



## Basic Etiquette: People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

1. Hearing disability, hard of hearing, and deaf are not the same.
  - Hearing disability refers to both persons who are hard of hearing and persons who are deaf
  - Deaf people utilize their vision skills for communication
  - Hard of hearing persons seek ways to retain their listening and speaking skills.
2. It is okay to use the terms the deaf or deaf person. This is an exception to the person-first language rule.
3. There are a wide range of hearing losses and communication methods. If you do not know the individuals preferred communication method, ASK.
4. To get the attention of a person with a hearing loss, call his/her name. If there is no response, you can lightly touch him/her on the arm or shoulder, or wave your hand.
5. When using an interpreter:
  - Always address your comments, questions, and concerns directly to the person with whom you are talking, never to the interpreter.
  - Always face the individual, and not the interpreter.
6. Always look directly at a person who has a hearing loss. Use eye to eye contact.
7. Use facial expressions and body language to communicate the emotion of a message, such as displeasure or approval.
8. Watch the individual's eyes to ensure understanding - do not depend on affirmative head nodding only.
9. If possible, use e-mail to communicate
10. Tips in using a TTY (Teletypewriter):
  - Make your communication clear, simple, and concise.
  - Typical abbreviations:
    - GA - Go ahead - means that the person has finished their statement and the other person can start typing
    - Q - Use instead of a question mark
    - SK - Means you want to conclude your conversationWhen you read SK, type SKSK if you are completely finished talking.
11. Can the person read lips?
  - Not all people who are deaf can read lips
  - Speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to determine if the person can read your lips
  - Do not exaggerate your speech
  - People who read lips only understand 20 to 25% of what is being said
  - Be sensitive to the needs of people who lip read by facing the light source and keeping hands, cigarettes, and food away from your mouth when speaking.
12. If you are asked to repeat yourself several times, try rephrasing your sentence.
13. When providing information that involves a number or an address, consider alternative ways to provide it; writing, faxing, or e-mailing are great ways to ensure accuracy and decrease frustration.
14. Have pencil and paper available and use them if necessary

15. If you are experiencing extreme difficulty communicating orally, ask if you can write. Never say, Oh, forget it, it is not important. Keep messages simple and direct.
16. Be aware of the environment. Large, crowded rooms and hallways can be very difficult for hearing impaired persons. Bright sunlight and shadows also present barriers.
17. In group settings:
  - o let the deaf individual determine the best seating arrangement in order for them to see the speaker and interpreter
  - o watch for signals that the deaf individual wishes to contribute
  - o ensure that one person speaks at a time
  - o do not pace while giving a presentation
  - o do not talk with your back to the audience while writing on a flipchart or blackboard
  - o incorporate visual aids, demonstrations, flip charts, written agendas, and handouts in presentations.
18. Do not change the topic of conversation without warning. Use transitional phrases such as Okay, we need to discuss. . . .

## **Resources for further information on hearing impairments:**

### **Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf**

3417 Volta Place N.W.  
Washington, DC 20007  
Voice/TTY: (202) 337-5220  
E-mail: [info@agbell.org](mailto:info@agbell.org)  
Web site: [www.agbell.org](http://www.agbell.org)

National membership organization. Provides information and referral for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

### **National Association of the Deaf**

814 Thayer Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-4500  
Voice: (301) 587-1788 Voice  
TTY: (301) 587-1789 TTY  
Fax:(301) 587-1791 FAX  
E-mail: [NADinfo@nad.org](mailto:NADinfo@nad.org)  
Web site: [www.nad.org](http://www.nad.org)

Information and referral source for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Services and information are available on a variety of topics including closed-captioning, interpreter services, deafness-related information and publications, and legal assistance.

### **National Deaf Education Network and Clearinghouse**

Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center  
Gallaudet University  
800 Florida Avenue, N.E.  
Washington, DC 20002-3695  
TTY/Voice: (202) 651-5340  
E-mail: [Clearinghouse.Infotogo@gallaudet.edu](mailto:Clearinghouse.Infotogo@gallaudet.edu)  
Web site: [www.clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/clearinghouse/index.html](http://www.clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/clearinghouse/index.html)

Information and referral source for people who are deaf and hard of hearing. Has numerous publications and resources available on a wide variety of topics.

**National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders  
Clearinghouse**

One Communication Avenue  
Bethesda, MD 20892-3456  
Voice: (800) 241-1044  
TTY: (800) 241-1055  
E-mail: [nidcdinfo@nidcd.nih.gov](mailto:nidcdinfo@nidcd.nih.gov)  
Web site: [www.nidcd.nih.gov](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov)

**National Technical Institute for the Deaf**

Rochester Institute of Technology  
Lyndon Baines Johnson Building  
Center on Employment  
52 Lomb Memorial Drive  
Rochester, NY 14623-5604  
Voice/TTY: (716) 475-6219  
Fax: (716) 475-7570  
E-mail: [ntidcoe@rit.edu](mailto:ntidcoe@rit.edu)  
Web site: [www.rit.edu/~435www/](http://www.rit.edu/~435www/)

Has variety of information and materials on employment of individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, including information for employers

**Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf**

8630 Fenton Street, Suite 324  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
Voice/TTY: (301) 608-0050  
Fax: (301) 608-0508  
E-mail: [admin@rid.org](mailto:admin@rid.org)  
Web site: [www.rid.org](http://www.rid.org)

Maintains nationwide registry of where to find sign language interpreters

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