



Severity Rating Scales/Guidelines for Speech/Language Communication Services - Language Severity Rating Scale

Definition: Language impairment: any deviation in one or more of the following language components perceived to be outside the allowable range for an individual's communication competence and not related to dialect or linguistic/cultural background. A language impairment adversely affects the student's education performance as reflected by his/her social interaction, behavior, emotional development, vocational performance, communication, and/or participation in classroom activities as well as academic achievement. These components may involve the form of language (phonology, morphology and syntax), the content of language (vocabulary, semantics), and/or the functional use of language (pragmatics) (not listed in any specific order):

Auditory memory	Verbal coherence	Speech intelligibility at the conversational level
Auditory attention	Verbal inflection	Language, relevance and spontaneity
Auditory discrimination	Verbal flexibility	Passive, spatial, temporal and/or comparative relationships
Auditory sequencing	Syntax (grammar)	Vocabulary/concepts

	No apparent problem	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Description of language	Age-appropriate language skills			
Formal assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <1.0 standard deviation below the mean standard score. • Language quotient or standard score of 86 or above. • 16th percentile or above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.0 to <1.5 standard deviations below the mean standard score. • Language quotient or standard score of 78-85. • 7-15th percentile. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.5 to 2 standard deviations below the mean standard score. • Language quotient or standard score of 70-77. • 2-6th percentile 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >2 standard deviations below the mean standard score. • Language quotient or standard score at or below 70. • 2nd percentile or below.
Informal assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structure • content • usage and/or • auditory processing The student's language skills are within his/her expected language performance range on an informal assessment instrument.	Informal assessment indicates a language deficit.	Informal assessment indicates a language deficit that <i>usually</i> interferes with communication.	Informal assessment indicates the pupil has <i>limited</i> functional language skills. Communication is an effort. Student is nonverbal and cognitive ability has not been ascertained (i.e., autistic, TBI, HI).
Effect on communication	Does not interfere with communication	<i>Minimal</i> interference with communication.	Interferes with communication.	<i>Seriously</i> interferes with and/or prevents communication.
Effect on education	Acquisition of basic academic, social and/or vocational skills is not affected.	Acquisition of basic academic, social and/or vocational skills <i>may</i> be affected.	Acquisition of basic academic/social and/or vocational skills <i>is usually</i> affected.	Acquisition of basic academic, social and/or vocational skills <i>is impaired</i> .

Severity Rating Scales/Guidelines for Speech/Language Communication Services - Articulation Severity Rating Scale

By the age of seven years, the student's phonetic inventory is completed and stabilized (Hodson, 1991).

Definition: Articulation impairment: the abnormal production of speech sounds including: substitutions, omissions, distortions or addition of speech sounds not commensurate with student's chronological age or cultural linguistic background and not related to dialect.

	No apparent problem	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Description of articulation	No sound errors present or production is developmentally appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sound errors are intelligible but noticeable. • Errors consist of common types of substitutions and/or distortions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More numerous articulation errors are present. Intelligibility is difficult for an unfamiliar listener. • Excessive use (40% or more) of substitution or omission processes which are inappropriate for age. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many articulation errors are present. Speech is frequently unintelligible to most listeners. • Excessive use (40% or more) of omissions processes or unique processes which are inappropriate for age.
Formal assessments		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more than 2 speech sound errors outside developmental guidelines. Students may be stimulable for error sounds. • 7-15th percentile on a standardized measure. • 1 to 1.5 standard deviations below the mean. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitutions and distortions and some omissions may be present. There is limited stimulability for the error phonemes. • 2-6th percentile on a standardized measure. • 1.5 to 2 standard deviations below the mean. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deviations may range from extensive substitutions and many omissions to extensive omissions. • A limited number of phoneme classes are evidenced in a speech-language sample. Consonant sequencing is generally lacking. • <2 percentile on a standardized measure. • 2 or more standard deviations.
Informal assessments		Intelligible over 80% of the time in connected speech.	Intelligible 50-80% of the time in connected speech.	Intelligible <50% of the time in connected speech.
Effect on communication		The student may experience some difficulty with expression and/or comprehension. Others understand the student's spoken message.	The student may experience some difficulty with expression and/or comprehension. The student's spoken message is understood by others <i>most</i> of the time.	The student has limited functional expression and/or comprehension. Often others do not understand the student's spoken message. Frequently accompanied by a phonological problem.
Effect on education		Acquisition of basic academic, social and/or vocational skills <i>may</i> be affected.	Acquisition of basic academic/social and/or vocational skills <i>is usually</i> affected.	Acquisition of basic academic, social and/or vocational skills <i>is impaired</i> .

Severity Rating Scales/Guidelines for Speech/Language Communication Services - Voice Severity Rating Scale

When a student is referred for a voice impairment, a medical referral is indicated.

Definition: Voice impairment: a voice impairment is the absence or abnormal production of voice characterized by: deviant initiation/duration, tonal quality, pitch, loudness and/or resonance for age, gender or speaking situation.

	No apparent problem	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Description of voice	Pitch, quality, intensity, rate and resonance are not unusual.	Noticeable differences that may be inconsistent in pitch, quality, intensity, rate and resonance.	Persistent noticeable differences noted in voice production quality (tension, resonance), pitch, intensity or rate.	Consistent noticeable extreme differences noted in voice production quality (tension, resonance), pitch, intensity or rate.
Informal assessments		Voice difference including hoarseness, nasality, denasality, pitch or intensity inappropriate for the student's age is of <i>minimal</i> concern to parent, teacher, student or physician.	Voice difference <i>is of concern</i> to parent, teacher, student or physician. Voice is <i>not appropriate</i> for age and gender of the student.	Voice difference is of <i>concern</i> to parent, teacher, student or physician. Voice is <i>distinctly abnormal</i> for age and gender of student.
Effect on communication		The voice difference is <i>not severe enough to interfere</i> with communication. The student's awareness may affect communication.	The voice difference may interfere with communication and impair intelligibility or both.	The voice difference impairs communication and intelligibility or both.
Effect on education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice <i>rarely</i> distracts listeners from message. • Minimal impact on social, emotional and/or academic functioning. • Minimal listener and/or speaker reaction as noted by two familiar listeners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice <i>does</i> distract listener from message. • Moderate listener and/or speaker reaction and concern as noted by two familiar listeners. • Interferes with social, emotional and/or academic functioning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voice <i>does</i> distract listener from message. • Avoidance of speaking situations may be observed. • Seriously limits social, emotional and/or academic functioning due to limited ability to communicate appropriately.

Severity Rating Scales/Guidelines for Speech/Language Communication Services - Fluency Severity Rating Scale

Definition: Fluency impairment: a fluency impairment is the abnormal flow of verbal expression characterized by impaired rate and rhythm that may be accompanied by struggle behavior.

	No apparent problem	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Description of voice	Fluency of speech does not draw attention to the student.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-5% stuttered words of total words spoken with a speech sample of at least 100 words. • No secondary characteristics, frustration and avoidance behaviors present. • Fluent speech predominates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-10% stuttered words of total words spoken with a speech sample of at least 100 words. • Secondary characteristics, frustration and avoidance behaviors <i>may be</i> present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11% or more stuttered words of total words spoken with a speech sample of at least 100 words. • Secondary characteristics, frustration and avoidance behaviors <i>are</i> present, typically noticeable and distracting.
Informal assessments		Transitory dysfluencies are observed in specific situations.	Frequent dysfluencies are observed in many situations.	Habitual dysfluent behaviors are observed in a majority of situations.
Effect on communication		The student may be aware of dysfluent behavior.	The student may express awareness of dysfluent behavior.	The student usually expresses awareness of dysfluent behavior. Avoidance of speaking situations is observed.
Effect on education		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal listener reaction. • Minimal impact on education. 	Some listener reaction and it interferes with educational functioning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seriously limits educational functioning. • Student may do poorly on reports, oral assignments and reading. • Student may withdraw from group learning activities. • Student may be ridiculed, ignored or excluded from play or group activities.

Sources:

- Arkansas Severity Ratings for Language
- ASHA Guidelines for the Roles and Responsibilities for the School-Based Speech-Language Pathologist
- ASHA, IDEA and Your Caseload, 1999
- Howard County Public School, Maryland, "Communication Rating Scales, Service Delivery Model, and Dismissal Criteria for Speech-Language Service"
- School Union #98, "Guidelines for Speech Language Communication Services, 1997"
- MSAD #59, "Language Severity Rating Scale"

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