

American Society for Deaf Children

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ASDC Snap Shots: Communication Modes

Parents use one or more of several modes to communicate with their deaf child.

American Sign Language (ASL)

ASL is a full, signed language with its own grammar, word order, and idioms. It is the primary language of many Deaf persons in the United States. It is associated with Deaf culture, which has customs, beliefs, and mores unique to itself.

Bi-lingual-Bi-Cultural

Schools where American Sign Language is the primary language of instruction generally subscribe to a bi-lingual/bi-cultural approach, where ASL and the Deaf community are seen as strengths. English is taught primarily through reading and writing, and speech training is offered.

Contact Language

Individuals who are learning a second language (such as hearing parents learning ASL) often follow the rules and patterns of their first language (such as spoken English). Contact language, sometimes called Pidgin Signed English, is the mode of communication that results from the “contact” between these two languages.

Cued Speech

Cued Speech is a sound-based visual communication system which, in English, uses eight handshapes in four different locations (“cues”) in combination with the natural mouth movements of speech, to make all the sounds of spoken language look different.

Oral

This approach emphasizes the use of residual hearing and speech reading. The use of sign language is not encouraged.

Signed English

These sign systems use signs from ASL along with invented signs to represent English word order and rules. These systems are not languages but are a code meant to be used to support spoken English. Some examples are Seeing Essential English (SEE I) and Signing Exact English (SEE II).

Speechreading

The skill of understanding spoken language through movements visible on the mouth, facial expression and body language, and contextual clues.

Sim-com

See Total Communication.

Total Communication

In theory this approach uses the diversity of ways in which persons who are deaf communicate: signing, speechreading, gesturing, use of residual hearing, etc. In practice this approach often appears as simultaneous communication, “sim-com,” or signing and speaking at the same time.