

# Tips for Communicating with Others Who Have Difficulty Hearing

## Be Patient...

- Ask the person with hearing loss if there is anything you can do to improve his/her hearing and speech understanding.
- Hearing aids are helpful; however, the listener may still experience difficulty understanding speech at times.
- Be supportive since the person with difficulty hearing may experience more stress if under pressure.

## Help the Listener Get the Correct Message

- Call the listener's name or touch their arm before you start talking.
- Inform the listener of topics and topic changes as they occur in conversation.
- If the listener does not understand your message, change the words or repeat the message.
- Articulate at an average rate, loudly enough to be heard. Avoid shouting.
- Remove things from near your face before talking (e.g., pens, books, hands and cigarettes).
- The listener may have difficulty lip-reading if you chew gum or have a beard or moustache.
- During discussions, only one person should speak at a time.



## Pick a Good Position for Communicating

- Move close to the listener – the best communication distance is about three to four feet.
- Move to the same room as the listener and get their attention before you start talking.
- Position yourself across from the listener and look at them when talking.
- Be expressive and use gestures, as people use body language for clues to what you are saying.
- Conversation is easier if there is good lighting.

## Decrease the Noise



- Turn off or move away from noise sources before talking (e.g., televisions, fans, open windows, dishwasher and other conversations).
- Sound bounces off hard surfaces and creates echoes, making speech harder to hear. Try carpet rather than linoleum, wallpaper or pictures on walls, curtains on windows and upholstered furniture rather than wood.
- Try adding soft, absorbent surfaces such as pillows or curtains to rooms with hard surfaces to minimize sound reverberation and echoes.



## Address Difficult Communication Situations



### Conversation in Groups

- Listening in large groups can be difficult; conversation in smaller groups is less of a strain.
- Take time to let the hearing-impaired person know what you are talking about and notify them of topic changes as they occur.
- Only one person should speak at a time.

### Conversation in 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 the listener rather than beside them.
- Choose restaurants with good lighting and low noise levels.
- Try to sit away from noise sources (e.g., kitchen, lounge and entrance).
- Allow the hearing-impaired person to choose their seat first.



### Telephones

- It is often hard for hearing-impaired individuals to hear on telephones, especially on cellular phones and phones with poor sound quality.
- Tell the person your name when they answer your call.
- Make sure you indicate when the topic is changing.

### For more information:

If you are an individual with hearing loss, see the ACSLPA information sheet titled “[Tips for Better Communication for Adults with Hearing Loss](#)”.

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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 or your child’s school.
- Search online to find a private practice audiologist in your area.



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