

It Matters

your guide on
how best to
communicate with
deaf people

Simple tips that
will make life easier
for deaf people
and people with
hearing loss



Hi, I'm Lucy,

Right now, you are doing something amazing. The fact that you are reading this guide means you want to do something to make life easier for deaf people and people with hearing loss. People like me. Thank you! Being deaf or having hearing loss can be an incredibly isolating experience.

It can be lonely. It can make you feel cut off from other people because of all the communication barriers you have to face on a daily basis. I know because I have been there.

Just by being aware of how best to communicate with deaf people or people with hearing loss, you can genuinely make life so much easier for them and make them feel included and connected.

By taking 5 minutes to read this guide, you could be the one who completely turns around another person's day.

Thank you again for reading this guide, and for making a difference.

Warm wishes,

Lucy (and hearing dog Wilbur)



Around 1 in 5 people in the UK have some level of hearing loss. That's roughly 12 million people. An estimated 1.2 million people are severely or profoundly deaf.



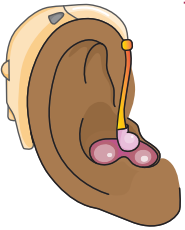
They could be your friends, family members, colleagues, or neighbours. They could be the people who deliver your shopping, or the people working in shops, banks, or cafes.

Everyone has individual needs when it comes to communication. Not all tips in this guide will be appropriate for every person who is deaf or has hearing loss. But by being aware of the different ways that could aid communication, you could make someone's life much easier.

How can I tell if someone is deaf or has hearing loss?

Deafness is an invisible disability and every deaf person or person with hearing loss is an individual. Some may be happy to tell you, and some may not. Sometimes people have hearing loss but haven't yet reached the point where they have sought help or been diagnosed.

However, there are some signs to look out for that could indicate someone has some level of hearing loss:



They may wear a visible hearing aid or have a cochlear implant.

They may have some kind of visual identifier with them, such as a hearing assistance dog, or a badge stating that they

have hearing loss or that they lipread.

They may ask you to repeat yourself when you say something, or ask 'Pardon?' or 'Sorry?' more than you might expect.

They don't respond when you say something to them.

They may misunderstand what you say or respond with something that doesn't seem to make sense, particularly when there is background noise.

They may say you are mumbling or talking quietly.

Pardon?

Sorry?

They may pay particular attention to your mouth and face when you are talking.

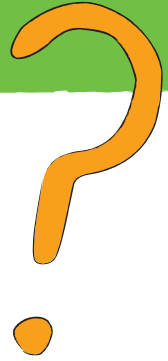
They may turn their head to the side slightly when you are talking to direct one of their ears towards you.

They may talk more loudly or quietly than expected.

They may not seem to follow conversation, particularly in a group setting or in environments where there is background noise such as pubs, restaurants, and shops.

They turn up the volume on the TV or when listening to music more loudly than is expected.

They may have difficulty hearing on the phone.



How best to communicate with deaf people or people with hearing loss

Here are some simple ways you can adapt the way you communicate to make life easier for someone who is deaf or has hearing loss.



Find out how the person prefers to be communicated with

It is okay to ask someone what their preferred communication method is.

Make sure you have their attention before talking

For example, a wave or light tap on the arm. It's far easier for someone to understand you if they know you are talking to them.



Always face the person you're talking to

Make eye contact and try to avoid covering your mouth, chewing, or turning away, as many deaf people and people with hearing loss rely on lipreading.

Speak at normal volume

Speak normally – don't exaggerate, shout or speak much slower than you normally would, as this can distort the way your mouth moves and your facial expressions, which makes it harder for people to lipread.



Don't say "It doesn't matter..."

If someone asks you to repeat yourself, either once or a number of times, don't give up and say, "Oh it doesn't matter". This can make someone feel that what they are saying doesn't matter, or that they don't matter.

Try rephrasing

If you say something, and someone doesn't understand, try rephrasing it, or finding another way to say the same thing.

Stand somewhere with suitable lighting

Strong directional light, such as bright sunshine behind you, can make it difficult for others to see your face clearly which can hinder understanding.



If possible, move to a quieter place with less background noise

Hearing when there is background noise can be particularly difficult for people with any level of hearing loss.



Use non-verbal communication

Some deaf people use British Sign Language (BSL) or Sign Supported English (SSE), so learning the basics or becoming fluent could help.

If someone struggles to lipread what you are saying, try writing it down

This could be on paper or a phone screen, for example.

Take turns to talk

If you are with more than one person, make sure only one person talks at a time.



Lucy says: "When I'm talking to people, I sometimes have to ask them to repeat themselves. If they say 'It doesn't matter', it can hurt my feelings. I know they aren't being deliberately dismissive, but it always makes me feel like what I'm saying isn't important. A lot of other deaf people have experienced this too, and it's really not a nice feeling. If someone is patient and repeats themselves, or rephrases what they've said, it can make the world of difference."

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide, and for taking an action to make life easier for deaf people and people with hearing loss.

To find out more about Hearing Dogs for Deaf People and how else you could change the lives of deaf people, visit hearingdogs.org.uk.



Helping deaf people, and people with hearing loss,
to leave loneliness behind and reconnect with life

hearingdogs.org.uk

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