

## Centre for Hearing & Balance Disorders (Audiology)

# Communication strategies - How to understand conversation better if you have a hearing impairment

### Hearing tactics

When someone speaks, clues are received from what we hear and see. You may be able to create a situation so that as many clues as possible are available.

### The best conditions for listening

- A room with soft furnishings (such as carpets, curtains, and cushions - these absorb sound and so reduce the echo effect)
- Try to reduce background noises (a tablecloth may lessen the noise of plates clattering for example)
- Ask others to face you, to speak clearly and a little louder (mumbling and shouting may make it more difficult for you to pick out the words of the speaker)

Remember noisy places such as busy streets, large shops, hospitals, and railway stations will be more difficult to communicate in because of the very loud background noise.



### **The best way to understand conversation is to**

- Make sure the room is well lit
- Have your back to the light source, for example a window, so that the light falls on the speakers face
- Position yourself 3-6 ft away as lip-reading is difficult if the speaker is too near or too far away
- Make sure your eyesight has been recently checked, as you don't want to strain your eyes
- Try to watch the speaker's lips (you may be surprised at the number of clues you pick up without realising it)
- Do not let yourself get too tired or tense as you will be able to lip-read better if you are relaxed

### **Do not be afraid to let people know that you have to rely a bit on lip-reading, and give them an idea of how they can help you by:**

- Facing you and keeping their heads still
- Keeping their mouth visible and not hiding lip movements behind their hands, a cigarette or pipe
- Not shouting but speaking clearly and not too fast (shouting alters the lip pattern and speaking too slowly may destroy the natural rhythm of speech)
- Attracting your attention before speaking so that you catch the beginning of what is said, not just the ending
- Not distracting your attention with unnecessary hand movements
- Asking the other person to remove their glasses before they speak to you, as frequently a lot of understanding of speech is through the eyes and dark glasses make it very difficult to observe an expression in the person's eyes
- Making the subject of the conversation as clear as possible
- Repeating something you haven't grasped, and then perhaps rephrasing what they want to say, as some words are more difficult to lip-read than others

## Patient Information

If you have any further queries, contact the Centre for Hearing and Balance Disorders on 024 7696 6444.

## Further information from Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID)

### RNID Information Line

The Information Line offers a wide range of information on many aspects of deafness and hearing loss. You can contact us for printed copies of the full range of RNID information fact sheets and leaflets:

RNID, Brightfield Business Hub, Bakewell Road, Orton Southgate, Peterborough, PE2 6XU

Telephone: 0808 808 0123

Text: 07360 268 988

Email: [information@rnid.org.uk](mailto:information@rnid.org.uk)

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 6444 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

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