Trends
The number of available positions for speech-language pathologists is expected to grow by 19% by 2022, which is faster than average for all fields. The anticipated growth in the field is largely attributed to the growing population of elderly individuals at risk for health conditions that affect speech or language. Many (41%) speech-language pathologists work in school systems, while others work in therapy offices (17%), hospitals (13%), and residence care facilities (5%).

Education & Training
A master's degree in speech-language pathology is the standard credential. For licensure in most states, professionals need a master’s degree in a relevant field, which may include communication sciences and disorders, speech-language pathology, or audiology. Some colleges offer undergraduate degrees in communication sciences and disorders, which prepare students for a master’s degree program. Many states have continuing education requirements for licensure renewal.

Tips for Breaking In
- Gain experience in the field through volunteering, job shadowing, and research
- Develop strong communication skills
- Maintain good grades to qualify for graduate programs
- Develop good attention-to-detail skills
- Research graduate school programs to learn what is expected and needed to get into the field
- Become familiar with state licensing requirements

Licenses & Certifications
Most state require that speech-language pathologists be licensed to practice in the field. Licensure typically requires a master’s degree in the field, a number of hours of practice, and passing scores on an exam. In North Carolina, speech-language pathologists must have a master’s degree, 400 hours of supervised clinical experience, 9 months of full-time professional experience, and a passing score on the National Teacher’s Examination in Speech-Language Pathology.

Earnings
The average salary (2014) for speech-language pathologists was $71,550. While most speech-language pathologists work full-time, some (25%) work part-time, and others work on a contract basis.