

Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy

Health professions, allied



Role of speech pathologists

Speech pathologists study, diagnose and treat communication disorders, including difficulties with speaking, listening, understanding language, reading, writing, social skills, stuttering and using voice. They work with people who have difficulty communicating because of developmental delays, stroke, brain injuries, learning disability, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, dementia and hearing loss, as well as other problems that can affect speech and language. People who experience difficulties swallowing food and drink safely can also be helped by a speech pathologist.

SPs can help in OT sessions by...

Speech pathologists can support occupational therapy sessions by providing guidance on how to best work with a child with communication needs. This may include strategies such as:

- incorporating visual supports to assist comprehension
- communicating at the child's language level (e.g. limiting number of words per sentence)
- providing prompting and feedback to promote engagement and generalisation of goals.

When to refer

Your child may benefit from consultation with a speech pathologist if they require support in any of the following areas:

- eating and drinking safely
- communicating clearly and easily
- social skills
- reading and spelling.

Don't "wait and see" - early intervention is key!

How to refer to SP

- Search "Find a Speech Pathologist" on the Speech Pathology Australia website www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/find
- Call Speech Pathology Australia for advice on 1300 368 835.
- Ask your GP about local service providers.

Occupational Therapy and Speech Pathology

Health professions, allied



Role of occupational therapists

Occupational therapists work with children and adolescents who are having difficulties successfully engaging in everyday occupations. This could include things such as:

- Self-care: eating, dressing, toileting, organisational skills, and managing transitions.
- Preschool and school participation: fine motor skills, handwriting, playing with friends, learning, attention, self-regulation, and executive functioning.
- Play/leisure: gross motor skills, pretend play, and sports.

OTs can help in SP sessions by ...

In paediatrics, speech pathologists and occupational therapists are often found working together on the same task, such as play, attending, story writing, and executive functioning. Both disciplines can look at the skill from their professional perspective. Occupational therapists can help in speech pathology sessions by working collaboratively to ensure that the child gains the most from therapy and parents/carers are supported using a consistent family-centred approach.

This might include strategies related to:

- optimal posture/positioning for mealtimes and communication
- supporting attention and self-regulation
- understanding the sensory and motor challenges experienced by the child.

Seeing a task from another perspective and embedding the skills that each profession is developing leads to a further depth and outcome for therapy.

When to refer

Referral to occupational therapy is recommended if the child is having difficulties with one or more tasks related to their occupations.

How to refer to OT

- Search “Find an OT” on the Occupational Therapy Australia website <https://otaus.com.au/find-an-ot>
- Call Occupational Therapy Australia for advice on 1300 682 878.
- Ask your GP about local service providers.