key concepts to them in language or terminology that is meaningful to them. Here is a sample suggestion of how this might be done.

People communicate in many different ways, and that's true for some people with disabilities. Not everyone talks with their voice—some people might use sign language, which is a language made with hand movements and facial expressions. Others might use pictures, symbols, or even special devices that speak for them. These tools help people share what they're thinking, what they need, or how they feel.

Some people use tablets or computers that have apps to help them talk. They can tap on pictures or type words, and the device says it out loud. Others might point to pictures on a board or use their eyes to choose symbols. These are all ways to help people who have trouble speaking or using their voice. This kind of help is called AAC, which stands for "augmentative and alternative communication."

For kids who are blind or have trouble seeing, they might read and write using Braille—little bumps you can feel with your fingers. Kids who are deaf or hard of hearing might read lips or use special hearing aids to help them listen. Everyone is different, and everyone's way of communicating is important.

The most important thing to remember is that communication isn't just about talking—it's about connecting and understanding each other. When we take the time to listen and learn how someone communicates, we help make sure they feel included and heard. It's one way we can all be kind, respectful, and good friends to one another.