

# Disability Campaign.org

## Nonverbal Communication



People who are nonverbal may or may not have a learning or intellectual disability. Just because someone is unable to speak verbally, does not mean he or she cannot hear or understand his or her surroundings. They may not be able to communicate in the same manner as you do, but like you, they deserve respect, patience, and kindness.

### *How to speak to a person who is nonverbal*

1. **Address the person that is nonverbal first.** If she needs additional assistance with communication, she may signal to her caregiver or attendant for aid.
2. **Ask the person if they use a communication device or some other tool to communicate.** A communication device can allow you to have a typical conversation with him.
3. **Be aware that the person may or may not be able to respond.** Just the fact that you are willing to talk to her even if she cannot respond is a loving and caring gesture.
4. **Always make eye contact while talking.** This tells him you are addressing him as a person. Just be aware that he may or may not make eye contact with you.
5. **Look for facial expressions or body language as a response.** His only way to communicate may be through different facial expressions. Pay attention to his face and movements for hints on what he is trying to communicate.

6. **Communicate with yes or no questions.** Try pointing to restaurant menus or holding objects for her to select. She may indicate her selection with a head nod, eye gaze, or by tapping one of your hands. In a home or classroom setting, use “yes/no” buckets for children to make a selection.
7. **Use pen & paper.** If he is able to read, write down on a notepad—or your phone, if you do not have pen and paper handy—what you wish to communicate.

### ***Nonverbal Communication Applications for Apple Devices***

1. Verbally (Free, but can purchase an upgrade.)
2. Convey (Free, but can purchase an upgrade. Audience: children.)
3. Answers:yesno (Free. **Note:** Type the name in the Apple Store search engine just as it is written here. You may need to search "iPhone only," but it still works on the iPad.)
4. Proloquo2Go (For Purchase. Audience: children.)
5. “Speak to Text” — a new setting under “Accessibility Settings” (for iOS 7 devices only). This allows your device to “speak” the written text you select.



### ***Nonverbal Communication Applications for Droid Devices***

1. TapToTalk (Free.)
2. JABtalk (Free. Provides the option to personalize a communication board.)
3. AAC Autism myVoiceCommunicator (For Purchase. Audience: children.)
4. AAC Speech Buddy (For Purchase. Audience: children.)

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P.O. Box 3333, Agoura Hills, CA 91376

[www.joniandfriends.org](http://www.joniandfriends.org)