

Centre for Hearing & Balance disorders

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

Hearing Tactics

When someone speaks, clues are gained from what we hear and what we 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 table cloth 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 e.g. 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



Patient Information

want to strain your eyes

- Try to watch the speakers 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 fairly 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

If you have any further queries contact the Centre for hearing and Balance
Telephone 024 7696 6444

Further information from Action on Hearing loss

Action on hearing Loss 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 Action on Hearing Loss information fact sheets and leaflets:

Information Line, 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL

Telephone: 0808 808 0123

Textphone: 0808 808 9000

Text: 07800 0000360

Email: informationline@hearingloss.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

Document History

Department:	Hearing & Balance
Contact:	26444
Updated:	September 2020
Review:	September 2022
Version:	3.2
Reference:	HIC/LFT/1246/11