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Speaking Clearly to Someone with Hearing loss

When a person speaks, clues are gained not only from what is heard but also from what is seen. These clues complement and supplement each other, helping us to follow a conversation.

For people with hearing loss the visual clues of speech become very important. Simple actions on your part, as the hearing person, may determine the ease with which these visual clues can be followed.

Top tips for good communication (a lot to remember - but worth practising):

Attract attention

- Attract the hearing-impaired person's attention before you start talking to them so that they can catch the beginning of what is said and not just the ending.
- Avoid speaking from another room, or with your head in a cupboard/newspaper/book.
- **Keep your face visible and ensure the room is well lit.**
- Try to avoid conversation in the kitchen where there are background noises from food mixers, washing machines and dishwashers etc.
- Keep your head as still as possible when speaking.

Use expression and gesture

- Use natural hand gestures but do not exaggerate. Unnecessary hand movements can be very distracting.
- Do not shout – speak clearly and not too fast. Shouting and over-mouthing words will alter your lip patterns and speaking too slowly will destroy the natural rhythm of speech.

Try to make the subject of the conversation as clear as possible

- Try to use full sentences rather than just short phrases as they are easier to understand.
- For a hearing-impaired person, it is important to see the speaker's eyes to gauge how they are feeling. Therefore, if you are wearing sunglasses, remove these while speaking.

Repeat or rephrase

- Repeat the sentence again if necessary and then perhaps rephrase what you want to say. You may not be aware of this, but some words are more difficult to lipread than others. For example, the month of March is easier to lipread than August. In the word March the shapes making 'M' and 'CH' are visible on the lips, the components in August are made inside the mouth, so there is nothing to see.
- Give the person time to process what you have said – do not walk away until you have some indication that the message has been understood.
- **Write down any important facts.**
- Above all, be patient.