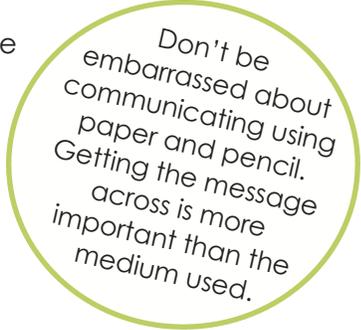


# TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

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Listed below are techniques to help those who do not know how to communicate in Sign Language communicate more effectively with individuals whom are Deaf or hard-of-hearing.

- Get the deaf or hard of hearing person's attention before speaking. Since deaf people cannot hear the usual call to attention, they may need a tap on the shoulder, a wave, or other visual signals.
- Speak slowly and clearly; exaggeration and overemphasis of words distort lip movements, making speechreading more difficult. Speechreading is a skill not all deaf persons have. Only about 25% of speech is visible on the lips, and even the best speechreaders cannot read everything but must try to pick up some contextual clues to fill in some of the gaps.
- Look directly at the person when speaking. Even a slight turn of your head can obscure the deaf persons view. Other distracting factors affecting communication include mustaches covering the lips and habits such as smoking, pencil chewing, and putting your hands in front of your face.
- Maintain eye contact with the deaf person. Eye contact helps convey the feeling of direct communication. If an interpreter is present, you may experience an urge to face and talk to the interpreter. Avoid asking the interpreter to "Tell him..." or "Ask her if..." A more effective approach is to maintain eye contact with and talk to the deaf or hard of hearing person despite their need to watch the interpreter. This gives the deaf person a chance to make eye contact when looking at you for speechreading cues or facial expressions.
- If you have some difficulty getting an idea across, try to rephrase a thought, or restate a sentence rather than repeating exactly the same words. Sometimes a particular group of lip movements are difficult to speechread, or it is possible the deaf persons vocabulary is limited.
- Permit only one person to speak at a time during group discussions. It is impossible for a speechreader to read two people at once. It is recommended that you raise your hand before you speak so that the Deaf or hard-of-hearing person knows exactly who to focus on and when.
- Use pantomime, body language, and facial expressions to facilitate communication. A lively speaker is always more interesting to watch.
- Avoid standing in front of a light source, such as a window, or light. The bright background and silhouette created on the face make it almost impossible for the deaf person to speechread.



Don't be embarrassed about communicating using paper and pencil. Getting the message across is more important than the medium used.



## THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO TO SET THE STAGE FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERACTION??? ASK!

Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals are a unique group of people who have different needs and preferences. Keep in mind, what works for some doesn't always work for others so don't be afraid to ask.

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