



Communicating with the hearing impaired

A strategy for success



How does hearing loss affect communication?

When a child has difficulty hearing or does not hear clearly, the areas of the brain related to communication may not develop appropriately. This makes understanding and talking very difficult.

A hearing loss can affect a child's self-confidence when interacting with others, as many deaf and hard of hearing kids feel isolated because of their inability to communicate and understand their hearing peers.

90%

of all deaf children are born into hearing families

Of those families, only 10% ever learn to effectively communicate with their deaf child.

Hearing loss is ranked third in the U.S. for most common health issues - just below heart disease and arthritis (HLAA, 2014).

3rd

83

out of every 1000 children in the United States have what is termed an educationally significant hearing loss.



In the U.S. two to three of every 1,000 children are born deaf or hard-of-hearing.

3rd

American Sign Language is the third most commonly used language in the United States

Popular Myths

All people with a hearing loss lack the ability to speak.

FALSE

While people who were born without hearing may experience some difficulty in learning to speak, people who have lost their hearing after the development of speech may have little difficulty speaking. Many persons with “prelingual” deafness learn to use their voices in speech classes.

All people with a hearing loss can read lips.

FALSE

Many people with a hearing loss have had formal training in lip-reading, but it is an imperfect process at best, with about a 30-40% accuracy rate. It is rarely used in isolation from other communication methods.

Hearing aids can correct a hearing loss.

FALSE

Hearing aids may improve hearing for many people with a hearing loss, but they are not corrective devices they simply amplify sound. If a person's hearing loss stems from profound damage to the inner ear, sounds will remain distorted even with amplification.

Because many people who are deaf have not learned to speak, they cannot be very bright.

FALSE

It is extremely difficult to learn spoken language if a hearing loss occurs before speech develops. Many people with deafness who have learned some spoken language have not mastered the fine grammatical points of their second language-English. The problem is one of communication, not intellect.

People who are deaf use one system for communicating.

FALSE

In the United States, people who are deaf use a variety of communication systems. Among the choices are American Sign Language, signed English, finger spelling, speechreading, cued speech and writing.

Common ASL Signs

What sign is this?



BADGE

What sign is this?



FLAG

What sign is this?



HONOR

What sign is this?



LEADER

What sign is this?



SCOUT

What sign is this?



OATH

What sign is this?



RANK

What sign is this?



SALUTE

What sign is this?



PREPARED

What sign is this?



CHARACTER

Communication Methods



One-to-One Situations

To communicate with a deaf person in a one-to-one situation

- Get the deaf person's attention before speaking.
 - Key the deaf person into the topic of discussion.
 - Speak slowly and clearly, but do not yell, exaggerate, or over pronounce.
 - Look directly at the deaf person when speaking.
 - Do not place anything in your mouth when speaking.
 - Maintain eye contact with the deaf person.
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One-to-One Situations

cont.

- Use the words 'I' and 'you' when communicating through an interpreter
 - Avoid standing in front of a light source, such as a window or bright light.
 - First repeat, then try to rephrase a thought if you have problems being understood, rather than repeating the same words again.
 - Use pantomime, body language, and facial expression to help supplement your communication.
 - Be courteous to the deaf person during conversation.
 - Use open-ended questions that must be answered by more than 'yes' or 'no.'
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Group Situations

If you participate in group situations with deaf people (meetings, classes, etc.), these tips will make communication easier.

- Ask the deaf person to choose the best seating for communication.
- Provide new vocabulary in advance.
- Avoid unnecessary pacing and speaking when writing on a chalkboard.
- Use visual aids, if possible.
- Make sure the deaf person doesn't miss vital information.
- Slow down the pace of communication slightly to facilitate understanding.

Group Situations

cont.

- Repeat questions or statements made from the back of the room and point to the person speaking.
 - Allow full participation by the deaf person in the discussion.
 - Use hands-on experience whenever possible in training situations.
 - Work with an interpreter in a large group setting.
 - Use a note taker when possible to record information.
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Most deaf people don't view their deafness as a disability or as a problem that should be fixed. For many of them, it's a natural part of a cultural experience that they share with friends, both deaf and hearing.

As leaders, it is our responsibility to include them in our scouting culture.