

# What is Aphasia and Apraxia?

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## Aphasia is a **LANGUAGE DISORDER**:

It results in difficulty accessing language, causing impairments in verbal expression, language processing, reading, and writing. Difficulties with word retrieval (including numbers) and sentence formulation are often challenging.

Common errors made by a Person with Aphasia (PWA):

**Semantic Errors:** When a PWA attempts to access the target word of “table,” they instead may choose a related word, or one in the same semantic category (i.e. furniture), such as “chair”. Semantics is basically a more technical name for the “meanings of words.” One’s semantics can sometimes become fuzzy with Aphasia, and those word concepts and features, and the relationships between them, need to be strengthened in order for there to be improved word retrieval abilities.

**Phonological Errors:** When a PWA attempts to access the target word of “pen,” they instead may choose a word that sounds similar, such as “hen”. This is likely a result of one’s Phonology (a fancy word for one’s sound system) being affected by his/her stroke or brain injury. The PWA may have trouble accessing the word form (i.e. the number of letters associated with the word, the number of syllables, the correct letters, and/or the correct sounds), causing them to produce an inaccurate target.

## Apraxia is a **SPEECH DISORDER**:

It affects the motor planning and programming involved in speech. Apraxia affects how someone can control the movements of their lips, tongue, jaw, and voice to make the sounds they want. In other words, our brain typically communicates with our articulators, and would signal our tongue to tap the roof of our mouth and turn on our voice in order to produce the /d/ sound. That connection is impaired in someone with Apraxia, making it difficult to produce and combine sounds to formulate words and sentences. Additionally, the natural prosody and rhythm of one’s speech is often affected in Apraxia.

## Aphasia and Apraxia:

It is not uncommon for both Aphasia and Apraxia of Speech to co-occur. However, it is possible to have ONLY Aphasia. It is much less likely and quite rare to have ONLY an Apraxia of Speech, although it is possible. It is also important to note that challenges at the sound level may be related to a phonological Aphasia (trouble accessing the word form) and may not necessarily be due to an Apraxia of Speech (trouble with the motor planning, programming, and execution for sounds/syllables). It is important that this differentiation is made and discussed by your Speech Language Pathologist (SLP), as the management of the disorders may vary.

