

Learning Guide



Communication Nation

Episode 3: Other Voices

We hope you enjoyed learning all about the wide array of nonverbal communication, through our hands, gestures, and bodies. Extend your learning with this print-ready Learning Guide!



What's in this Learning Guide?

Get Set to Listen

Answer TRUE or FALSE statements before and after listening to the episode.

Vocabulary

Discussion Questions

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.3-8.1, SL.3-8.3

Writing Prompts and Extension Projects

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.3-8.1, W.3-8.2, W.3-8.3, W.3-8.4, W.3-8.7, W.3-8.8

Emotion Charades

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1, SL.2, SL.6; National Core Arts Standards (Theatre): TH:Cr1.1, TH:Pr4.1, TH:Pr6.1, TH:Re7.1; National Communication Standards (NCA): Nonverbal Communication & Interpersonal Communication; CASEL: Social Awareness

Nonverbal Communication Investigation

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.2, SL.3; CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.2; National Core Arts Standards (Theatre): TH:Re7.1 & TH:Cr2.1; CASEL: Social Awareness; NCA: Nonverbal Communication, Observation & Interpretation

ASL Learning Resources

Make a Communication Board

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.1, SL.5, W.2, W.7; National Core Arts Standards (Media Arts/Design): MA:Cr1.1, MA:Cr2.1, MA:Pr5.1; ISTE: 1.4 Innovative Designer, 1.5 Computational Thinker, 1.6 Creative Communicator; NCA: Augmentative & Alternative Communication, Visual Communication

Additional Resources & Book List



The Children's Hour
kids public radio

© 2026 The Children's Hour radio show podcast
<https://www.childrenshour.org/other-voices/>



Get Set to Listen

1. Before listening!

Read each statement and write TRUE or FALSE based on what you already know.



2. After listening!

Based on what the experts said in the episode, write TRUE or FALSE.



Before Listening	TRUE or FALSE?	After Listening
	1. People can only communicate using words.	
	2. Nonverbal communication includes gestures and facial expressions.	
	3. Body language is another term for nonverbal communication.	
	4. Some people communicate using only gestures and body movements.	
	5. Assistive technology is only helpful for people who can't use words.	
	6. Assistive technology is a high-tech electronic device that people use to communicate.	
	7. People who use words to communicate can't communicate with people who don't use words.	

What did you learn?



Get Set to Listen

Answer key

1. FALSE. Nonverbal communication, which doesn't use words at all, is a very important part of communicating with others.
2. TRUE
3. TRUE
4. TRUE
5. FALSE. In our guest, Tibbany Ho's words: "universal communication boards in the classroom that we use with all of our students, including students with disabilities, students who come from other countries that speak different languages, who are having a hard time expressing their communication with others. So, using it in a more universal way to be able to connect with each other. Even as technology is getting better and better, you think about your phone. If you've ever used Siri and Alexa, right? It could be used and considered a piece of assistive technology to help somebody access something. That's a tool that a lot of us use all the time. And the words people are using with assistive technology are the same words that we use, too."
6. FALSE, sort of. While some assistive communication technology systems are high-tech, such as augmentative communication that talks for you or iPad-like devices with images that expand into menus with more word choices when you touch them, assistive technology in general is any device, program, or equipment that helps someone with a disability access their environment. And that can look different for each person. Some people use what we call unaided forms of communication, such as gestures, facial expressions, and head nods. And then we have what we call aided, and that means they need some other device or system in front of them. That could be as simple as a pencil and paper, a board used to write words, or a book with pictures to point at.
7. FALSE! While it does take more time to create a message with assistive technology, it is definitely possible to communicate with others with limited or no verbal communication. It just requires some patience.



Vocabulary

Listening for Words

1. Make a four-column chart and label the columns “I don’t know,” “I’ve seen or heard, but don’t know the meaning,” “I think I know the meaning,” and “I know the meaning.”
2. Write the vocabulary word in the column that describes how well you know the meaning of the word.
3. Listen to [the episode](#). Note how the speaker uses the words.

Matching Words with Definitions

1. Print and cut apart the word and definition cards.
2. Spread out the word cards so you can see them all. One by one, attach a definition card to each word card.

Writing with New Words

After working with the words and definitions, write a one-page essay or story that uses at least three of the words.

**nonverbal
communication**

Sending and receiving messages without using words or spoken language.

nonverbal cue

Ways that people express themselves without using words. These cues include gestures, facial expressions, and body movements. They help us understand what someone is feeling or thinking.



Vocabulary

emotion

A strong feeling or mental reaction caused by a person's circumstances, environment, or mood. Emotions can also cause physical reactions.

exaggerate

To make something sound more extreme or dramatic than it really is.

facial expression

How a person uses their face to show their feelings.

body language

The gestures, movements, and mannerisms a person uses to communicate with others.



Vocabulary

neurodivergence

When a person's brain works differently than what is considered typical. A person with neurodivergence might live with autism, ADHD, a learning disability, or more.

gesture

A movement of the body or limbs that expresses or emphasizes an idea or feeling.

eye contact

The act of looking another person straight in the eye.

assistive technology

Any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the daily life of somebody with a disability.



Vocabulary

Alternative Assistive Communication (AAC)

Different tools and methods people use to help them communicate.

augmentative

To add to, expand, or make greater, often to make something more usable or helpful. Augmentative communication gives a person access to more speech.

low-tech

A way to describe a tool that is simple and easy to use. Low-tech tools are often easy to access.

high-tech

Advanced technology such as electronic devices, including computers, tablets, and more.



Discussion Questions

1. How can body language (like facial expressions or posture) change the meaning of what someone is saying?
2. Why might people believe body language more than words?
3. What are some ways people communicate without speaking?
4. How do people who are deaf use communication differently?
5. Why is it important for communities to be inclusive of people with different communication needs?
6. What is assistive technology, and how does it help people communicate? Can you think of examples of assistive technology you've seen or used?
7. Why is patience important when communicating with someone who uses assistive technology?
8. What does it mean to be neurodivergent, and how can that affect communication?
9. Why is it important not to judge someone's way of communicating?
10. What are some ways you can improve your own communication skills?

Group Discussion Strategies

Think Pair Share:

1. Individually, student writes down their answer to a question.
2. Students pair up and tell each other their answers.
3. Teacher calls for volunteers to share with the whole class their answer (and/or their partner's answer). Teacher notes key words/phrases on board.

Round Robin:

1. Teacher poses one question (written on top of a large page) to students, who are assembled into small groups of 3 or 4.
2. Students take turns brainstorming the answers. The recorder of the group writes down all answers.
3. The leader reads the group's ideas to the entire class. Teacher moderates.



Writing prompts

Narrative Prompts

1. Imagine you wake up and cannot use spoken words for a whole day.
How do you communicate? What challenges do you face?

Extensions:

- *Include at least 3 different nonverbal communication methods.*
- *Describe your feelings and how others react.*

2. Write a story about meeting someone who communicates differently (uses sign language or assistive technology).

Extensions:

- *Show how you learn to communicate with them.*
- *Include a lesson about patience or understanding.*

Informative/Explanatory Prompts

1. Write an essay explaining different ways people communicate (speech, body language, sign language, technology).

Extension: *Compare at least two different communication methods.*

2. Explain what assistive technology is and how it helps people communicate. Give examples (apps, communication boards, devices).

Extension: *Choose one type of assistive technology to research and explain how people use it.*

Opinion/Persuasive Prompts

1. Write an essay persuading schools and communities to be more inclusive to make communication easier for everyone. Include reasons and examples, and suggest at least 2 ways it can be improved.
2. Do you think body language is more important than spoken words? Explain your opinion.



Emotion Charades

Listen

to [Part 1: Nonverbal Communication](#)

Objective

Correctly guess the emotion or feeling that a player is acting out without any talking.

Directions

1. Using your chart and some index cards (consider cutting them in half), create a set of 5 emotion cards. Write one feeling on each and include a visual such as color design, symbols, and/or drawings. Shuffle the cards and place them in a container.
2. In teams, decide who will go first. The player chooses a card and has 30-60 seconds to act out the emotion using only body language and facial expressions. No sounds or words are allowed.
3. The player who guesses correctly first will earn a point for their team by providing their evidence with this sentence stem:

"I knew you were acting out [emotion] because of the way you ____."

Reflect

1. If this game were played in classes in various countries across the world, what do you think could be some of the differences in emotions, expressions, and body language?
2. Not everyone is able to read social cues and interact with others naturally. Why is it important to be aware of this, and how can others help communicate smoothly?
3. What steps can you take to better understand and respect others' nonverbal communication cues?



Nonverbal Communication Investigation

Listen

to [Part 2: Sign Language & Deaf Culture](#)

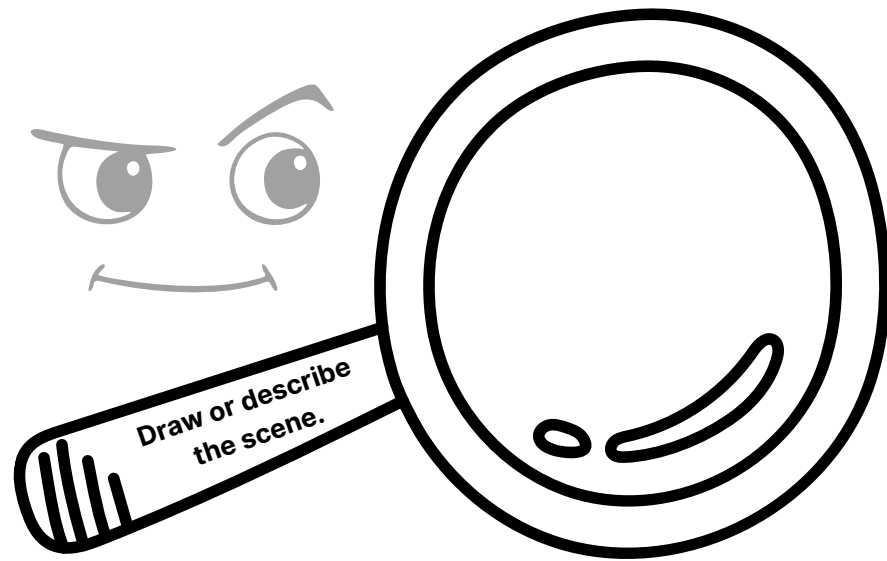
Find a place where you can safely and quietly watch other people in your community. Pay close attention to their faces, gestures, and body language. Write down your observations.

Body Language

How do people's bodies move to communicate?

Gestures

How do people use their arms, legs, and head to say things?



Facial Expression

How do people's faces show what they're thinking?

Eye Contact

Are people looking at each other?

Reflect

Review your notes and observations. Then, reflect on what you think was happening based on the nonverbal cues you observed.

From their gestures and expressions, I think that they were...

It is important and helpful to be aware of nonverbal cues because....



ASL Learning Resources

Sign Language Is for Everyone

Take Action!

What can you do to make your community more inclusive for people who cannot hear? Include closed captioning and learn a little sign language!

Knowing a little sign language not only makes it a lot easier for people who are deaf, but it's also a great way to communicate when you want to speak without using your voice. You can learn sign language online for free!

Watch

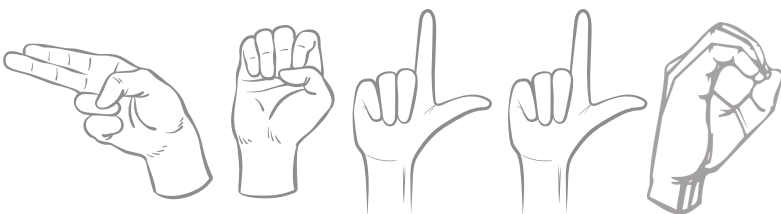
Check out these [videos from ASL Kids](#).

Watch these great videos from [Miacademy](#) to help you get started learning ASL!
(Check out their website for a complete scope and sequence for the 3-unit course.)

- [All About Introductions: Learn to Introduce Yourself in Deaf Culture](#)
- [ASL: Basic Signs 1 - Everyday Vocabulary in ASL](#)
- [ASL: Basic Signs 2 - More Essential ASL Words](#)
- [ASL: Emotions](#)
- [ASL: Family](#)
- [ASL: Alphabet](#)
- [ASL: Numbers 0-10](#)
- [ASL: Food and Beverages - Sign Popular Foods and Drinks in ASL](#)

Print

[Print this free ASL Alphabet Chart](#)





Make a Communication Board

Listen

to [Part 3: Assistive Technology](#)

A communication board uses pictures and symbols to represent words and ideas. It can be printed or displayed in an open space or school area. A board is a great example of Alternative Assistive Communication (AAC), or the ways that someone communicates besides talking. Your challenge is to create an AAC Communication Board to help people communicate.

Research & Plan Your Board

- Read [this article](#) for an overview and how to get started.
- Watch [this how-to video](#).
- Think about where you would like your board to be used. It can be for a specific person you know, such as a younger sibling, or it can be displayed in a public space, such as a playground or library, for many people to use.
- Think about what symbols you want to include and if you want to have categories such as pronouns, activities, feelings, food, questions, needs, etc.

Create

1. Identify Vocabulary & Needs

2. Select & Design Symbols

3. Create the Board

- *Digital Tools:* Use free software like [Canva](#), LessonPix, or Google Docs to design and print.
- *Physical Materials:* Print on cardstock for durability, then laminate or put in sheet protectors for sturdiness and easy cleaning.
- *Attachment:* Use Velcro dots for flexible placement, or punch holes to attach with a binder ring or lanyard.

4. Use & Adapt

- *Model, practice, and expand the vocabulary as the user masters the current words.*

Reflect

1. Who will use the board, and where will it be used or displayed?
2. What will be the theme or topic, and what categories will it have?



Communication Board



Additional Resources

[Understanding Nonverbal Communication Lesson](#)

This free lesson from Overcoming Obstacles will help students explore the concept of nonverbal communication.

[What Are Communication Boards?](#)

An overview of what they are, how they're used, and how to get started using them from the Organization for Autism Research.

[Print this free ASL Alphabet Chart](#)

Videos

[Make a Simple Communication Board Out of a Cookie Sheet](#)

This video explains how to choose the right vocabulary for your communication board.

[Creating AAC Picture Communication Boards Using Canva](#)

Watch this video to learn how to design your communication board using software like Canva.

[How to Make Communication Boards Using LessonPix](#)

LessonPix is an online software with thousands of different pictures for early literacy, and it can easily create communication boards.

[Build Communication with Picture Boards](#)

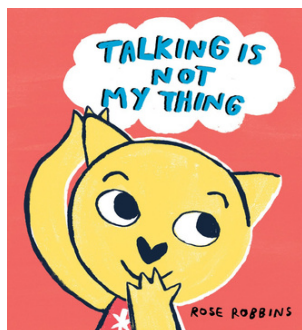
This breaks down the steps for creating picture communication boards. The video suggests using it with toddlers, but it is widely applicable.

Check out these [videos from ASL Kids](#).

Watch these great videos from [Miacademy](#) to help you get started learning ASL! (Check out their website for a complete scope and sequence for the 3-unit course.)

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- [ASL: Food and Beverages - Sign Popular Foods and Drinks in ASL](#)

Book List

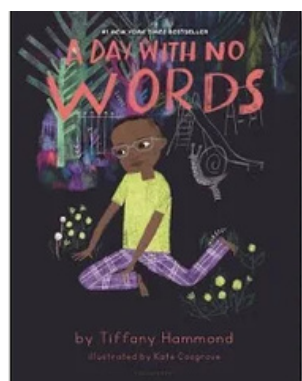


Talking is Not My Thing!

by Rose Robbins

In this sibling story, a non-speaking autistic girl shares her creativity and joy through gestures and drawings, while her brother understands her. It celebrates neurodiversity, connection, and different ways of communicating.

ages 3-7



A Day with No Words

by Tiffany Hammond, illustrated by Kate Cosgrove

This picture book follows an autistic child and his mom communicating through a tablet as they share their day. It celebrates connection, love, and the many ways people can be understood without spoken words.

ages 4+



I Go Quiet

by David Ouimet

This story follows a quiet, anxious girl who finds her voice through imagination and books. With powerful illustrations, *I Go Quiet* explores loneliness, courage, and self-expression.

ages 4-8



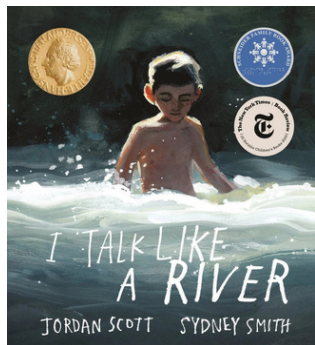
Wanda's Words Got Stuck

by Lucy Rowland, illustrated by Paula Bowles

Wanda struggles to speak, but her story shows that connection doesn't always need words. This heartfelt book celebrates understanding, friendship, and different ways of communicating.

ages 3-5

Book List

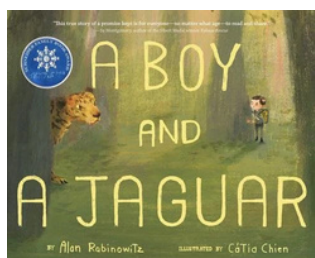


I Talk Like a River

by Jordon Scott, illustrated by Sydney Smith

In this poetic and powerful book, the author, who struggles to speak with his stutter, uses the beautiful simile of a river to demonstrate that there's beauty and strength in every voice. [The video of the author reading his book](#) is unforgettable!

ages 4-10

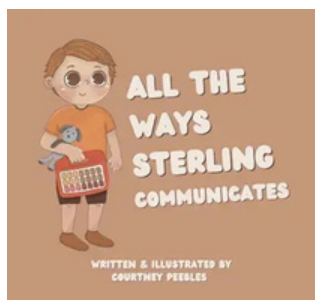


The Boy and the Jaguar

by Alan Rabinowitz, illustrated by Cátia Chien

Alan loves animals and wonders why they're kept in cages at the Bronx Zoo. He stutters when speaking to people, but not to animals. This true story shows how he finds his voice and becomes an advocate, proving all voices matter—even when they sound different.

ages 4-7



All the Ways Sterling Communicates

by Courtney Peebles

Sterling is playful and expressive, communicating through AAC, ASL, and speech. This inclusive book shows that all forms of communication are valid and every voice matters.

ages 1-14



El Deafo

by Cece Bell

In this funny graphic novel memoir, Cece Bell shares her experience growing up with hearing loss and using a hearing aid. El Deafo is a heartfelt story about feeling different, finding connection, and friendship.

ages 7-10

Check out [this great list](#) for more books that celebrate different ways of communicating!