

Hey, my friend doesn't hear well!

People with hearing damage often try to hide their hearing damage in order to not be different than people in the hearing world. Surprisingly, many succeed very well at this. However, this requires a great deal of effort, frequent excuses, tricks, and hide-and-seek games. This not uncommonly leads to social isolation.

Technical hearing aids are frequently hidden behind long hair or even completely rejected. Those who observe themselves in loud situations will determine that they use another person's mouth movements (lips, cheeks, inside of the mouth) as an aid to understanding. Especially for people with hearing damage, ensuring a view of the other person's mouth is very helpful.

The pairs of cards provide information and aids to help students know how they should talk with people with hearing damage. To establish a reference to the students' world, the question is worded as "How do I talk with a friend who has hearing damage?"

1 How do I talk with a friend who has hearing damage?

Look at your conversation partner!

Why?

If you make eye contact before starting to talk, a person with hearing damage knows that you are talking with him or her.

Keep a proper distance!

Why?

Keeping a distance of at least an arm's length gives your friend a good view of your face and lips. Your face reveals a lot about what you are saying and helps your friend understand you.

Additional explanation: A distance between 0.5 and 3.5 m provides a good view of your lips.

Try to avoid background noise!

Why?

Background noise is a distraction and makes listening difficult.

Additional explanation: It is especially difficult for people with hearing damage to filter spoken language from background noise. If possible, all sources of noise should be turned off.

Make sure the lighting is good!

Why?

Do not stand in front of a window or in the dark. When your face is well lit, it reveals a lot about the content of your spoken words.

Additional explanation: If the speaker's face is not sufficiently illuminated, people with hearing damage cannot evaluate information from the lips, cheeks, or inside of the mouth. Therefore, you should never stand with your back to a window.

Speak slowly and clearly!

Why?

This makes it easier for people with hearing damage to understand.

Additional explanation: A natural speech melody and a good rhythmic speaking voice facilitate understanding. Accentuated pronunciation can make it easier to distinguish between similar sounds.

Don't shout!

Why?

When you shout, your face and language are distorted.

Additional explanation: Shouting distorts speech and movements of your mouth and entire face. As a result, it is difficult for people with hearing damage to obtain clear information from your face.

Ask your friend with hearing damage whether he or she understands you.

Why?

Sometimes it is embarrassing for people with hearing damage to admit that they haven't understood something. It is easier for them if you approach them with your question. Perhaps they will give you additional tips and tricks.

Additional explanation: People with hearing damage often do not want to confess that they have not understood something or they do not want to stand out by frequently asking for clarification. Asking comprehension questions can help in communication. In contrast, questions such as "Did you understand that?" are less helpful.

2 Additional tips for teachers in designing lessons

Additional tips for teachers are provided below to help ensure successful communication in class:

- **Formulate short, clear sentences.**

Why? People with hearing damage often have a limited vocabulary and problems with complex grammatical structures.

- **Facilitate understanding through facial expressions and gestures.**

Why? Using natural facial expressions and gestures facilitates speech comprehension because this provides additional information.

- **Communicate at the same eye level.**

Why? Facial expressions, gestures, and lip movements provide information about content. However, if the difference in height is too great, as is the case with adults and children, the angle of view is too steep.

- **Write down especially important messages.**

Why? Written aids enable students to follow the lesson better. It is easier for them to make factual connections themselves.

- **Have the question repeated if incorrect answers are given.**

Why? If a student gives a wrong answer, the reason may simply be that he or she did not correctly hear the question. To make sure, have the student repeat the question. In this way you will determine whether the student did not understand or did not hear.