



Will my child speak?

This is a difficult question to answer as Autism is a spectrum condition and children will be affected in very different ways:

- Some children will be able to speak in full sentences and have conversations but may show difficulties with the subtleties of language including using appropriate language, understanding language and knowing the rules of conversations.
- Some children may develop language but at a slower rate and not at the same level as other children their age (language delay) or have gaps in their language skills / uneven profile (language disorder)
- Some children may not spontaneously develop speech but they may be able to learn some words and phrases with the right support from parents and professionals especially the Speech and Language Therapist.
- For other children, even with all the right support in place, they may not be able to speak. But talking is only one method of communication and they can still communicate and have their voices heard through approaches such as signing, use of pictures and use of technology.

Parents will sometimes say their child is lazy if they are not talking as much as their peers but, in our experience, children are not lazy when it comes to communication. As soon as children can talk they will. One characteristic of Autism can be a child not using words which they have been heard to use previously. Often a child may start to develop language alongside their peers but then either show slower progress, appear to stop progressing or some children appear to lose language skills which they had previously. This is understandably a very worrying time for parents and may often be the point when they seek a second opinion.



With early input and the correct support, children will be supported to achieve communication skills to their full potential.

Written for DisabledChild-India by: Jenny Hinton, Speech and Language Therapist
Date reviewed: January 2021