

Strategies to Improve Communication with People Who Have Hearing Loss

- Face the person with hearing loss.
- Get his or her attention before speaking.
- Eliminate background noise as much as possible (eg, turn off television, close doors, etc).
- Have the person with hearing loss have his or her back to the wall, so that sound reflects back to the ear.
- Speak each word clearly and distinctly.
- Avoid shouting, which distorts lip movements so they are harder to read and may sound angry.
- Do not cover lips with hands, mustaches, or other objects.
- Use complete sentences, so that the listener can use the context to identify meaning.
- Use a different phrasing if the listener does not understand at first.
- Spell words out or write them down.
- Use facial expressions, gestures, and body language to help get the message across.
- Make certain that light is shining directly on the speaker's face, and is not coming from behind the speaker.
- Speak toward the better ear, if applicable.
- Have the listener repeat back what he or she heard.
- Make sure hearing aids are in place and working properly.
- Make sure the listener is wearing his or her eyeglasses (if applicable).
- Learn how to use assistive listening devices.
- **Ask the listener what is the best way to communicate with him or her.**

Be alert to the potential for misunderstanding when speaking to a person with hearing loss. If a reply does not make sense, try repeating what was said, using different words. It's also helpful to ask the person to repeat what he or she heard to make sure there have been no misunderstandings. Writing words down also helps. Printing in large letters with a marker pen may be necessary, because many older adults also have vision problems.