

Speech-Language Pathology

- As defined by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) a speech-language pathologist (SLP) works “to prevent, assess, diagnose, and treat speech, language, social communication, cognitive-communication, and swallowing disorders in children and adults.” The career of an SLP is very wide-ranging, yet overwhelmingly rewarding, as a person can work in a variety of different work settings and with varying populations of clients. For example, a SLP could work in clinics, schools, hospitals, or nursing homes, targeting skills in receptive, expressive, and pragmatic language, cognition, articulation and phonology, fluency, voice, feeding and swallowing.
- The following are key points in the pathway of becoming a speech-language pathologist, starting at the undergraduate level to the Certificate of Clinical Competence.
 - **Bachelor’s Degree:** A completed bachelor’s degree is necessary in order to be accepted into an accredited speech-language pathology master’s program. A student can complete their bachelor’s degree in any area, although majors in communication sciences and disorders or a related field would be ideal. It is smart to check the pre-requisites of graduate programs to ensure all necessary coursework is completed.
 - **Master’s Degree:** It is required to obtain a master’s degree from an accredited Speech Language and Hearing Science master’s program. There are over 300 graduate programs that have been accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA). Use EdFind, ASHA’s online directory of undergraduate and graduate programs for speech-language pathology and audiology, to search for the graduate program that best fits you.
- Typically, graduate programs take two years to complete. However, depending on the program and a student’s undergraduate degree, a graduate program could span the course of 3 years. It is also an option for a student to continue past their master’s degree and obtain a doctoral degree.
 - **Supervised Clinical Experience:** Along with educational requirements, there are clinical hours that must be met before graduation from a master’s program. It is required that students complete 400 hours of supervised clinical experience (25 hours of clinical observation and 375 hours of direct client treatment).
 - **Clinical Fellowship (CF):** Once a student has obtained their graduate degree, it is now time for them to enter into their clinical fellowship, which is meant to be a transition period between being a student to an independent therapy provider. During this time the clinical fellow has the support and supervision of their Clinical Fellowship Mentor. To find a CF position, search for job positions accepting CF-SLPs. A CF can be completed in 36 weeks if working full-time (35

hours per week). Part-time work can also be used to complete a CF, as long as the CF-SLP works more than 5 hours per week.

- **Praxis Exam:** The Praxis Exam is a requirement in order to receive your ASHA Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology. It is also necessary to be able to obtain a state professional licensure and state teacher credential. Typically, the Praxis Exam is taken during the last semester of your graduate program or shortly after graduation.
- **Certificate of Clinical Competence:** Once the previous requirements (as noted above) have been met, an individual can obtain a Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC). The credentials of CCC-SLP represent that individual has met certain academic and clinical skills to be competent in independently providing speech and language services.
- **State License:** Additionally, each state has varying licensure requirements. Majority of states require a state license in order to provide therapy. These requirements can be checked at ASHA.