SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY CAREER GUIDE

Everything You Need to Know About Working As an SLP
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. What Does a Speech-Language Pathologist Do?
4. How to Become a Speech-Language Pathologist
5. How Much Do Speech-Language Pathologists Make?
6. Is Speech Pathology Right For You? Five Questions to Ask
7. Taking the First Step Toward a Meaningful Career
If you’re interested in a career where you will be able to make a real difference in the lives of others, then becoming a speech-language pathologist (SLP) might be just the career for you. Not only do SLPs help their patients lead healthier, happier, and more fulfilled lives, but they also enjoy generous pay and career stability for their efforts.

In this career guide, we answer some of the most common questions that individuals have about working as a speech-language pathologist. This includes questions such as:

- What does a speech-language pathologist do?
- Where do they work?
- How much money do they earn?
- What is the process of becoming a speech-language pathologist?
- And perhaps most importantly, how can you determine if it’s the right career for you?

Continue reading to find answers to these and other questions so that you can feel empowered to make the best decision for yourself and your career.
WHAT DOES A SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST DO?

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If you are looking for a career that will enable you to make a real and lasting difference in the lives of others, then becoming a speech-language pathologist could be an excellent choice for you. Not only do SLPs help their clients and patients lead more fulfilling lives, but they also earn a substantial salary for their efforts.

To become a speech-language pathologist, you will ultimately need to earn a relevant degree, such as a Master of Science in speech-language pathology. Of course, earning an advanced degree will take an investment of time, effort, and money, so it's only natural to research the field before making such a commitment.

With this in mind, we will explore common questions about becoming an SLP, including what a speech-language pathologist is, what they do, where they work, and more.

**What Is a Speech-Language Pathologist?**

A speech-language pathologist (SLP) is a professional trained to be an expert in all aspects of speech and communication. As such, SLPs provide a range of services to their patients and clients. The most well-known of these services revolves around speech (speech sounds, language, literacy, fluency). SLPs also provide a number of services focused on social communication, cognition, and issues related to feeding and swallowing.

**Speech-Language Pathologist vs. Speech Therapist**

Ultimately, the terms speech-language pathologist, speech pathologist, speech therapist, speech teacher, and speech correctionist can all be used interchangeably to refer to a practicing SLP. However, the terms speech-language pathologist and speech pathologist are most commonly used in professional settings, while the others are more often used informally.

**What Do Speech-Language Pathologists Do?**

Speech-language pathologists perform a range of roles and duties depending on where they are employed and the specific patient populations that they work with. For example, those working in a hospital setting will perform different activities and treatments than those who work in a school or private practice.

“It really depends on the setting that a speech-language pathologist is working in,” says Lorraine Book, department chair and associate clinical professor of Northeastern’s MS in Speech-Language Pathology program. “That being said, their primary role revolves around the assessment and treatment of speech-language disorders and swallowing disorders.”

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SLPs dedicate the majority of their time to:

- Evaluating patients
- Diagnosing disorders, such as speech, communication, language, or swallowing disorders
- Creating individualized treatment plans for their patients
- Implementing treatments and interventions
- Training family members or caregivers to oversee treatment in everyday life
- Collaborating with other medical professionals as needed
- And more

While speech-language pathologists are perhaps most well-known for working with children in a school setting, they can—and often do—work with patients of all ages.

“As an allied health profession, SLPs are trained to treat across the lifespan, which means birth to death,” Book says.

**Conditions Addressed by Speech-Language Pathologists**

Because the role of an SLP can be so broad, the easiest way to understand it is to explore the specific types of conditions and problems that SLPs treat. These include:

- **Speech disorders:** This category includes any disorder or condition that causes an individual to have difficulty producing sounds. Stuttering, dysarthria, and ataxia of speech can all be considered speech disorders.
- **Language disorders:** These include any condition that causes an individual to have difficulty communicating with others. Language disorders include receptive as well as expressive language and can involve spoken or written language. Phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics are all involved.
- **Social communication disorders:** Individuals with these conditions have difficulty understanding and adhering to the rules of social communication, such as taking turns during a conversation or not interrupting others while they are speaking. Those on the autism spectrum or who have experienced traumatic brain injury commonly exhibit issues around social communication.
- **Cognitive-communication disorders:** These disorders cause individuals to have difficulty remembering, organizing their thoughts, paying attention, or problem-solving. Stroke, dementia, and traumatic brain injury are often common causes.
- **Swallowing disorders:** Difficulty feeding and swallowing, known as dysphagia, is common in those who have suffered from a stroke, traumatic brain injury, or certain illnesses or other injuries.
Becoming a Speech-Language Pathologist

If the role described above aligns with your personal and professional goals, then a career as a speech-language pathologist could be the right one for you. In addition to enjoying competitive wages and significant job growth over the coming decade and beyond, you will be able to make a real difference for the individuals that you treat.

Continue reading to learn more about the steps involved in becoming a speech-language pathologist and exactly what the career entails.
WHERE DO SPEECH PATHOLOGISTS WORK?
FIVE CAREER OPTIONS
When it comes to the field of speech-language pathology, a common image that comes to mind is that of a speech therapist who works in a school with young children. But while schools are, of course, an important employer of SLPs, it’s important to recognize that speech-language pathologists can work in a number of different settings performing a wide range of roles.

“One of the great things about this perfect profession is that you can work in a variety of settings and with a variety of populations treating a wide range of disorders,” says Lorraine Book, department chair and associate clinical professor at Northeastern’s MS in Speech-Language Pathology program. “I think that’s what makes it attractive to so many people: the variety and flexibility in the field.”

With this in mind, below we take a closer look at five of the most common employment settings where speech-language pathologists typically work, and highlight the key duties that are performed in those settings.

### Where Do Speech-Language Pathologists Work?

Some of the most common employment settings for speech-language pathologists include:

- Educational facilities
- Hospitals
- Nonresidential healthcare facilities
- Residential healthcare facilities
- Private practice

### Career Options for SLPs

#### 1. Educational Facilities

According to a report compiled by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), more than 56 percent of all speech-language pathologists work in an educational setting of some sort. Specifically, 53 percent work in school settings (pre-K through 12th grade) while only 3 percent work in a college or university setting. This means that educational facilities are, by far, the largest employers of SLPs in the United States.

- **Pre-K Through Grade 12**: For SLPs who work in pre-K through grade 12 educational facilities, tasks are largely focused around early intervention as well as providing services to students. This includes conducting diagnostic evaluations and various screenings, working with children with disabilities, and providing various services related to reading, writing, speaking, and listening to either individual students or in group settings. SLPs can also be employed in special needs classrooms in support of general education.

  Speech-language pathologists employed in educational settings will also play an active role in generating learning plans for students, coordinating with other professionals, supervising the clinical practicum and fellowships of SLPs in training, and more.
• **College and Universities:** SLPs provide services to college-age students and administer care at university-affiliated healthcare facilities. Colleges also employ a large number of SLPs in research and teaching positions.

2. **Private Practice**

A full 19 percent of all speech-language pathologists, or roughly one-fifth of the profession, work in private practice. This means that they are either self-employed, running their own clinics and handling their own clientele, or else are employed by a private practice.

Speech-language pathologists working in private practice provide services to clients while unaffiliated with a particular educational institution or healthcare facility. Though some in private practice may specialize in providing care to a particular patient population, others do not specialize.

In addition to providing care, SLPs who run their own private practice need to be proficient in certain areas of business, such as accounting, marketing, and more.

3. **Nonresidential Healthcare Facilities**

After private practice, nonresidential healthcare facilities take third place in terms of the percentage of SLPs that they employ. Approximately 16 percent of all speech-language pathologists are employed in nonresidential healthcare facilities, such as doctor's offices, hearing clinics, and other outpatient settings.

Speech-language pathologists working at nonresidential healthcare facilities may work in an outpatient clinical setting or may even work with patients in their own homes, because patients do not require full-time care. Duties are often focused on helping patients develop or reacquire functional skills, such as speech after a stroke, and becoming more independent.

4. **Hospitals**

The fourth largest employer of speech-language pathologists in the United States is hospitals. According to ASHA, roughly 13 percent of all SLPs are employed in a hospital setting. Hospitals catering to patient populations with a higher instance of communication or voice disorders—such as children's hospitals, military hospitals, and stroke centers—often have a special need for SLPs.

SLPs working in hospitals will often be involved in evaluating patients after a traumatic injury or accident or who have certain ailments in order to diagnose communication, language, or swallowing disorders. They will also provide direct treatment and may generate treatment plans. SLPs in hospital settings also play an important role in educating patients, their families, and even other members of the medical team about communication, language, and swallowing disorders.
5. Residential Healthcare Facilities

Residential healthcare facilities, such as nursing homes and assisted-living facilities, come in fifth in terms of the percentage of speech-language pathologists that they employ. According to ASHA, 10 percent of all SLPs will work in residential healthcare facilities, where they cater to the elderly as well as those who are recovering from various medical ailments, such as a stroke.

Speech-language pathologists working at residential healthcare facilities perform many of the same tasks as those employed at hospitals and nonresidential facilities. The primary difference is that patients under their care often require additional support and oversight, as they may be suffering or recovering from more serious medical conditions.

Other Career Options

In addition to the careers listed above, a small number of SLPs will also find themselves employed in either a corporate or governmental setting.

Those who work in a corporate setting are often employed as consultants, working to educate other employees to become more effective communicators. They can also inform an organization of how its products or services may impact the speech and communication of its consumers.

Those who work in a governmental setting, meanwhile, may work in either an administrative or clinical capacity. Public health departments in particular will often employ SLPs to help individuals with speech, language, and swallowing disorders.

Gaining the Required Education and Training

As demonstrated above, the day-to-day activities that you will be responsible for as an SLP will depend heavily on your place of employment.

“Your day-to-day work responsibilities do look different depending on the employment setting,” Book says. “In a school, for example, you’re focusing on school-aged students. But grade level is also important, and your day can look significantly different depending on whether you are employed in an elementary school, where diagnosis and early intervention is more crucial, or a high school. In a hospital, you’re looking at more medically complex cases, and you have more responsibility for treating swallowing disorders.”

With this in mind, if you know the type of career you would like to pursue before you enroll in a master’s degree program, Book recommends looking for programs that offer specialty tracks that are geared toward those careers. For example, at Northeastern, students interested in eventually working with young children can choose to pursue an Early Intervention Certificate program.
“While these programs are not required in order to work in a particular capacity as an SLP, they can help you gain the foundational knowledge that you will need during your career,” Book says.

If the program you are enrolled in does not offer a specialty track, Book says that you can still gain valuable experience in your chosen field by seeking practicum experience or fellowship experience working with that population.
HOW TO BECOME A SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST

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Speech-language pathology consistently ranks as one of the most fulfilling and desirable jobs for many reasons. If you’re interested in becoming a speech-language pathologist, you should begin by understanding the steps required to start working as an SLP. We define and discuss each of these steps below.

How to Become an SLP

To become a speech-language pathologist, you will need to:

• Earn a bachelor’s degree in a related field
• Earn a Master of Science in speech-language pathology
• Pass the Praxis examination in speech-language pathology
• Complete your clinical fellowship
• Obtain licensure and certification

Steps to Becoming a Speech-Language Pathologist

1. Complete a Bachelor’s Degree in a Related Field

To become a speech-language pathologist, you will ultimately need to complete a graduate degree in the field. But the first step toward starting your career as an SLP will be to complete an undergraduate degree that will prepare you for graduate education.

Two undergraduate degrees closely aligned with the field include the Bachelor of Science in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology and the Bachelor of Science in communication sciences and disorders. These programs are an excellent option for anyone who knows early on that they would like to pursue a career in speech-language pathology.

However, other degrees (such as a bachelor’s degree in education, psychology, or linguistics) can also prepare you for your eventual graduate education, especially if paired with a relevant concentration. At Northeastern, for example, undergraduate students may complete a communication sciences and disorders (CSD) minor or a clinical speech-language pathology and audiology (SLPA) minor.

2. Complete a Master’s Degree in Speech-Language Pathology

Once you have completed your undergraduate degree, your next step will be to enroll in a graduate program accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (CAA).

Some common program titles include Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology or Master of Science in Communication Science and Disorders. At Northeastern, we offer an MS in Speech-Language Pathology.
While the exact curriculum will vary from program to program, most graduate programs in speech-language pathology include 60 credit hours of material. This curriculum consists of both academic and clinical work, allowing students to learn about key concepts such as speech-language disorders, articulation, phonology, dysphagia, etc., while also putting those lessons into practice in a clinical setting.

Each graduate program will have its own prerequisites, which you will need to complete before enrolling. For example, Northeastern students must complete five prerequisite undergraduate courses before enrolling in the MS in Speech-Language Pathology program. These include:

- Anatomy and Physiology of the Speech and Hearing Mechanism
- Introduction to Audiology
- Introduction to Speech and Hearing Science
- Language Development
- Phonetics

If you have completed a relevant undergraduate degree, as mentioned above, then you will likely find that you have completed the necessary prerequisite courses.

3. Pass the Praxis Examination in Speech-Language Pathology

To earn licensure in many states, you will first need to pass the Praxis 2 Examination in Speech-Language Pathology administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS).

To pass, you must earn a minimum score of at least 162. The test includes material about the foundations of speech-language pathology, screening and assessment of patients, etiology, planning and implementation of treatment, and more. The exam is offered at test centers throughout the country on multiple dates throughout the year.

You can take the exam at any time after you meet the requirements. Many students will take the Praxis exam in the last semester of their graduate program. Others will take it as soon as they graduate so that, if they were to fail, they would have time to retake the exam.

It is worth noting that any of the organizations you may apply to for your clinical fellowship may require a passing grade before they will accept your application.
4. Complete Your Post-Graduate Clinical Fellowship

After completing your graduate degree, you need to complete a post-graduate clinical fellowship, which is a requirement for state licensure. As mentioned above, you can complete your clinical fellowship before you have passed the Praxis if you choose.

Post-graduate fellowship requirements can vary from state to state. However, many states have modeled their clinical fellowship requirements to match the requirements needed to earn the Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC-SLP) credential through the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). To qualify for the CCC-SLP, your fellowship must meet the following requirements:

- Be overseen and mentored by an ASHA-certified SLP for the duration of the fellowship
- Be at least 1,260 hours in length, typically accrued over at least 36 weeks (35 hours per week)
- Have at least 80 percent of your clinical experience involving direct clinical contact with patients

Depending on the state in which you wish to complete your fellowship, you may or may not need to apply for a temporary license. Check with your state’s speech-language pathology and audiology board to understand whether this will be required.

5. Obtain State Licensure and ASHA Certification

Upon completing your fellowship, you will be eligible to apply for state licensure, which you will need to practice. Licensing requirements and processes will vary by state, sometimes significantly, so it is important to check with your state’s speech-language pathology and audiology board.

It is also important to note that you will need to apply for licensure in any state you wish to practice. This means that if you live in a border region (for example, the Connecticut and Massachusetts border) and wish to practice in both states, you will need to ensure that you meet the requirements for both.

Many SLPs will also apply for accreditation through ASHA at the same time as they apply for state licensure, specifically, the CCC-SLP. Generally speaking, even if certification is not required, it is recommended that you apply for and maintain it, as it is an important professional achievement.

“This is considered to be the gold standard certification internationally,” says Susan Fine, director of clinical education at Northeastern’s MS in Speech-Language Pathology program. “Once you’ve earned your CCC-SLP, it’ll set you up for a number of great work opportunities both domestically and abroad and can open many doors in your career.”

Because many states model their licensing requirements on ASHA’s qualifications, you may find that
you qualify for certification at the same time as you earn your license. You may, however, need to complete additional requirements.

6. Continue to Advance
While it can be tempting to rest on your laurels once you have earned your license, it’s important to continue your education as you advance your career.

Many states require SLPs to complete a certain number of continuing education hours to maintain licensure. ASHA also requires continuing education to be completed in order to keep your certification.

Even in cases where this is not a requirement, pushing yourself to complete additional coursework will empower you to stay on top of trends and developments in the field. The end result is that you will be more effective in treating your patients.

Choosing the Right Program for Your Needs

Earning your Master of Science in speech-language pathology will prove to be one of the most important steps in becoming an SLP. Through this education, you will learn the concepts, skills, and frameworks necessary to perform your job well, and you will begin to gain hands-on experience that you’ll leverage throughout your career.

“Our students have the opportunity to gain a wide range of clinical experiences,” Fine says. “We have excellent clinical training settings in our program. Our students get trained across the lifespan. They complete a minimum of four clinical rotations, initially in our state-of-the-art campus clinic, Northeastern University Speech-Language and Hearing Center. Students continue with their clinical training within the greater Boston area in a variety of settings, including schools, early intervention programs, inpatient acute care, rehabilitation hospitals, and specialized outpatient practices.”

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HOW MUCH DO SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS MAKE?
Speech-language pathologists perform a range of duties to improve their patients’ lives and well-being. From evaluating patients to diagnosing speech, language, and swallowing disorders to creating and implementing treatment plans and more, SLPs play a critical role in mental health and healthcare industries.

To become an SLP, an individual must complete a graduate-level degree (such as a Master of Science in speech-language pathology), pass a national examination, and apply for licensure in the state they wish to practice. Together, these steps serve to demonstrate SLPs’ future effectiveness in the role.

Clearly, becoming an SLP is no small feat. It takes dedication and an investment of time, effort, and money to earn the degree alone. It is for this reason that speech-language pathologists are well-rewarded for their work. In addition to the satisfaction that comes from working to improve the lives of their patients every day, speech-language pathologists also enjoy competitive salaries and significant job security.

Below, we examine the average salary that speech-language pathologists can expect to earn and discuss some of the factors that can influence this salary.

**Speech-Language Pathologist Salary**

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), the median annual salary of all speech-language pathologists is approximately $80,500 per year. The highest 10 percent of professionals earn more than $122,750 per year. This figure typically correlates with those who have the most experience in the field.

However, several factors will influence your compensation as a speech-language pathologist. These factors include:

- The specific environment you work in
- How long you have worked in the field
- Where in the country you are employed

**Speech-Language Pathologist Salary by Work Environment**

The specific facility or work environment you are employed in will significantly impact your salary. Per the BLS, those who work in nursing and residential care facilities earn the highest average wages, while those working in educational facilities, such as schools, earn the lowest average wages:

- **Nursing and residential care facilities**: $95,010 per year
- **Hospitals**: $87,110 per year
- **Private practice**: $83,250 per year
- **Educational services**: $71,410 per year
The ASHA compiled a similar report in 2019 that breaks down these facilities in more granular detail. That study reported salary by facility and work environment as follows:

- **Skilled nursing facility (SNF):** $95,000 per year
- **General medical:** $85,798 per year
- **Home health:** $76,000 per year
- **Outpatient clinic or office:** $73,500 per year
- **Pediatric hospital:** $78,000 per year
- **Rehab hospital:** $79,000 per year

**Speech-Language Pathologist Salary by Experience**

ASHA also found that SLPs with greater levels of experience will typically earn more than those with fewer years of experience:

- **1 to 3 years of experience:** $66,000 per year
- **4 to 6 years of experience:** $72,000 per year
- **7 to 9 years of experience:** $78,000 per year
- **10 to 12 years of experience:** $78,000 per year
- **13 to 15 years of experience:** $87,500 per year
- **16 to 18 years of experience:** $82,000 per year
- **19 to 21 years of experience:** $100,000 per year
- **22 to 24 years of experience:** $83,000 per year
- **25 to 27 years of experience:** $90,000 per year
- **28 to 30 years of experience:** No data
- **31 or more years of experience:** $95,000 per year

**Speech-Language Pathologist Salary by Location**

Finally, the specific location in which you work can impact your salary as well. According to ASHA, the region with the highest median salary for SLPs is the Western United States, while the region with the lowest average salary is the Midwest:

- **West:** $85,000 per year
- **South:** $79,000 per year
- **Northeast:** $78,000 per year
- **Midwest:** $73,520 per year
Speech-Language Pathology Job Outlook

Between 2019 and 2029, the number of speech-language pathologists is expected to grow by approximately 25 percent—a much faster growth rate than the 4 percent growth expected across all occupations in the U.S. This growth translates into an additional 40,500 open positions in the coming decade.

There are a number of trends driving this increased demand. One of the most consequential developments is the aging of the Baby Boomer population. As this significant population ages, they are increasingly experiencing medical problems such as dementia and stroke that lead to speech and swallowing conditions addressed by SLPs. Additionally, medical advances have increased the likelihood of survival for those who experience serious medical episodes (such as a stroke), increasing the number of older patients in need of the services offered by speech-language pathologists.

Another critical consideration is the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the field of speech-language pathology. For example, more SLPs are needed to help treat speech and swallowing complications that have resulted from the disease in some patients. Additionally, the rapid shift toward telehealth sparked by the pandemic has made getting treatment by SLPs much more accessible for many populations (while also notably limiting access for other populations).

The First Step into a Promising SLP Career

Speech-language pathologists enjoy high salaries, robust job growth, and numerous avenues for career growth. If you believe that becoming an SLP is the right move for you, the first step toward breaking into the field is to complete a related master’s degree, such as a Master of Science in speech-language pathology.

When selecting a program to enroll in, there are several factors to consider, including the quality of the facilities, whether or not the faculty consists of individuals with experience in the field, and clinical placement opportunities.

Students enrolled in the MS in Speech-Language Pathology program at Northeastern complete their initial clinical training in the on-campus Speech-Language and Hearing Center to develop competence in the foundational skills they will use throughout their careers. Faculty members are active in the fields of speech-language pathology and audiology, in addition to being world-renowned researchers contributing to the progression of the discipline.

Students must complete a total of four clinical courses, gaining the hands-on experience that they will need to be successful in the field. Once the first semester of clinical training is completed at the Speech-Language and Hearing Center, the following semesters include advanced clinical programming at the center, along with off-campus work in community-based hospitals, clinics, educational facilities, etc.
IS SPEECH PATHOLOGY RIGHT FOR YOU?
FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK

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Before you put in the time, money, and effort required to earn a degree, it’s important to first consider which careers that degree will prepare you for. In the case of earning a Master of Science in speech-language pathology, your future career is a rather obvious one. The degree prepares students specifically for a career as an SLP.

If you are unsure of whether this is truly the right career for you, the good news is that there are several questions you can ask yourself to ensure that you’re making the right decision. Below, we explore these questions, tying each back to the field of speech-language pathology, and present some alternative careers you might consider if you decide that this is not the field for you.

1. Do you have a passion for helping others?

Speech-language pathologists play an important role in the healthcare industry by diagnosing and treating speech, language, communication, and swallowing disorders. Treatments, interventions, education, and support provided by SLPs work together to empower patients to become more effective communicators. The end result is a patient who can make more meaningful connections with their loved ones and the broader community.

It’s for this reason that most SLPs aspire to the career. They have the drive to help others and to make the world a better place.

2. What are your salary requirements?

While salary should not be your only consideration in choosing a career, it is still an important factor influencing your decision. It’s only natural, then, to ask the question: How much does a speech-language pathologist make?

As previously discussed, according to the BLS, speech-language pathologists make a median annual salary of $80,500 per year, with the highest earners taking home more than $122,750 annually.

A variety of factors will influence how much you earn, including your level of experience, the location of your work, and the type of facility you are employed in. Generally speaking, those who work in nursing homes or residential care facilities, those who work in the Western states, and those with more years of experience working in the field can all expect higher pay than their counterparts.

The field of speech-language pathology is growing rapidly as the Baby Boomer population ages and the number of individuals suffering age-related diseases that lead to speech and communication problems (such as dementia and stroke) increase. Between 2019 and 2029, the number of SLPs is projected to grow by about 25 percent, compared to job growth of 4 percent for all occupations as a whole.
3. What is your career timeline?

Though a career as a speech-language pathologist is a rewarding one, both in terms of pay and your ability to affect real change in the quality of life for your patients, breaking into the field will require an investment of time. To become an SLP, you will need to:

- Earn a relevant bachelor’s degree, such as a BS in speech-language pathology and audiology or a BS in communication disorders
- Earn a relevant graduate degree, such as an MS in speech-language pathology
- Complete a post-graduate clinical fellowship
- Pass the Praxis exam
- Apply for state licensure and ASHA certification

All told, it takes an average of six to eight years from the start of your bachelor’s degree through the end of your fellowship to become an SLP, depending on the speed of your studies.

4. How much variety and flexibility do you want in your career?

When most people think about speech-language pathology, they commonly envision speech therapists who specialize in working with children in schools. While this is a popular career path for many SLPs, it is far from the only option. In fact, the field offers a large amount of flexibility.

“I feel it’s a limitless career,” says Lorraine Book, department chair and associate clinical professor of Northeastern’s MS in Speech-Language Pathology program. “You can really run the gamut of individual ages and disorders that you’re working with, and that can change throughout your career.”

SLPs can work in a variety of settings, playing significantly different roles depending on where they work. For example, while you might work in an educational facility such as a school, you can just as easily pursue a career in a nursing or residential facility, a hospital, a clinic, or private practice.

“As an allied health profession, SLPs are trained to treat across the lifespan, which means birth to death, and we literally have clinicians who do that,” says Susan Fine, director of clinical education at Northeastern’s MS in Speech-Language Pathology program. “So they can work anywhere from inpatient and outpatient hospital settings, to adult geriatric settings in skilled nursing facilities, to schools, early intervention and private practice treating a range of communication and swallowing disorders.”
5. Do you have an interest in science and technology?

Speech-language pathology requires not only a drive to help others but also the ability to understand key medical and scientific concepts and technologies. If health, medicine, science, and technology interest you, then this field allows you to put that interest into action every day of your career.

“Our profession also involves a basic understanding of science and use of technology,” Book says. “So if you have an interest in or a passion for science and technology and the intersection of that and helping others, this could be a good career for you.”

Alternative Careers to Speech-Language Pathology

If, after asking yourself these questions, you have decided that speech-language pathology is not the right career for you, there is still good news. Many other fulfilling careers provide many of the same rewards.

If you are primarily motivated by a drive to make a difference in the lives of others, for example, you might pursue a career in counseling, occupational therapy, nursing, other careers in the field of allied health, or education. Each of these career paths will empower you to improve the lives of others, whether they be your patients or your students, while also providing competitive salaries and job stability.

A Rewarding Career in Speech-Language Pathology

If you instead found yourself agreeing with the discussion points above, then a career in speech-language pathology could be right for you. Such a career will offer you the flexibility to work in various settings and with diverse patient populations while earning competitive pay and making a real difference for your patients. This final piece—a passion for helping others—is often the key determining reason why someone chooses to go into the field.
TAKING THE FIRST STEP TOWARD A MEANINGFUL CAREER

If you are ready to take the next step in your career by earning your Master of Science in speech-language pathology, it’s important to choose a program that aligns with your unique personal and professional goals.

With this in mind, you should start by asking yourself the following questions:

• Do I plan to earn my degree part time, while working, or full time?
• Where do I hope to work after graduation? (This includes both geographic location as well as the type of employer.)
• Would I like to work with a particular patient population, such as children or adults, after graduation?

Your answers to these questions should influence your final choice of program.

At Northeastern University, the Master of Science in Speech-Language Pathology is offered as a full-time program. Students who enroll complete the degree within two years. Students who are interested can choose to simultaneously complete the complementary Early Intervention Certificate Program.

Our academic program and on-campus Speech-Language and Hearing Center are fully accredited by the Council on Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology of the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association.

Are you ready to learn more about the MS in Speech-Language Pathology program at Northeastern University?

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