

What is language?

Language is the system of human communication – whether spoken or written – where words are combined in a meaningful and structured way. We use language to express our thoughts and emotions, communicate with others, to have wants and needs met, and to learn and understand new concepts.

Receptive language refers to the language a person is able to understand.

Expressive language refers to the language a person is able to use.

Examples of *Receptive Language Skills*

- understanding what words mean
- learning and retaining new vocabulary
- comparing new, unfamiliar words to previously learned words
- following directions
- answering WH questions
- understanding concepts such as first/last, big/small, next to, before/after, above/below, and full/empty
- sorting items into categories (such as understanding planes and birds are both things in the sky)
- understanding concepts such as cause/effect, problem/solution, and author's purpose

Examples of *Expressive Language Skills*

- putting words together to form complete thoughts and/or sentences
- using appropriate grammar – including word order, pronouns, and verb tenses
- organized thoughts and stories
- providing appropriate label or name for people/items
- describing an event that has happened in real life or in a story with appropriate detail
- persuading someone to do something
- requesting an item or assistance
- sharing feelings about something
- putting thoughts into writing

How do *language disorders* affect academics & the school setting?

Receptive Language Disorders: Difficulty understanding language will negatively impact academics and school across the board. Tasks such as following directions, learning new vocabulary, learning and retaining new concepts in all subject areas, reading comprehension, and listening comprehension will all be difficult.

Important note: It is possible to have both *receptive* and *expressive* language disorders.

Expressive Language Disorders:

- may negatively impact both spoken and written organization and grammar skills
- may leave a student with an inability to adequately express everything known about a subject, as his/her language skills may not be strong enough to convey everything that is understood
- may cause difficulty when trying to get others to understand what the student wants to express
- may cause social isolation due to difficulty communicating

Usually, a person's *receptive language* skills are at least equally – if not better – developed than *expressive language* skills. (If you have ever tried to learn a foreign language, you will find that you can often understand more of the language than you can speak.)