

Tips for Communicating with Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing People

- 1. Get the person's attention before you speak.**
You can avoid frustration and reduce the need to repeat things.
- 2. Do not have objects in your mouth such as gum, cigarettes, or food.**
- 3. Speak clearly and at a moderate pace.**
The best distance for communication is 3 to 6 feet. If you speak at a slow-to-normal rate and pause between sentences, you will give the person time to catch up.
- 4. Keep movement to minimum while speaking.**
Continuous movement will make it difficult for those who read lips to follow you.
- 5. Use facial expressions and gestures.**
This helps fill in the blanks and adds more information.
- 6. Rephrase when you are not understood.**
If one or two words keep tripping someone up, try using a different word. For example, rephrase 'Do you want a drink?' to 'Would you like some water?'
- 7. Be aware that accents or slang may be difficult to understand.**
- 8. Don't shout**
Shouting makes you look and sound angry. It actually distorts the sound signal. It is better to make sure the person can see you and speak slightly louder than normal.
- 9. Use paper and pen when needed.**
Some people do not read lips or verbally communicate, so have paper and pen available as an alternative means of communication.
- 10. When writing back and forth, keep your word choices simple and sentences short.**
If the person understands you well and uses more complex sentence and vocabulary, you may do the same. Take your cue from the deaf person.
- 11. Label and display items**
If you have different sizes of cups with different prices, label them and put them on display near the counter, so a deaf person can indicate what size of cup to be ordered.
- 12. Have printed materials available**
If you have a menu as well as specials on display, have a printed copy of the menu and the specials available on the counter for a deaf or hard-of-hearing person to point to a menu item to order.
- 13. Talk TO the deaf or hard-of-hearing person, not to his/her partner.**
- 14. Be patient, positive, and relaxed.**
It may take time to learn how to best talk with someone. Experiment and ask how you can help.