Caring for Your Child
Helping Your Child to Understand Language
(In the classroom and at home)

Problems in understanding language can make learning activities at home, school, and in the community a challenge for your child and he may not be able to do his best. It is important that teachers and other adults know about your child’s weakness with understanding what he hears.

A language delay or disorder can make it hard for your child to:
- understand vocabulary words, concepts, and sentences
- answer questions
- follow directions
- follow daily routines
- follow along with books and songs
- understand what he reads

The following ideas may help your child with different listening and learning situations:

- Your child’s physical location within the classroom is important and can affect his ability to learn. Request that your child sit close to the teacher and away from anything that is distracting. Get rid of any noise that you can, such as sounds from an open window, loud kids in the hallway, whispering students, or a noisy vent. Other things that may be distracting are animal cages, lights, and fish tanks. Your child may also be more sensitive than other children to normal noises in a class, such as shuffling feet, moving papers, coughing, etc.
- It may be helpful for your child to sit near another student who is a good listener so that he can ask questions about missed or misunderstood information or directions.
- Before giving directions, the teacher or adult should stand close to and make eye contact with your child.
- Get your child’s attention before giving important directions. Examples of ways to get your child’s attention include:
  - Use of starters, such as, “Class” or “Children”
  - Use of “ready” phrases, such as, “Listen,” “Get ready to listen,” or “Look at me so I know you are listening”
  - Touch your child’s shoulder before beginning to talk
- Shorten long directions into clear, simple steps. Take a break between the steps in the directions. Say the directions twice exactly the same way to help your child know what to do. Do not rephrase directions.
Have your child say the directions back to you or ask you questions about what you said to make sure that he heard you and understands what to do.

Let your child know that he should tell teachers and other adults when he does not understand, cannot remember something, or needs something repeated. For example, encourage your child to ask a question when he does not understand a new vocabulary word someone uses or that he reads.

Say the key part of the message louder to show it is important. For example, “This is not a spelling word.”

Use pictures, charts, and written words when giving instructions and new information. Some children find that making a picture in their minds of important information can help.

Help your child learn to put steps in order for a task. Use pictures or written words with the steps to explain the order of the task. This will help your child get organized to get something done.

Talk or read about a topic before your child learns about it in school. This is called “pre-learning” and it will help your child know new words and concepts so he can learn more easily and take part in the lesson at school. The teacher can give the parents and speech therapist important vocabulary ahead of time.

Ask teachers to write assignments and materials needed on the board so that your child can copy them into an assignment book. Another student or the teacher can then check to make sure that your child wrote down the homework and books or materials he needs to bring home. Make lists of chores or things to do at home on a board or calendar.

Give your child a quiet space for finishing work so he can concentrate. He may need to take tests in a quiet room at school or do homework without background noise, such as away from the TV.

Plan out homework so that your child completes the most difficult subjects first or in study hall where he has access to teachers for questions. Your child may feel better if the hardest work is done first, which can make homework time more productive and less stressful for everyone involved.

Children who have problems with learning language can become more tired than other children. Your child may have to use more energy to keep up with learning and their work. Your child may learn better if given periodic breaks to move around, such as to stretch, walk across the room to get a tissue, or get a drink.

As your child gets older, he may need to get notes from a classmate or the teacher or a lesson outline from the teacher so he can listen more carefully and fill in notes.

Give your child extra time to finish his work at home and at school, such as when reading, doing projects and homework, or when taking tests.