

Language Disorder

Language disorder is defined as a communication disorder in which speech and language do not develop normally. Individuals who have a language disorder have trouble learning and using different forms of language such as written, spoken, or sign language. Learning disorders are much more prevalent in children than in adolescents and adults.

Signs & Symptoms

Problems with oral communication are the most common signs of language disorders. The two types of language disorders are receptive and expressive.

Receptive language issues include:

- Difficulty understanding what people say
- Difficulty following simple directions
- Difficulty organizing what others say to them

Expressive language issues include:

- Limited vocabulary compared to children of the same age
- Difficulty learning new vocabulary words
- Leaves out key words, messes up verb tense, or becomes frustrated by inability to communicate thoughts clearly when speaking

Causes & Types of Learning Disorders

Learning and using language relies on expressive and receptive skills. People diagnosed with language disorder can have impairments in either receptive abilities, expressive abilities, or both. An individual's social and academic skills can be also affected by a language disorder. The causes of developing a language disorder are not completely understood, but thought to be a combination of genetics, prenatal nutrition, and other factors such as Autism, Down syndrome, or premature birth.

Diagnosis & Treatment

A pediatrician will diagnose a child with language disorder by checking their receptive and expressive developmental milestones. The first step in diagnosis is ruling out a hearing problem because hearing issues are a common cause of language problems. If no hearing issues are found, the next step is to get an evaluation from a speech language pathologist. A speech language pathologist can use speech therapy to help them improve communication skills.

Sources – Understood: <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/communication-disorders/understanding-language-disorders> and Psychology Today: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/conditions/language-disorder>

