Communication Tips

People who are deaf or hard of hearing communicate in many ways. Some read lips and use speech while others use sign language. Others may choose to write or use a combination of these methods.

Many individuals with a hearing loss may feel left out of social situations. Ask the person who is deaf or hard of hearing what you can do to help improve the communication process. Also ask them if an assistive listening device would be helpful.

When communicating critical or complex information, use the preferred accommodation of the person with hearing loss.

# Guidelines for effective face-to-face communication:

* Communicate in a well-lit and quiet environment with few sight and sound distractions.
* Get the person’s attention to begin the conversation. Call him or her by name, tap his or her shoulder, flash the lights on and off, wave your hand or use other visual signals.
* Maintain eye contact. If you have to turn away from the person, wait until you reestablish eye contact before continuing the conversation.
* Avoid standing in front of bright lights or windows.
* Make sure your face and mouth are clearly visible. Do not eat, smoke, chew gum or in any way cover your mouth.
* Speak clearly at a normal pace and avoid unusual lip movements or shouting.
* Use facial expressions and gestures to help clarify your message. Pointing to appropriate objects or using visual aids can also be helpful.
* Introduce one idea or fact at a time.
* Only one person should talk at a time in a group situation.
* Rephrase your message if the person does not understand you.
* Do not assume the person can hear and understand what you are saying just because he or she is wearing a hearing aid. The hearing aid may be worn to increase awareness of sounds like fire alarms or a car horns.

# Contact us:

[Visit Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services’ website](https://mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/) (mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/)

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*Consumers with hearing or speech disabilities may contact us via their preferred Telecommunications Relay Service.*