



# Exploring Communication Choices: Auditory Verbal

## Spoken Language through Auditory Verbal Philosophy and Practice

Families who have just had a child diagnosed with hearing loss often have many questions about how their child will be able to communicate. There are four main ways, or roads, to communicate with children who have limited or no hearing. This One of those roads is Auditory Verbal.

Learning to communicate is a journey. At the end of that journey, most families want their child to be a successful communicator and learner.

**Your task:** Learning about hearing loss and its possible impact on listening and communicating is unexpected for most families. In some ways it's similar to being told you need to make an unexpected trip. Your trip needs to start as soon as possible and it will take time to get there. There are several different roads and all of the roads are available to you and your family on this journey. Some roads may be more difficult or will really slow you down; other roads may be much easier for your child and family. You can start down one road and then switch to another road if it helps your child. Your task is to figure out which road you want to take first. There will always be mile markers so you know where you are and people to ask for directions along the way.

**Which road?** Each road is a different way you can share thoughts, ideas and feelings with your child. Each way will take extra effort by you and your family because a child with hearing loss needs help if they are to learn language well.

### What to think about as you plan your route:

1. How much can your child hear? Can he hear at all?
2. How important is it to you that your child learns to speak clearly?
3. How important is it to you for your child to sign or communicate visually?
4. Are you willing to learn a new language or a new way of communicating that you would use whenever you are with your child?

### AUDITORY VERBAL as a route to communication development

- Early identification of hearing loss and early fitting with appropriate hearing aids so that the child is able to hear sounds and spoken language well.
- Maximum use of hearing through the use of hearing aids and/or cochlear implants every day for all waking hours.

- Auditory Verbal Therapists guide and coach parents to become the main facilitators of their child’s listening and spoken language development.
- Family members do not have to learn signs or Cued Speech but they do need to learn strategies to help their child learn to listen and speak throughout family routines and activities.
- The child may receive hand cues that mean that it is time for him to listen carefully (like pointing to your ear).
- Singing, talking with your child, “learning to listen” play sounds, reading to your child, modeling or rewording sentences, whispering, pointing to your ear to listen, using a hand cue, and listening in noise are a few of the Auditory Verbal techniques.
- Within Auditory Verbal philosophy and practice, children are encouraged and supported to attend regular classes with typically hearing peers, with appropriate support services, from early childhood onwards.
- The main goal of Auditory Verbal philosophy and practice is for the child to develop speech and language through the use of aided hearing alone and to communicate well enough to be able to learn and live fully within the hearing community.

**What to think about as you plan your route: Auditory Verbal**

1. **HEARING:** The Auditory Verbal route requires full use of a child’s hearing. The child learns to use his hearing to listen to the spoken language of others and then develops natural language in ways that are similar to typically hearing children.
  
2. **SPEECH:** The child learns to speak as he learns to listen and make full use of his hearing as the primary sense for learning to understand and use spoken language. Speechreading, or watching the lips and face of someone while they are talking, is not used as a way to directly teach the child speech and language skills, but the use of natural gestures during daily communication is encouraged
  
3. **VISUAL COMMUNICATION:** No sign language, Cued Speech, natural gestures or other visual communication is used.
  
4. **FAMILY MEMBERS LEARNING A NEW WAY TO COMMUNICATE:** For success, it is necessary that the parents make sure that their child uses working hearing aids and/or cochlear implants every hour that the child is awake. Just wearing amplification is not enough for the child to become a highly successful communicator. Hearing and listening as the avenue to language learning are a priority to the family each time they interact with the child.

Family members are also very involved with Auditory Verbal Therapists (also called Listening and Spoken Language Specialists-AVT) or professionals who know Auditory Verbal techniques. Work on listening and spoken language strategies with the therapist or teacher is intensive and often so the families can learn the techniques. Families work hard to use Auditory Verbal strategies to facilitate their child's development of listening, speech and language skills at home throughout all the family's daily activities. Within Auditory Verbal philosophy and practice, parents are considered the young child's first and most important "teachers" for learning to listen and developing natural spoken language.

### **Auditory Verbal:**

The main goal of Auditory Verbal is to use audition as the primary route for learning so that the child can be educated in his or her neighborhood school. Auditory Verbal:

- Requires consistent, diligent use of amplification.
- Does not require learning a different language or manual communication method.
- Requires the child to focus on listening activities. What the child hears is linked to natural language and speech. Learning is through listening.
- Requires the home to become a listening and learning environment with daily practice of specific Auditory Verbal strategies that are integrated into family routines and activities.
- Takes patience and diligent use of Auditory Verbal strategies in the home and other daily environments.
- Promotes education in regular classes with typical hearing peers from early childhood onwards.

### **Other Questions to Ask in Your Community**

1. Do other families of children with hearing loss use Auditory Verbal where you live? Is there someone that works with your local school district Help Me Grow program that can help your family to learn Auditory Verbal techniques? Are there children currently in your school district who are learning through the use of Auditory Verbal in their classrooms?
2. Where can you go to learn Auditory Verbal techniques?
3. What do other parents of children with hearing loss and professionals who specialize in helping children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing say about these local services?

Your early intervention professional, your child's audiologist, or the deaf and hard of hearing teachers in your school district should be able to give you names of parents who have already gotten answers to these questions.

## Remember

- **Each family is different.**

There isn't a "right" choice for all children or all families. Each child needs different things. Parents are also different, and have their own hopes for their child. Some families choose one main way of communicating while other families make other choices.

- **Be flexible.**

Follow your child's lead. You may feel stressed out over choosing one of the communication choices. Some parents even combine ways of communicating. It's important to be flexible. Give one method your best effort. If it doesn't work, be open to trying other ways to communicate.

## Related Information

To view an example of Auditory Verbal go to

[http://www.ncbegin.org/communication\\_options/auditory\\_verbal.shtml](http://www.ncbegin.org/communication_options/auditory_verbal.shtml)

### Source – Beginnings for Parents

- Oral Deaf Education  
<http://www.oraldeafed.org/>
- Beginnings for Parents: Auditory Verbal [includes video above ]  
[http://www.ncbegin.org/communication\\_options/auditory\\_verbal.shtml](http://www.ncbegin.org/communication_options/auditory_verbal.shtml)
- Auditory options  
<http://www.auditoryoptions.org/auditory-verbal.htm>
- Auditory Verbal parents (children with cochlear implants learning auditory verbal techniques).  
<http://auditoryverbalparents.com/>
- Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf  
<http://agbell.org/NetCommunity/Page.aspx?pid=784>  
<http://www.familysupportconnection.org/html/HOHissues.htm>
- Raising Deaf Kids: Auditory Verbal: Learning to use the hearing that is left  
<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/communicating/choices/av.php>
- Family Support Connection: Should I learn sign language, cued English, or any other communication system?  
<http://www.familysupportconnection.org/html/HOHissues.htm>

Developed by Karen L. Anderson, PhD for the Minnesota Department of Education Parents Know website, 2011 (<http://parentsknow.state.mn.us> ).