
Etiquette Quick Tips

Interacting with People with Hearing Disabilities

People with Hearing Disabilities

Hearing loss falls along a continuum, from people who are totally deaf to many more who are hard of hearing and may or may not use a variety of sound amplification devices. Sometimes an individual's ability to speak is also affected.

- Ask people how they prefer to communicate.
- To get the attention of a person, lightly touch the individual or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly and expressively to establish if the person can read your lips. Not all people can lip-read. For those who do, be sensitive to their needs by positioning yourself facing them and the light source. Keep your hands and food away from your mouth when speaking. Avoid chewing gum and smoking while speaking.
- Use a normal tone of voice unless you are asked to raise your voice. Shouting or exaggerating your words will be of no help.
- Slow your speaking rate if you tend to be a rapid speaker.
- Make sure you have good light on your face
- Do not run your words together.
- Avoid complex and long sentences.
- Pause between sentences to make sure you are understood.
- If you are giving specific information such as time, place, addresses, phone numbers, it is good practice to have it repeated back to you.
- If you cannot understand what is said, ask people to repeat it or write it down. Do not act as if you understand unless you do.

- If the person cannot lip read, try writing notes. Never assume that writing notes will be an effective way to communicate with all people who are deaf. Some may not be strong in written English, since ASL is their primary language, which is very different from English as a language.
- If a person who is deaf is using an interpreter, always speak directly to the person, not the interpreter.
- If you cannot make yourself understood try writing notes or drawing pictures.



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