

**Better Communication:
Tips for Listeners with Hearing Loss
and their Communication Partners**

10 Communication Tips for Listeners with Hearing Loss

1. Pick a good place to communicate. Quiet, well-lighted places are best.
2. Face your communication partner. Look for visual clues on the speaker's lips and face about what is being said, including their facial expressions.
3. Pay attention to the talker.
4. If you have hearing aids or assistive listening devices, then use them.
5. Identify WHY you are having difficulty communicating. Is it something about the talker, environment, message, or you?
6. Once you identify the source of the difficulty, make specific requests for improving communication in that situation. For example, if a person is speaking too softly for you, then you could ask her to "speak a little louder" instead of saying "huh".
7. Be assertive. Talk about your hearing loss to your communication partners. Tell them the best ways to talk to you, in a polite way of course.
8. Anticipate difficult listening situations and plan ahead.
9. Don't pretend to understand when you don't. Verify what you think you heard.
10. Stay positive and be patient. It can be tough communicating, so don't blame others or be too hard on yourself. Use good communication strategies to help.

10 Tips for Communicating With People with Hearing Loss

1. Get the person's attention before you start talking.
2. Keep objects and your hands away from your face while you are talking.
3. Face the person so he can see your lips and face while you speak. The person can understand you better if he can pick up visual cues from your face.
4. Don't speak from another room. A good distance from the person is typically between 3 and 6 feet. Again, face-to-face conversation is best.
5. Speak slowly and clearly, but don't exaggerate what you are saying.
6. Speak only a little louder. Shouting does not help.
7. Speak with normal intonation rather than speaking in a monotone voice.
8. If the person does not hear you, then try repeating it one time. If that does not work, then try rephrasing what you said instead of repeating it a second time.
9. Don't exclude the person. Try to use strategies to help her understand the conversation.
10. Be positive, patient, and understanding with the person. It is difficult to understand conversation at times when you have hearing loss.

At Home Exercises

1. Think about a difficult communication situation. What were the sources of difficulty (e.g., talker, environment, message, you--the listener)? What specific strategies could you use to help in this situation?
2. Practice being assertive.
3. Make a list of behaviors you do that help you communicate better (e.g., wear your hearing aids, watch the talker, etc.) and a list of behaviors that are not so helpful (e.g., not pay attention, get frustrated, etc.). Make a goal to work on improving those unhelpful behaviors you identified.
4. Ask your communication partner to make a list of behaviors that help you communicate better (e.g., speak in the same room, willing to repeat, etc.) and a list of behaviors that are not so helpful (e.g., not getting his attention first, get frustrated, etc.). Ask your communication partner to make a goal to work on improving those unhelpful behaviors identified.
5. Think about a future listening situation that you will encounter (e.g., eating dinner out with friends). Think of all the possible difficulties that may arise in that situation. Think of possible strategies that you could try to either prevent or reduce the difficulties you may encounter.

Other Resources for Help*

<http://www.asha.org/aud/pei.htm>

<http://www.betterhearing.org/>

<http://www.howsyourhearing.org/>

<http://www.oticonusa.com/~asset/cache.ashx?id=17306&type=14&format=web>

<http://www.avreap.research.va.gov/>

<http://www.ncrar.research.va.gov/ForVets/Index.asp>

*These resources are in no way endorsed by the VA and the VA is not responsible for the content of the resources listed.

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