

# What is a speech–language pathologist?

We help people with difficulties from the neck up! This includes **communicating**, **eating**, and **thinking**. In newborns to older adults. At schools, hospitals, private clinics, living rooms—anywhere people need our support!



## Communicating:

You may already know that speech therapists can help people talk. But that's just a tiny piece of communication. One big piece of communication is **language**—the words we use and how we combine them to make a message. Language takes many forms, including **speech** (the sounds coming from your mouth), **sign language**, and **written words** or symbols. We work with people who have difficulties with any or all aspects of language, whether they're learning their first words or re-learning after an injury. We also help people access language through **technology** too—like iPads, or even computers that can read eye movements or brain signals!

But communication isn't language alone. It also involves **social skills** and awareness, gestures, **listening and understanding**, and more. It's a complicated process. There are a lot of places where things can go wrong and a lot of ways SLPs can help.

We also help people who want to change something about the way they talk, like working on speech fluency if they **stutter** or altering their **voice** to align with their identity. Sometimes it's not the person themselves who needs to change but something about their **environment** so that everyone is set up for successful communication from the start!

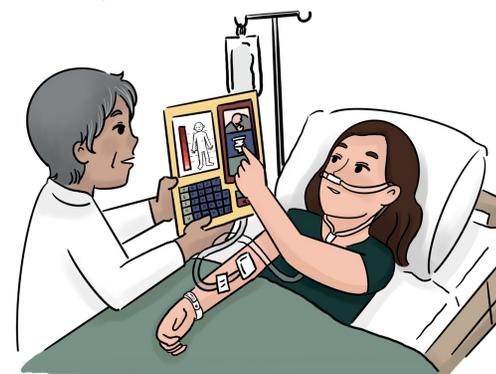


## Eating:

People of all ages, from newborns to the elderly, can have mealtime difficulties. SLPs can help people learn to use their mouths to **chew**, **drink**, and otherwise get food toward their throats. We also diagnose and treat **swallowing** difficulties, so our patients can eat without food going into their lungs or getting stuck along the way. We can help children and adults with feeding problems, too—things like **discomfort during meals**, fear of choking, or wanting to eat a wider **variety of foods**.

## Thinking:

Also known as **cognition**, thinking is the flow of thoughts through your mind. It involves **planning**, **remembering**, and **organizing ideas**, which lead to things like time management and self-control. Sometimes these skills are called executive functioning. If your thinking is impaired, you might have difficulty communicating, working, living independently, enjoying hobbies, socializing, or even eating. These cognitive deficits happen in people of all ages and can be caused by traumatic **brain injury**, **strokes**, or degenerative conditions like Alzheimer's or Parkinson's disease. SLPs work with people to set goals based on what's most important to them, and to learn strategies and skills to achieve those goals. Other people seek support from SLPs because of **cognitive differences** and want support for things like self-advocacy.



If you think you or a loved one could benefit from working with a speech–language pathologist, please visit [WhatsLP.com](https://www.whatslp.com) for information about finding an SLP near you.

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**INFORMED SLP**