

# What is a speech and/or language disorder?

Language is different from speech.

**Language** is made up of socially shared rules that include the following:

- What words mean
  - “star” can refer to a bright object in the night sky or a celebrity
- How to make new words
  - Friend...friendly...unfriendly
- How to put words together
  - “Peg walked to the new store” rather than “Peg walk store new”
- What word combinations are the best in what situations
  - “Would you mind moving your foot?” could quickly change to “Get off my foot, please!” if the first request did not produce results

**Speech** is the verbal means of communicating. Speech consists of the following:

- Articulation
  - How speech sounds are made
    - Children must learn how to produce the “r” sound in order to say “rabbit” instead of “wabbit”
- Voice
  - Use of the vocal folds and breathing to produce sounds
    - The voice can be abused from overuse or misuse and can lead to hoarseness or loss of voice
- Fluency
  - The rhythm of speech
    - Hesitations or stuttering can affect fluency

When a person has trouble understanding others (*receptive language*), or sharing thoughts, ideas, and feelings completely (*expressive language*), then he or she has a **language disorder**.

When a person is unable to produce speech sounds correctly or fluently, or has problems with his or her voice, then he or she has a **speech disorder**.

Language and speech disorders can exist together or by themselves. The problem can range from mild to severe.

