

COMMUNICATION ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



Where do assessments take place?

This varies but it's usual for your child to be seen either in their nursery or school, a clinic, or at home.

What happens at the first speech therapy appointment?

The people who will be there

The **speech therapist** is the one who carries out the assessment. Usually just one speech therapist does this.

Sometimes a **Speech Therapy Technician** or **Speech Therapy Assistant** is present.

Sometimes a student speech therapist might be there. If a student is present the speech therapist will tell you this. You don't have to have a student involved with your child if you don't want to. Just tell the speech therapist. They won't be upset about this. However, if you're happy to have a student involved this is helpful because this is the way we train new speech therapists for the future.

The assessment

The speech therapist will assess your child's **communication skills**. They do this by watching and listening as your child plays and talks. They might also ask your child to carry out some activities – like pointing out things in books, repeating words, moving toys, following instructions, and so on.

They will look at how well your child can:

- listen and concentrate
- understand words and sentences
- use words and sentences to talk to other people
- talk without straining their voice
- use the right sounds in words when speaking
- talk in a smooth, easy and relaxed way without tripping over their words or stuttering
- use speech and language differently in different situations

Discussion

When the speech therapist has finished the assessment they will discuss your child's communication skills with you. They will also talk about any difficulties your child might be having.

Working together

You and the speech therapist will decide what to do next.

- If your child's communication skills are about the same as other children of their age then no more appointments may be needed.
- If your child only has a small difficulty the speech therapist might just give you advice about how to help them stay confident about communicating.
- If your child does have some communication difficulties then the speech therapist will discuss what can be done to help.

What if my child has difficulties?

There are lots of ways a speech therapist can help:

- providing **advice leaflets**
- showing you ways you can use **everyday activities** to help your child
- **providing games and activities** that help to improve communication skills
- **advising** nursery or school teachers on ways they can help
- **working directly with your child** – this might be done on their own or in a small group of children who all have a similar difficulty. Sometimes the speech therapist works directly with your child. Sometimes a Speech Therapy Technician or Assistant does the work, under the speech therapist's supervision. At other times someone in nursery or school might be asked to work directly with your child, using the activities recommended by the speech therapist.

Further assessment

Sometimes the speech therapist needs to get more information about things that might be affecting your child's communication skills. If this is the case, the speech therapist will refer your child to be seen by another professional. For example, because hearing difficulties can cause **speech difficulties** and **language difficulties**, the speech therapist might arrange a **hearing test**. The speech therapist will always discuss their concerns with you before referring your child to another professional.

Written reports

It's usual for a speech therapist to summarize their assessment findings in a written report. A copy of the report is often sent to your doctor and to you. Sometimes copies are sent to your child's nursery or school and other professionals who are involved with helping your child. The speech therapist might need your permission to send reports to certain people. So, discuss this with them.

If you're using a private speech therapist there might be additional charges for written reports. So, check this with your speech therapist first.

Remember!

It's the speech therapist's job to work with you so that you can help your child. So, **don't be afraid to ask any questions**. The speech therapist will be pleased to answer any concerns you might have. They will be able to give you information about organizations that help children with communication difficulties, useful websites, support groups and any other advice.