

# Auditory Processing Disorder (APD)

APD is defined by a disconnect between what you are hearing and how your brain processes these sounds. People with APD hear normally (or will score normally on a hearing test) but they will struggle to process what they hear in the same way other people do.

Students with APD don't recognize slight differences between sounds in words, even when the sounds are loud and clear enough to be heard. An example of this challenge is:

*"Mom, what is an alibi?" So I gave her a definition. Her response was, "Oh, I thought it was the song you sing to a baby."*

*(Taken from Raising a child with APD blog-<http://apdhailey.blogspot.com>)*

These kinds of problems usually occur when there is background noise, which can be prevalent in social situations and classrooms. Students with APD can have trouble understanding what is being said to them when they're in a noisy environment like a playground, sports event, the school cafeteria, and a party. These problems become more pronounced when the student is listening to complex information and can result in speech, language, and academic problems, especially in spelling, reading, writing, and speaking skills.

## TYPES OF APD

- **Auditory discrimination:** difficulty hearing differences between words or sounds that are similar; for example look/book and ch/sh
- **Auditory figure-ground discrimination:** when a child is unable to block out background noise to focus on one speaker; noisy classrooms and free structure/movement in a classroom would exacerbate this
- **Auditory memory:** difficulty in remembering heard or spoken information; this is generally noticed as difficulty with recalling directions or lists; it can also be immediate or delayed
- **Auditory sequencing:** difficulty remembering the order of sounds and words; for example 'What is the same in dog and duck' vs 'What is the same in duck and dog'
- **Auditory cohesion problems:** when higher-level listening tasks are difficult, e.g. drawing inferences from conversations, understanding riddles, or comprehending verbal math problems

## COMMON ISSUES WITH THIS CHALLENGE

- **Communication:** Students with APD may not speak clearly. They may drop the ends of words and syllables that aren't emphasized. They might confuse similar sounds (free instead of three) long after their peers have learned to correct themselves.
- **Academics:** Students with APD often have trouble developing reading, spelling and writing skills, learning vowels, and developing phonemic awareness.
- **Understanding:** Students with APD may find following spoken instructions to be challenging.
- **Organization/memory:** Students with APD are often found to be disorganized and struggle to recall instructions and to-do lists without significant prompting.
- **Social skills:** Students with APD have trouble telling stories or jokes. They may avoid conversations with peers because it's hard for them to process what's being said and think of an appropriate response.

## HOW WE SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH APD

- ✓ Delivering direct instruction phonics and reading programs using Orton-Gillingham techniques
- ✓ Using multisensory delivery, specifically visual and kinesthetic prompts to support understanding of classroom topics without relying on verbal instructions
- ✓ Providing support to students for understanding and organizing language-based information, including charts, graphic organizers, visuals, note-taking supports, and assistive technology
- ✓ Teaching students to look for non-verbal cues

**“Ben, put on your shoes and socks, get your bag from your room and meet me at the car.’ Well, I can guarantee you that I will get to the car, without my bag and possibly without the shoes.”**

- Ben



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