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Communicate With People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Read this page for tips on communicating with a person who is deaf.

Do you have a friend, classmate or co-worker who is deaf?
Maybe he uses sign language or maybe he speaks.
Either way, there are things you can do that will help you communicate.

How to communicate with a person with hearing loss

Communicating with a person with hearing loss sometimes takes longer than talking with a hearing person. But it can be rewarding.

Follow these tips the next time you meet someone with hearing loss.

Be prepared.

- Ask the person what would be the best way to communicate.
- Have paper and pencil ready.
You may want to write down words that are hard to understand.

Find a quiet, well-lit room to talk in.

- Good lighting helps both of you see each other's faces.
- Background noise makes it harder to hear if you have a hearing aid.

Be patient.

- Try not to rush.
Rushing can make it hard for the other person to hear you or read your lips.
- Don't pretend to understand if you don't.
Ask the person to repeat what he said.
- Nodding doesn't always mean a person understood what you said.
Ask him, "Do you understand?"
Or ask, "Do you want me to say that again?"
- If the person doesn't understand you, repeat what you said.
But this time, use shorter, simpler words and sentences.

Talk normally, and keep your mouth clear.

- Talk normally. Speak a little louder than usual but don't shout. Shouting changes the way your face looks. It can make things harder to understand.
- Don't overdo your lip movements. Talking a little slower helps the most.
- Don't put anything in your mouth while talking.
- Don't cover your mouth or turn your head away while talking.

Make sure you can see the other person's face clearly. Make sure he can see yours, too.

- Wait until the person can see you before talking
- Stand or sit about 3 to 6 feet from the person.
- For groups, have everyone sit in a circle so everybody's face can be seen.
- Watch facial expressions.
- Look right at the person when you are talking.

Learn sign language.

- Try to learn from someone who uses American Sign Language (ASL) as a first language.
- Take a sign language class. Classes may be offered at
 - the local school for the deaf
 - adult education programs
 - other community programs
 - local colleges
- Make a friend.
Deaf adults are often eager to meet hearing people who want to make friends. This is a great way to learn sign language. It doesn't cost money. And, you won't have to follow a class schedule.
- Get a sign language video.
- Get an [ASL dictionary](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/resources/books.jsp) (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/resources/books.jsp>).
- Check out these [ASL sites](http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/resources/index.jsp?section=2) on the Internet (<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/resources/index.jsp?section=2>).

These tips were written by [Liberty Resources](http://www.libertyresources.org/) (<http://www.libertyresources.org/>).

Learn more about how to communicate with a person with hearing loss:

- Read this brochure about how to [communicate with a classmate](http://www.agbell.org/information/brochures_classmates.cfm) from the AG Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (http://www.agbell.org/information/brochures_classmates.cfm).
- Read these tips written by a deaf woman about [communicating with a person who is deaf](http://www.his.com/~lola/deaf.html) (<http://www.his.com/~lola/deaf.html>).
- Read this guide to [communicating with deaf people](http://www.rit.edu/~257www/tips/primer.htm) from the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (<http://www.rit.edu/~257www/tips/primer.htm>).

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You can find this page online at:

<http://www.raisingdeafkids.org/tips/deaf.jsp>