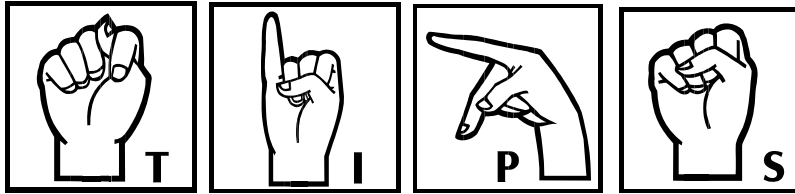


Tips for Communicating with Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) People



The following tips will allow a person with hearing loss to effectively use what hearing they have and use visual cues to receive as much information as possible. People with hearing loss often rely on visual cues for information. Some people have difficulty knowing where a sound is coming from. Others hear sounds, but may not be able to recognize the words that were spoken. All of these tips are easy to do, but may require a conscious effort at first.

Choose a quiet environment.

Avoid communicating where there is a lot of noise or visual activity. If there is a TV or radio in the room, consider turning it off.

Avoid standing in front of a light source when speaking.

The bright light behind you (from a window or desk lamp) will make it harder to see your face. Make sure the light is shining on your face, not behind you.

Allow the person with hearing loss to choose their seating first.

Most people know how the environment will help or interfere with communication.

Make sure you have the person's attention before speaking.

Waving a hand, or a light touch on the shoulder or arm, is an acceptable way to get attention.

Stand a normal distance from the person.

Do not cover your mouth when you are speaking.

This includes covering your mouth with a hand or a long mustache or beard!

Do not have anything in your mouth when you are speaking.

Look directly at the person you are speaking to and maintain eye contact.

Do the same when an interpreter is present.

Ask the person what will make communication easier.

State the topic of discussion as you begin.

When you change the topic, make sure the listener is aware of the new topic.

Speak clearly, at a normal pace.

If you tend to speak quickly, slow down. Do not overly exaggerate or slow your speech at first. If the person has difficulty understanding, slow your speech more, break the sentences into smaller portions, and check for understanding again.

Use open-ended questions to check for understanding.

Repeat the statement, then re-phrase if the person is unable to hear the words spoken.

Use shorter, simpler sentences if necessary.

Do not shout.

A loud voice may increase distortion or give the impression you are angry, without improving comprehension.

Use gesture, facial expression and body language to assist with communication.

Be patient and take time to communicate.

Saying "never mind" or "it's not important," causes the person with hearing loss to feel they are not important.

Be aware of fatigue.

People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deaf/Blind must work harder to communicate, and this can be extremely tiring.



Communicating with People who are Hard of Hearing

The tips listed above are the most important for communicating with someone who is hard of hearing. The following will also help:

Remember that hearing loss does not equate with loss of intelligence.

Try writing down a couple words or a phrase to clarify if communication is difficult.

Remember that just because a person can hear your voice, does not mean they can understand your words.
Hearing loss may cause distortion in the way sounds are perceived.

Speak naturally and with normal expression.

Quiet places will assist communication.
Be aware of office machines, fans, restaurant noise, and other people's conversations.

Look directly at the person.
Avoid filling out forms or reading while talking.

In groups, make sure only one person at a time is talking.
Whoever speaks should be sure to have the attention of the person with hearing loss.

Don't assume that a hard of hearing person is able to understand casual conversation taking place in the room.



Communicating with People who are Deaf

Do not shout.

If a person is deaf, your voice will not be heard clearly, no matter how loud it is.

When writing back and forth, keep your word choices simple and sentences short.

If the person understands you well and uses more complex sentence and vocabulary, you may do the same. Take your cue from the deaf person.

When using an interpreter, speak directly to the deaf person.

When the interpreter voices what the deaf person signs, look at the deaf person, not the interpreter.

Use pantomime, body language, facial expression.

Patience and kindness will also aid communication.

Don't be afraid to make mistakes.

Most deaf people are very comfortable communicating with hearing people. Most will appreciate any attempt to communicate, even if you use the wrong sign.

Avoid depending on the TTY or a Relay service to communicate.

Make time to meet the deaf person face-to-face to learn the richness of his or her personality.

For a late deafened person, a computer and word processor can be a useful communication tool.

Enlarge the font so it is easy to read. Let the late deafened person speak, and if they don't understand your speech, type and allow the person to read the computer screen.

