

Communication strategies for people affected by hearing loss



Your hearing device will help you hear better in some situations, but for better results using a range of communication skills will help you make the most of your hearing and your hearing device. There are other things you can do to give yourself the best chance of hearing and understanding well. These are commonly known as “communication tactics”. The best thing about these tactics is that they are useful for everyone, whether or not they have a hearing loss or use a hearing device.

Tips to help you hear better

Be assertive

Inform people you have a hearing loss and tell them how they can help you. Most people will be happy to oblige if they understand what they need to do.

Explain you don't need them to shout at you, but to face you when they are talking and speak normally. You might need to remind people of this at times.

Using visual cues

We all “lip-read” to some degree, as we understand how different sounds look on people's lips when they are talking. We use this naturally to help us figure out what a word might be if we missed it.

Keep a clear view of a person's face by looking at them when they talk and making sure the room is well-lit.

Using context

When chatting with somebody try not to worry about hearing every single word but focus instead on the theme of the conversation. You can piece in missed words if you understand the general context of the conversation.

Reduce background noise

Try to reduce the noise around you when people are speaking, for example, turn off the television or radio, or sit away from the kitchen or entrance-way in a café.

Asking for clarification

If you miss what somebody has said and you can't figure it out, try to avoid saying simply “I can't hear you” or “what did you say?” as this will eventually lead to frustration for yourself and those talking with you.

Instead, ask them to repeat specifically what you missed. For example, “I'm sorry; I missed where you said you were going on Sunday afternoon?”

Asking for repeats

If you keep missing the same word or group of words, ask the speaker to rephrase what they are saying. You might say “I keep missing that last part about your new car, could you please try saying it a different way for me?”

Importance of concentration and keeping calm

Try to keep calm if you can't hear well in certain situations. When you miss words you might find yourself getting tense, but this will make it even harder for you to catch up with what has been said. There will be times when you don't hear so well, when you find it almost impossible to figure out the conversation. This is an expected part of having a hearing loss, even if you are wearing a hearing device.

It can help to think about what you can do to help yourself in these situations. For example, can you ask the speaker to write down what they have said?

Remember that if you are tired, or unwell, you will likely find it more difficult to concentrate on following a conversation and you might not hear as well.

Tips for communicating with a person with hearing loss



A person with a hearing loss will struggle to hear at times, even with a hearing device. This is normal and to be expected – a hearing device can help a person, but it cannot cure the underlying hearing loss. Your understanding and consideration of this will help them a great deal.

Try not to get frustrated if somebody can't hear you – they are asking you to repeat yourself because they value what you have to say.

Speak clearly and don't shout

Shouting will make your voice distorted and hard to understand. Instead, speak clearly and if necessary, slightly slower than normal. If you do need to raise your voice, project your voice the way you would if you were speaking to a person on the other side of the room. This usually sounds clearer than shouting.

Face the person

When talking to a person who has a hearing loss, make sure you face them. This is helpful because they can watch your face for extra clues about what you are saying, and the volume of your voice will be louder when you are looking at them.

Try not to cover or hold objects in front of your mouth, as this will make it hard for a person with a hearing loss to see and read your lips.

Reduce the distance between you and the person

The ideal listening distance for a hearing impaired person is less than two meters from the speaker. Avoid talking to a person with a hearing loss from a different room.

Reduce background noise

Reduce background noise if you can – turn off the radio or television, close the door leading onto a busy street, pick a quieter restaurant to dine in.

Rephrase the sentence

Rephrase what you are saying if you need to. If a person with a hearing loss asks you to repeat something you said, repeat it once – if they still cannot understand you, think of a different way to say the same thing. This is something most people will naturally do, even for those with normal hearing.

For more information, please contact
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Visit www.hearroom.net