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## Communication Choices

Read this page to learn about different ways of communicating with your child.

**If your child has a hearing loss, this can help.**

Have you just found out your baby has a hearing loss, and want to learn how to "talk" to him? Are you wondering if it's better to speak or use sign language, or maybe both? You've come to the right place.

On this page, you'll find out about different ways to communicate with your deaf child.



### **What communication is**

Communication is sharing ideas. Many people think it's just talking. But real communication happens when you understand other people, and they understand you.

Communication is more than words. You communicate by smiling, frowning and the expressions on your face. You also do it by the way you stand, and by how you move your body.

### **Different ways of communicating**

#### Communicating with your baby

For tips on talking to your baby, read our page on [communicating with your baby](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/tips/baby.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/tips/baby.jsp>)

## Communicating with your child

Once your child is a bit older, there are 5 main ways he can learn to communicate:

- **Learn to use his hearing and speak.**
  - This is called the [auditory-oral method](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/ao.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/ao.jsp>)
  - This method teaches children to listen, read lips and speak.
- **Learn to use the hearing he has left.**
  - This is called the [auditory-verbal therapy](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/av.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/av.jsp>)
  - This method helps children use whatever hearing they have left.
  - This method does not encourage lipreading.
- **Learn American Sign Language**
  - This is called [bilingualism/biculturalism](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/bibi.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/bibi.jsp>)
  - With this method, children learn American Sign Language and become part of Deaf Culture.
- **Learn to use handshapes that stand for sounds.**
  - This is called [cued speech](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/cued.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/cued.jsp>)
  - This method gives people a way to "see" English.
  - It uses handshapes to "show" the sounds you can't see by reading lips.
- **Learn to use some of these methods together.**
  - This is called [total communication](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/tc.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/tc.jsp>)
  - This approach uses different ways of communicating together, like signing and talking at the same time.

## **How to choose a way to communicate**

- **Accept that each family is different.**

There isn't a "right" choice for all children.  
Each child is different, and needs different things.  
Parents are also different, and have their own hopes for their children.  
Some families are able to do one thing.  
Some families are only able to do another.
- **Be flexible.**

Follow your child's lead.  
You may feel stressed out over choosing one of the options listed above.  
But many parents find that the best choice is to follow their child's lead.  
Some parents even combine ways of communicating. It's important to be flexible.
- **Ask yourself these questions:**
  - How much can your child hear? Can he can hear at all?
  - Does your child get mad quickly when you don't understand him?
  - Are you willing to learn a new language?
  - How much time can you give to help your child learn?
  - How important is it to you that your child learns to speak clearly?
  - Are there programs for the different options where you live?
  - What do other parents and professionals say about those programs?

**What other parents say about these options.**

Read what other parents say about [the choices they made](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/meet/parents/communicating.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/meet/parents/communicating.jsp>).

**Learn more about ways to communicate with your child**

- [Communication Options for Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/commopt.asp), from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/commopt.asp>).
- ["Communication Choices with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children"](http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/SupportServices/series/4010.html) explains your options (<http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/SupportServices/series/4010.html>).

**Remember!**

- There are many different ways of communicating.
- Every child is different. There is no one "right" way for all children.
- Give one method your best shot. But if it doesn't work, be open to other options.

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*You can find this page online at:*

<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/>