

# Tips for Better Communication for Adults with Hearing Loss

## Tell People That You Have Difficulty Hearing

- Remember that no one hears everything. People with normal hearing may also need repetition.
- Ask others to let you know if your speech becomes hard to understand so you can try to speak more clearly.
- It is easy to talk a lot to avoid having to listen. Remember to give others a chance to speak.
- Even though your hearing aids will help you, you may still have difficulty understanding speech at times.



## Know the Topic of Conversation

- Ask people to inform you of topics and topic changes as they occur in conversation.
- Try to get the message or main idea rather than understanding each individual word.
- It is easier to follow the conversation when you are familiar with the topic. It may be helpful to keep up with current events in the news and be aware of popular TV programs.

## Choose a Good Listening Position

- Sit across from people rather than beside them.
- Sit with your better hearing ear towards the speaker.
- Move close to the talker; the best communication distance is about three to four feet.
- Conversation is easier if the lighting is good.
- Ask family and friends to speak to you only if they are in the same room and have your attention.

## Improve the Speech Signal



- Ask your audiologist or hearing aid practitioner about technology adapted for better listening on the telephone, television and other difficult listening situations such as travelling in a car or being in the wind.
- Contact an audiologist or hearing aid practitioner about hearing aids. If you already have hearing aids make regular appointments to ensure they are properly maintained and programmed.
- Try adding soft, absorbent surfaces such as pillows or curtains to rooms with hard surfaces to minimize sound reverberation and echoes.
- Move away from or turn off noises (TV, fan, open window) before communicating.

## Make Sure You Get the Correct Information

- If you are not sure you heard something correctly, ask the speaker to change the words or repeat the message. Ask specifically for what you missed rather than a complete repetition.
- You can ensure that you receive the correct information by repeating it back.

## Use Visual Cues



- Ask people to remove things from near their face before talking to you (i.e., chewing gum, pens, books, hands and cigarettes).
- Being aware of the position of speech sounds on the lips, teeth and tongue may improve your understanding of speech. It may be difficult to see speech sounds being formed if the speaker has a beard or moustache or is chewing gum.
- The speaker's expressions, gestures and posture may help you understand what they are saying.



# Handling Difficult Communication Situations

## Groups of People:

- Everyone experiences some difficulty hearing in groups, especially when more than one person is talking at the same time. Request that only one person speak at a time.
- Working on your communication skills in groups of family and friends may help you to become more confident in group situations.
- Listening in groups requires more effort. Be an active and attentive listener.

## Telephone:

- Telephone amplifiers can be used with or without hearing aids. They are available where hearing aids or telephones are sold.
- Ask your audiologist about special features that may be available for your hearing aid to help you hear better on the phone.
- Some public telephones have volume controls. If your hearing aid has a telecoil (telephone switch), look for a public phone with a blue ring where the cord attaches to the phone.

## Radio or Television:

- It may be difficult to understand dialogue on radio or television because of rapid speech, not being able to see the talker's face, or background noise.
- Most TV's have a built-in Closed Captioning option that will show the words on the screen. For older TV's, you can purchase a caption box that will connect to your TV.
- Headphones and other devices are available where hearing aids are sold or at electronic stores. These make the signal louder and decrease the effects of background noise.
- Some hearing aids have a feature that allows streaming the sound from a radio, cell phone or television. Talk to your audiologist or hearing aid practitioner about this option.



## Restaurants:

- Try eating out during times when the restaurant is less likely to be busy and noisy.
- Request a high-backed booth or a table along a side wall.
- Sit across from your guests rather than beside them.
- Choose restaurants with good lighting and low noise levels.
- Try to sit away from noise sources (i.e., kitchen, lounge, and entrance).



## Places of Worship:

- It is best to sit close to the front and where you can easily see the talker's face.
- Adjust your hearing aid to the talker's voice, not the other sounds (i.e., soft prayers, music).
- Ask if assistive listening devices are available at your place of worship.

## Theatre:

- Try different seats throughout the theatre to find the spot where you hear and see best.
- Ask if assistive listening devices are available at the theatre that you attend.



## For more information:

If you are a conversation partner to an individual with hearing loss, see the ACSLPA information sheet titled "[Tips for Communicating with Others Who Have Difficulty Hearing](#)".

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## Getting Help

If you suspect a problem, consult a Registered Audiologist (R.Aud). To find a practitioner:

- Contact HEALTH LINK - Health Advice 24/7 at 8-1-1 or visit: [www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca](http://www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca)
- Enquire at a Public Health Centre.
- Search online to find a private practice audiologist in your area.



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