

May is
"Better
Hearing and
Speech
Month"

The Key to Communication



DID YOU KNOW?

26 million people in the United States have some type of communication disorder.

Celebrate Better Communication by:

- Learning 1 new vocabulary word per day (randomly pick from the dictionary for fun)
- Taking care of your voice— it's the only one you've got
- Using synonyms for common words, like big & good

Visit the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) website at www.asha.org

Mean What You Say and Say What You Mean

Have you ever been *tongue tied* when trying to get your words out? Even worse than that, ever mean one thing, but say another? This can be the most confusing and tricky part about communicating. The English language is filled with many words that can mean more than one thing. It can be really challenging to understand the differences between many words, especially if English is not your first language.

Here are some examples of common words with more than 1 meaning. See if you can give at least 2 definitions for each one:

- bank (nouns)
- block (noun and verb)
- duck (noun and verb)

Phew, some of those were tough!

Even more tricky than these are words that are spelled the same but sound differently (these are called homographs). For exam-

ple:

- read (present tense verb and past tense verb)

I read every night. I read that book yesterday.

- lead (verb and noun)

The drum major will lead the parade. I broke the lead in my new pencil.

Other words can sound the same but be spelled differently (these are called homonyms):

- write and right
- so and sew
- steal and steel

In Language Arts we have been learning about special words called synonyms and antonyms. Do you know the difference? Here's a hint, just in case...

Synonym begins with *s*, just like similar or same. So synonyms are words that are similar or the same. Easy, huh?

Take a look at some synonyms:

- big-large
- like-adore
- laugh-chuckle

Synonyms are great for developing your vocabulary! Impress your teachers by saying their lessons are "enlightening" (use the dictionary if you don't know what it means!)



Antonyms are words that are opposites. For example:

- hot-cold
- boring-interesting

Wow! Lots to think about, huh? Now you have many different kinds of words to add to your vocabulary, so happy communicating!

Around the World in 80 Days

Our class took a trip around the world right here at school! We've gone around the class and asked everyone to contribute their own bit of multicultural info to help us during our travel. Here's what we found...

We can say "hello" in 4 other languages: Hola (Spanish), Guten Tag (German), Bonjour (French),

and Xin Chao (Vietnamese). Wow!

We also did some research and learned about different communication styles for other cultures. For example, in Middle Eastern cultures, it is considered impolite to say *no*. In Asian cultures, smiling does not always mean happiness; it can also mean many other



positive and *negative* emotions. Hispanics may stand closer during conversations and avoid eye contact as a sign of respect. Pacific Island children sit down when addressing an older person as a sign of respect.

We were amazed by all of the different facts we found!

From Celeste Roseberry-McKibbin's *Multicultural Students with Special Language Needs*, 1995.

What Will They Think of Next?

One of the most important uses of communication systems and technologies has been to assist people with disabilities. In 1838 Louis Braille demonstrated a system of imprinting raised dots on paper standing for letters of the alphabet, numbers, and punctuation. With this system, blind people could read by running their fingers across the dots, and could write by impressing the raised dots into paper using special machines. Sign language—a system of making signs for letters, words, and groups of words using fingered signs and body gestures—was formally developed in the 18th century in Paris, France, as a system of communication for deaf people. Alexander Graham Bell originally began his work on the telephone to help hearing-impaired people hear more clearly.



Using sign language to communicate

Today many new systems assist people with disabilities. The Kurzweil Reading Machine, for example, electronically scans printed text and speaks the words aloud using speech-synthesis software. Some personal computers can now read typed-in text aloud or enlarge text for blind or visually impaired people. Computers can be equipped with touch-sensitive screens or pointers for people whose physical disabilities make them unable to type. Computers can also recognize a person's voice, and with special software can turn lights on and off, engage security systems, or make emergency medical, police, or fire calls. This technology is especially helpful for people who need to use a wheelchair or who have limited use of their limbs.

"Alexander Graham Bell originally began his work on the telephone to help hearing-impaired people hear more clearly."

Several new technologies have been developed to help deaf people use the telephone and watch television. Instead of communicating by voice, deaf telephone customers and their families and friends can communicate with TTYs, or teletypewriters (they are now also known as TDDs—telecommunications devices for the deaf). The TTY is a machine that allows individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to display messages to another person on the other end of the line. Or they can call a trained operator and he/she can relay the message to any U.S. phone without a TTY.

Televisions in the United States today are equipped with closed-captioning devices which display the text of words being spoken, sound effects, and/or music. Some programs are broadcast (or recorded onto videotape) with additional sound tracks, so that blind people can hear not only the dialogue, music, and sound effects of a program, but also an announcer quietly describing the pictures.

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Students Test Communication Skills

We now know how important communication skills are in our everyday lives. We use them to express and share our needs or thoughts and to interact with other people. Think you've got what it takes to be a great communicator? Well, let's take a look at your language skills and see how you measure up to the test! Below are some questions to test different areas of language, including the ability to understand and use language to communicate.

Let's get started...

1. True or False— Making eye contact with the speaker only makes them more nervous so it's best to look away when they're talking to you.

2. When giving an oral presentation, you should:

- speak as quickly as you can to get it over with
- speak at a slow, calm rate
- breathe as little as possible

3. Screaming or talking loudly for long periods of time can lead to _____.

4. True or False— The only way to communicate is by talking.

5. Is it okay to ask the speaker a question when you don't understand their message?

How did you do? Don't be discouraged if you needed a little help! Remember, practice is the key to good communication skills!



Answers: 1. False 2. b 3. hoarseness 4. False 5. absolutely!

Who Really Cares About Grammar Anyway?

More people than you think! We know grammar can be a pretty boring subject, but think about these things:

Plus, don't forget that grammar is a big part of communication. We all know how important communication skills are by now, right?

- Good grammar makes you sound mature
- Good grammar is polite to use (think about that the next time you bump into the President or Michael Jordan)
- Good grammar will help you communicate your ideas better
- Good grammar can get you a great job one day
- Great grammar are the bestest thing! Oops, we mean... Great grammar is the best!



Michael Jordan Scores!
Photo courtesy of Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia