

Top tips for communicating with deaf people



Top tips for communicating with a deaf or hard of hearing person:

- 1. Always face a deaf person.** Make eye contact when you are talking. Try not to look away or cover your mouth as many deaf people rely on lip reading to help them understand you.
- 2. Check the noise and lighting.** Turn off or move away from background noise. Make sure your face is not in shadow and there are no strong lights or sunshine in their eyes.
- 3. Keep your distance.** Stand a metre or two away from the deaf person. This is important for hearing-aid users, lip-readers and signers.
- 4. Speak clearly, slowly and steadily.** Do not mumble, shout or exaggerate – it distorts your lip patterns.
- 5. Take turns.** If there is more than one person in a conversation take turns to talk.
- 6. Repeat and re-phrase if necessary.** Trying to say the same thing in a different way might help.
- 7. Write it down.** Do not be afraid to write or draw to help with understanding.

One of the most important points to remember is to *keep trying* – even if a deaf person does not understand what you're saying the first few times. When someone says 'oh, don't worry - it doesn't matter' it feels like they mean 'you don't matter.' Even if it takes rephrasing or writing it down, do not give up.

Did you know...? Around 9 million people in the UK are deaf or hard of hearing.

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