Speech-Language Pathologist

Children who need help learning to speak clearly often work with a speech–language pathologist, also called a speech therapist. Speech therapists also help children who have a hard time using words to express themselves. Some speech therapists will work with the child at school, while others may work in a hospital or medical office. Therapy sessions may be once a week, twice a week or even every day.

Career Path

Students who are interested in psychology and communication might be interested in speech-language pathology. To become a licensed speech therapist, you need a Master's Degree in speech-language pathology and must pass a national exam.

Many speech therapists work with children with autism. These children often know what they want to say, but can't find the words to say it. For these children, learning to use words to say what they are thinking is very difficult and can take a long time. It takes a lot of patience to help someone develop language skills. If you have a lot of patience and like to help people, this might be the career for you!

Therapists sometimes teach their students by playing games. If the student does well, the therapist may even give out a small reward. But don't be fooled! Although it may sometimes look like lots of fun, speech therapy is also very hard work. For children who talk very little or not at all, modern technology can be a big help! Many children with autism learn to talk using an electronic device that speaks for them. This device shows pictures of many different kinds of things. When the child touches a picture, the device forms a sentence about that picture. For example, if the child touches a picture showing someone playing with a ball, the device might say, "I want to play with a ball." The speech therapist encourages the child to repeat the sentence. When the child repeats the sentence, he gets a chance to play with a ball.

Technology Spotlight

The picture below shows a boy using this type of electronic device. If you were designing a device like this, what pictures and ideas would you include? Make a list of sentences you think the device should be programmed to say. If you like, you could also draw a picture to go with each sentence.

Picture Ideas

1.

2.

3.

4.