



Gloucestershire Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Adult Hearing Services - Communication Tips

Introduction

This leaflet aims to help individuals who struggle to hear and help make communication more effective and easier. These tips are designed for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, and for those communicating with them. The aim is to support clearer, more effective communication for everyone involved.

Please share this with family, friends, and others who would also benefit from these tips. If you are concerned about your own hearing or someone else's, it would be beneficial to arrange an appointment with Hearing Services (Audiology).

If you already have a hearing aid, please contact the Hearing Services (Audiology) Team via:

- Telephone: 0300 422 6919
- Email: ghn-tr.audiology.appts@nhs.net
- Postal: Hearing Services,
Gloucestershire Royal Hospital,
Great Western Road,
Gloucester,
Gloucestershire,
GL1 3NN

If you don't currently wear an NHS hearing aid, your GP can refer you.

If you have difficulty hearing:

Before you start, where possible, try to:

- Be open; tell the speaker you may struggle to hear them and ask them to help you.
- Move away from or turn off sources of sound, such as the television or radio, or ask them to switch off that sound.
- Position yourself at a more comfortable distance to the person speaking in a way you can see their face clearly.
- Ask the person speaking to introduce the topic of conversation before starting the discussion.

When listening, where possible, try to watch the speaker for visual cues such as gestures, facial expressions, and lip movement.

If you mishear what has been said, try to:

- Replay in your mind what you heard, trying to fill in the gaps or what may have been said.
- Ask the speaker to repeat what was said. If it is still not clear, ask them to rephrase.
- Tell the speaker what you heard and check if it was correct, or get them to fill in the missing or incorrect words.

Consider:

- Asking family and friends not to speak or shout from other rooms or floors in the house.
- Learning to lip-read.
- Asking the person speaking to talk clearly and at a comfortable speed.
- Asking others to get your attention first before they start speaking.

Attending a meeting:

- Ask before the meeting for a summary, notes or reference points.
- Arrive early or reserve seating in an area best placed to support your hearing needs (i.e. sitting where you can see everyone clearly).
- Discuss your needs with the chair before the meeting.
- Avoid sitting near distractions or potential noise sources.
- Check and adjust light levels when needed.
- Ask for others in the meetings to indicate before speaking and to talk one at a time.
- There is equipment that can help support you, such as the loop system or Roger microphones.

Equipment can be provided by your employer and/or the Government via the Access to Work Grant. If you would like to know more, please go to:
<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

More ideas:

- If it is a number or date, ask the caller to count from 0 and stop at the correct number.
- Ask the caller to reply with 'Yes-yes' for yes or 'no' for no. This can enable you to ask yes or no questions and hear what they have said, even if you partially miss what was said.

On the telephone:

- Keep a pen and paper by the phone.
- Turn down background noise, such as the radio or television, when you are on the phone.
- If possible, adjust the volume and tone of the phone to best suit your needs. This may involve getting someone to call and talk while you make adjustments.
- Move the phone speaker around your ear until you find the best position.
- If you have a hearing aid, the microphone is at the top of your ear. To find it, run your finger over the hearing aid until you hear a rustling. Place the telephone at this spot and move it around until you find the best place.

If you still cannot hear:

- Explain to the other person that you do not hear well.
- Ask them to repeat what they have said, but slower and not to shout.
- Ask them to repeat what they said in a different way.
- Ask them to spell out important words or numbers.
- If you can, ask the speaker to spell out words using the phonetic alphabet (B=Bravo, F=Foxtrot, etc).
- Ask them to say two-digit numbers like this: 14= one four.
- Check back: Ask “Did you say....?” to get a ‘yes or no’ answer.

Lipreading support services:

Face-to-face Lipreading classes:

- Gloucestershire Deaf Association (GDA):
<https://www.gda.org.uk/lip-reading>
- Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults (ATLA): <https://atlalipreading.org.uk/>

Online Lipreading classes

- 1:1 lipreading classes via Zoom – cost involved:
<https://www.lipreadingclass.co.uk/lipreading-home>
- Lipreading practice online:
<https://lipreadingpractice.co.uk/>

When speaking to someone who is having difficulty hearing:

Before you start, where possible, try to:

- Find a suitable environment away from noise and distractions with good lighting.
- Move closer to the individual but ask if this is a comfortable distance.
- Gain the individuals attention first.
- Ensure the individual can see your face and lips clearly.
- Do not stand with the window behind you, if you do, your face is in a shadow, making it difficult for the person to lip-read you. Move away and, if possible, face the window.

When speaking, where possible, try to:

- Speak clearly using normal lip movements; there is no need to speak slowly or fast.
- Use natural facial expressions and gestures.
- Speak to the individual on the side they are able to hear better with. Ensure the individual knows the topic of conversation.
- Be ready to write things down or use a speech-to-text application such as Live Transcribe (a free smartphone application that listens to conversations and transcribes live).
- Use plain language if needed.

Remember:

- Hearing aids help, but do not restore normal hearing.
- Be patient and understanding.
- Do not talk to the individual from another room.
- If the individual does not understand after repetition, try to rephrase the sentence instead.
- Do not cover your mouth when speaking.
- Avoid talking whilst chewing.
- Do not shout at the individual.

On the telephone:

- Some people are able to hear on the phone, while others may struggle to understand. It can depend on a number of factors including the accent of the speaker.
- Reduce background noise, such as turning off radios or shutting open windows.

In meetings:

- Make time for the meeting. It can take longer for those with hearing difficulties to follow a group meeting. Remember to schedule short breaks for long meetings.
- Choose the meeting place, taking into consideration lighting, background noise, acoustics, etc.
- Always ask the person where they would like to sit.

- If a language communication support professional, for example a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, is required, please consider where they will sit. This is usually opposite the person who is using their services.
- Use lip-reading to supplement hearing.
- Provide a detailed agenda before the meeting to give them time to read and prepare for the context of the meeting.
- Meeting papers, reports or notes should be sent out one week before the meeting to give them time to read. It is impossible to read while also lip-reading.
- Request that there is only one person speaking at a time.
- Request any questions posed to be repeated by the chair prior to an answer.
- Implement a loop system or use a speech to text application such as Live Transcribe (a free smart phone application that listens to conversations and transcribes live).

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Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.

Ask 3 Questions

To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you asked to make a choice about your healthcare.

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation.

***Ask 3 Questions** is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial.

Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85



<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>



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If you would like to find out more, please contact:

Charity Office **0300 422 3231** or visit gloshospitals.nhs.uk/charity

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