



Self Help for Hard of Hearing People



The official website for Self Help for Hard of Hearing People (Australia) Inc

1334 Pacific Highway, Turrumurra, NSW 2074  
Phone (02) 9144 7586 (Voice and TTY) Fax (02) 9144 3936  
Email: [shhh@netspace.net.au](mailto:shhh@netspace.net.au) Website: [www.shhhaust.org](http://www.shhhaust.org)

## Information Sheets

SHHH's Information Sheets are provided as a service to members and those in the community at large who have an interest in hearing impairment. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information provided, SHHH accepts no responsibility for any adverse consequences arising from the contents of these sheets.

If you wish to reproduce these Information Sheets you may do so for personal use only, and only if the entire document is copied. No partial copying or editing of them is permitted. Should you have any questions about them, please contact SHHH.

© SHHH Australia Inc.

### Information Sheet Number 2

#### **IDEAS FOR HEARING IMPAIRED PEOPLE: IMPROVING COMMUNICATION**

##### **1. How the hearing impaired can improve their communications**

If you feel you are "missing out" because of your hearing, it is **first of all** your own responsibility to do something about it. Listed below are some simple rules which can help you to hear and to communicate better, whether or not you are wearing a hearing aid.

Stage manage the listening situation to your best advantage. Sit opposite the speaker rather than beside him, so that you can comfortably observe the whole situation. Avoid facing a window or bright light that may put the speaker's face in shadow.

Watch carefully, observing the whole expression of the person you wish to hear. Don't concentrate on the speaker's lips alone. Don't be afraid of appearing to stare, or be rude. It is always polite to look at the person you are listening to.

Look for Ideas, not single words. As you become familiar with each speaker, key words will emerge to help you to put the message together. Identify the topic, as soon as possible. Family and friends may learn to give you this information, or you may quietly ask what is being discussed. You will find it much easier to catch on to what is being said if you keep up with current affairs, and with the activities to your family and friends.

Re-Wording: If you don't understand anything that has been said, ask the speaker to say the same thing in different words. However, if you have caught any part of the message, use it in a question to fill in the gaps. Use questions that ask WHEN - WHERE - HOW - WHY?

Example:

Companion: "Will you meet me outside the station at 5.00 'clock."

Yourself: "Where did you want me to meet you?" or "When will you be at the station?"

Avoid saying WHAT? BEG PARDON? or EH? These will prompt only a repetition of what you have already missed - and you'll probably miss it again.

Relax. Don't strain either to hear, or to see, speech. It is a combination of hearing and seeing that will help you most.

Remember that conversation is two-way. Do not monopolise it in order to stay in control.

AND

Remember also that many people do not know how to help a hearing impaired person. Put them at ease by telling them firstly that you do not hear well, and then what it is that they can do to help you manage better.

<p><b>TEACHING YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES HOW BEST TO HELP YOU IS <i>YOUR</i> RESPONSIBILITY.</b></p>
--

## **2. How others can communicate with the hearing impaired**

Communicating with a person who does not hear well does not have to be difficult. A few simple rules will help, particularly if you remember that it is not fair to say that such people "hear when they want to". Mostly it is more correct to say "they hear when they can". Remember also that they are always struggling to try to make sense of an incomplete puzzle, and will manage less effectively if tired, worried or made to feel a nuisance, and particularly when there is background noise, your face is in shadow, or you have turned away.

## WHAT TO DO

***Gain attention*** - Call the person by name to attract his/her attention, or a gentle touch may help. Do not start talking until the person knows he/she is being spoken to.

***Face each other*** - Hearing impaired people need to see your face clearly to gain help from facial expression and to speech read. Be sure to face the person, at about a metre or two away. Avoid shadows on your face (e.g. do not stand in front of a window with the light behind you).

***Avoid background noise*** - It is not always possible to avoid background noise, but do remember that it is particularly necessary for you to take care in any noisy place. Turn off the TV, radio or music if that is making things difficult!

***Talk normally*** - Be careful not to cover your face, and to talk normally, if anything, just a little slower. Don't exaggerate lip movements. Don't shout.

***Get to the point*** - Knowing the subject matter avoids misunderstandings. Explain briefly what, who, when, where and how.

***Rephrase*** - Sometimes the key word will continue to be missed. If you are not understood say the same thing in different words. If this does not work, write it down.

REMEMBER that hearing impaired people often smile and nod even when they may not have heard correctly. They may think they have, or they may think it's not important. Avoid errors from bluffing and ensure accuracy by asking the person to repeat any important message back to you.

FINALLY, understand that a hearing aid does not make a person hear normally. Many people with hearing aids may obtain limited benefit. It will still be necessary to be patient, and to remember to use the suggestions in this list.

***SHHH gratefully acknowledges the permission given by Dr. Jenny Rosen, former Head of the Department of Audiology, Hornsby Kuring-gai Hospital, to reprint her article here.***

**TIPS FOR TALKING WITH HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE**



**Gain attention.** Face the hard of hearing person directly, and on the same level, whenever possible.



**Avoid background noise.** Turn off or turn down the TV or radio. Do not talk from another room.



**Be careful that the light is on your face, not behind you.** Hard of hearing people need to see you clearly to help them understand



**Speak normally,** if anything a slower. Don't exaggerate lip movements. Don't shout.



**Get to the point.** If you are not being understood, say the same thing in different words. If necessary, write it down.



**Understand that hard of hearing people manage less well when they are tired or ill.** Even with the best hearing aid a person may have difficulty understanding speech.