



# Tips for Hearing People on Communicating with Hard of Hearing People

**Northern Virginia Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Persons**

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**RULE: When audio is poor, emphasize the visual.  
Practice special speaking skills.**

## SET YOUR STAGE

- Face audience directly. Always look at the hard of hearing person.
- Spotlight your face (no back lighting) so the hard of hearing person can see your mouth.
- Avoid noisy backgrounds. Noise blocks out conversation sounds.
- Get attention first. Be sure the hard of hearing person is aware of you before you speak.
- Ask how you can facilitate communication.

## PROJECT YOUR COMMUNICATION

- Don't shout. Shouting distorts your face and mouth until speechreading is impossible.
- Speak clearly, at moderate pace. Speak more slowly to let listener keep up with you.
- Don't hide your mouth, chew food, gum, or smoke while talking.
- Rephrase if you are not understood. Try different words or write key words on a pad.
- Use facial expression, gestures, hand signals or finger spelling.
- Give clues when changing subject. Hard of hearing people get lost with sudden changes.

## ESTABLISH EMPATHY WITH AUDIENCE

- Be patient if response is slow. Making sense of conversation takes time and is fatiguing.
- Stay positive and relaxed. If you are irritated or annoyed your speech will deteriorate.
- Talk TO hard of hearing people, not ABOUT them. Only their ears are "broken".
- Offer respect to help build confidence. Encouragement is very helpful and appreciated.

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**RULE: Communication is a two-way street.  
Hard of hearing people must make as  
much effort as hearing people.**

## SET YOUR STAGE

- Tell others how best to talk to you. Explain your hearing loss and tell them what to do.
- Pick your best spot (light, quiet, proximity). Choose where you want to sit or stand.
- Anticipate difficult situations, plan how to minimize them. Think ahead.

## PROJECT YOUR COMMUNICATION

- Pay attention. Watch, listen and concentrate so you can follow the conversation.
- Concentrate on speaker. You cannot talk and watch the view at the same time.
- Look for visual clues. Watch for facial expressions, gestures and body language.
- Ask for written cues if needed. Always carry a note pad and pencil. Ask for key words.
- Don't interrupt. Let conversation flow to gain more meaning but admit if you are lost.

## ESTABLISH EMPATHY WITH AUDIENCE

- React. Let speaker know how well he is doing. Show appreciation for efforts to help.
- Don't bluff. Admit it when you don't understand, to prevent serious trouble.
- Conversation is very tiring. If too tired to concentrate, ask for discussion later.

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