

Receptive Language Disorder

Definition:

A receptive language disorder is an impairment in the comprehension of a spoken, written, gestural and/or other symbol system.

Description:

When a child has receptive language disorder, he or she exhibits significant deficits in the level of development of comprehension of language. These deficits affect how the child functions socially or academically.

Children with receptive language problems can have great difficulty understanding what is said to them. Most children with a receptive language disorder will also have an expressive language disorder (difficulty using language to express ideas).

Children with a receptive language disorder can have difficulty with any of the following:

- Understanding meaning of gestures
- Following directions
- Understanding questions
- Identifying objects and pictures
- Taking turns when talking with others
- Understanding the order of words in a sentence
- Understanding plurals and verb tenses
- Understanding age-appropriate vocabulary and knowledge about objects and sequence of events
- Knowledge of the goals or functions of language (e.g. to obtain a desired object, tell a story, ask questions, comment)
- Knowledge of how to use language to achieve goals (e.g. appropriately using language to get a desired object,)
- Carrying out cooperative conversations (e.g. perspective-taking and turn-taking)

Causes:

The cause of a Receptive Language Disorder is often unknown, though it may be related to genetic factors, amount of exposure to speech and language and/or delays in general development. Receptive Language Disorders may also exist in children with developmental disorders such as Autism and Down Syndrome or medical problems such as a brain injury or brain tumor.

Diagnosing this disorder:

Speech language pathologists diagnose this disorder. When children exhibit language skills below what is expected for their age, developmental disorders are often suspected by the child's parent, pediatrician or teacher. The child is then referred to the speech-language pathologist who will conduct a full diagnostic evaluation of the child's receptive and expressive language skills, using standardized tests and informal measures. The speech-language pathologist will also evaluate other measures of communication to rule out other issues. The child's vision and hearing must be screened prior to testing as well to achieve valid test results. Children exposed to multiple languages should be screened in all languages and tested in their primary language. This multilingual assessment framework is referred to as a "difference vs. disorder" approach. Assessment data is obtained in all languages of exposure. Any noted errors or differences in communication skills are then analyzed and assigned to three main categories: 1) errors appropriate for the child's age (developmental errors); 2) errors

attributed to the interaction between the two languages spoken (cross-linguistic influence); and 3) atypical errors.

Receptive language disorder is diagnosed when an individual does not demonstrate the ability to comprehend age-appropriate vocabulary, follow instructions or understand foundational communication skills such as turn-taking and perspective-taking during conversation. Careful diagnosis is important to distinguish receptive language disorder from other communication disorders and other diagnoses such as intellectual disability, autism and/or other physical and developmental problems which may first manifest as language problems.

Treatment:

Individuals benefit from a regular schedule of speech therapy with a speech-language pathologist. Parent and teacher involvement in the use of strategies learned in therapy provides maximum benefit. Treatment for a receptive language disorder is tailored to each child's needs.

Areas of treatment can include:

- Strategies to improve the child's ability to follow directions
- Techniques to improve receptive comprehension of questions (e.g. who, what, where, when), age-appropriate vocabulary, and sequencing
- Strategies for practice using language appropriately in social situations, such as taking turns in conversation.
- Helping the child use other ways to communicate when needed. This may include simple gestures, picture boards, or computers that say words out loud. This is also called augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC.

Resources:

Books for Kids:

Reading to your child will help with their language development, especially [repetitive books](http://www.apraxia-kids.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=chKM10PIIsE&b=699375&ct=3545757) (<http://www.apraxia-kids.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=chKM10PIIsE&b=699375&ct=3545757>) with pictures and basic concepts. Here are a few examples:

- *Jump, Frog, Jump!* by Kalan R.
- *Brown Bear, Brown Bear* by E. Carl
- *It Looked Like Spilt Milk* by C.B. Shaw
- *The Napping House* by A. Wood
- *Goodnight Moon* by M. Brown
- *I Went Walking* by S. William
- *Froggie Gets Dressed* by J. London
- *The Hungry Caterpillar* by E. Carl

Books for Parents:

- *Childhood Speech, Language & Listening Problems: What Every Parent Should Know* by [Patricia McAleerHamaguchi](#)
- *The New Language of Toys: Teaching Communication Skills to Children With Special Needs, a Guide for Parents and*
- *Teachers* by [Sue Schwartz](#)
- *The Parent's Guide to Speech and Language Problems* by [Debbie Feit](#)
- *SMILE for Young Children: A Program for Improving Communication Skills in English and Spanish* by Bilinguistics, Inc. (to be used with the guidance of a speech-language pathologist) <http://bilinguistics.com/smile-program/>

Support Groups:

- Growing Roots: <http://growingrootsaustin.com/>
- Inspire Communication Disorders Online Support Group (<https://www.inspire.com/groups/communication-disorders/topics/speech-and-language-disorders/>)

Websites:

- American Speech and Hearing Association <http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/>
- Voice Nation (<http://www.voicenation.com/resources/article-library/a-childhood-language-and-communication-disorder-guide-for-parents-and-teachers.shtml>), A Childhood Language and Communication Disorder Guide for Parents and Teachers
- Communicating Partners (<http://jamesdmacdonald.org/Articles/MacDonaldStart.html>)
- Late talkers (<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/Latetalkers/>) discussion board online
- Children's disabilities Information (<http://www.childrensdisabilities.info/>)
- Bridges 4 Kids (<http://www.bridges4kids.org/Disabilities/SLI.html>)
- National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (<http://nichcy.org/disability/specific/speechlanguage#parents>)
- Language Delay Network (<http://languagedelaynetwork.com/speech-talk-specialist-articles/help-my-child-has-a-language-disorder>)
- Información en español (<http://nichcy.org/espanol/discapacidades/especificas/lenguaje>)

References:

Kaderavek, J.N. (2011) Language Disorders in Children: Fundamental Concepts of Assessment and Intervention, *Allyn & Bacon*

Paul, R. (2006) Language Disorders from Infancy through Adolescence. Assessment and Intervention. *Mosby*

Morrisey, B. (2012, May 18). Receptive Language Disorders. Retrieved from <http://www.speechdisorder.co.uk/receptive-language-disorders.html>