



## Communication with Hearing Impaired Volunteers

Communicating with a person who does not hear well need not be difficult. A few simple rules will help.

For someone with a hearing impairment, it is not a case of 'hearing when they want to', but rather a case of 'hearing when they can'. A person with a hearing loss will be struggling to make sense of an incomplete puzzle so communication will be made easier by following these simple tips.

### COMMUNICATION TIPS

**Face the person:** Gain their attention before you speak and make sure they can see your face clearly.

**Keep lips clear:** To aid lip-reading keep hands away from the face and ensure that moustaches, food or other objects are not obscuring the mouth.

**Ensure good lighting:** Lighting should be on the speaker's face and not dazzling the listener.

**Give them clues:** provide the topic of Conversation so they know what they may expect.

**Avoid background noise:** Keep background noise to a minimum – shut doors or window, turn off radios, fans or air conditioners if possible.

**Speak clearly and a little slower:** No need to shout as this distorts your voice and can be intimidating. Slow down a little, pause between sentences or phrases, and wait to make sure you have been understood before going on.

**Position yourself by their "better" ear:** If the hearing impaired listener hears better in one ear, try to make a point of remembering which ear is better so that you will know where to position yourself.

**Even if someone is wearing hearing aids** it doesn't mean they can hear you perfectly. Ask if they need to lip-read. Hearing aids will NOT restore 'normal' hearing.

**Get to the point:** Keep the language simple and get to the point.

**Pay attention to the listener:** A puzzled look may indicate misunderstanding. Tactfully ask the hearing impaired person if they understood you,

or ask leading questions so you know your message got across.

**Talk directly to the person:** If you are using a sign language interpreter, always remember to talk directly to the person you are communicating with, not the interpreter.

**Never speak from another room:** it is almost impossible to hear around corners if you have a hearing loss!

**Rephrase instead of repeating:** When there is a difficulty with a word or phrase, try saying it a little differently.

**Be aware of possible distortion of sounds** for the hearing impaired person. They may hear your voice, but still have difficulty understanding some words.

**Some people with hearing loss are very sensitive to loud sounds** so avoid situations where there will be loud sounds when possible.

**If you are giving specific information** such as time, place or phone numbers, have the person repeat the specifics back to you or write it down.

**In a group, focus on everyone:** If you're talking to a group that includes deaf and hearing people; don't just focus on the hearing people.

**Use natural gestures:** Pointing and gesturing may aid understanding.

**If in a group, only speak one at a time:** more than one person speaking adds to confusion.

**Don't ever say "It doesn't matter"!** There is nothing more isolating and frustrating than hearing these 3 words for the hearing impaired.

**Last but not least, be patient and try not to interrupt!**