



DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
INYUVESI YASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE

DISABILITY  
RIGHTS UNITS

# DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

**ENVISION2030**

transparency • honesty • integrity • respect • accountability  
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**CREATIVE. DISTINCTIVE. IMPACTFUL.**



# DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

**People who are Deaf, deaf or hard of hearing (categorised as hearing impairments) are not easily identifiable. According to the World Health Organization, hearing impairments are the most common sensory deficits affecting the human population, with more than 250-million people affected.**

## TIPS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

Here are some tips if you are Deaf, deaf or hard of hearing, or if you have a friend, family member or fellow student who is.

- Be open. Inform the person you are speaking to that you are going to lip read or communicate through writing before you start the conversation. There's no reason to be embarrassed about your hearing loss.
- Do not stand too far away. Make sure you have a clear view and can see the face and lips of the

person you are speaking to – facial expressions and other non-verbal communication will help you understand what they are saying.

- If your hearing is not the same in both ears, make sure you position yourself in the best way to hear the speaker, making sure it's your good ear/side. Do not be shy about asking people to change places with you.
- Ask people to get your attention before they start talking to you.
- Try to keep calm. If you become anxious or flustered it will be harder for you to follow what's being said, so take three deep breaths when this happens, to help you relax.





# TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

Follow these simple tips to improve communication with your hearing-impaired friends, family and coworkers:

- If you miss what someone says/said the first time, do not be afraid to ask them to say it slower or repeat it or say it in a different way.
- If necessary, ask people to slow down and speak more clearly.
- Do not be too hard on yourself. No one hears correctly all the time.

- Get their attention. Getting the listener's attention before you start speaking will give them an opportunity to shift their attention and attend to you. Try saying their name, politely touching them on their arm or using a gesture or signal to get their attention. It might also be helpful to ask the person how they want you to get their attention for future purposes.
- Maintain eye contact. Make sure that you are face to face with your hearing-impaired listener. This will allow them to attend to what you are saying, to lip read and read facial expressions to help them better understand what you are saying.
- Speak naturally and clearly – do not shout. Speak clearly, at a normal rate, or perhaps at a slightly slower pace, and make sure you enunciate all your words. Try to speak in a slightly louder voice, as this may help your listener understand, but be careful not to shout as it makes it difficult for your listener to lip read and it may distort the sound of your words. Do not be condescending in doing all of this. Also note that there are just six to eight letters of the alphabet that you can read on your lips.
- Try not to obscure your face or mouth with anything - keep your hands away from your face. Most impaired listeners rely on lip reading and facial expressions in conversations, so be sure to keep your face or mouth clear of any obstructions.
- Rephrase, enunciate, speak slower or write down. You may be asked to repeat yourself

by a hearing impaired person, so be patient, and rephrase and use different words to help the listener understand what you are saying. Make sure you also ask for clarification or ask leading questions throughout the conversation to ensure your message is clear and understood.

- Avoid excessive background noise. Background noise makes listening conditions difficult for those with hearing loss, so try to avoid situations where there will be loud noises. Turn off the television/ radio, move away from noisy areas and, if you're in a social environment, try to find a quiet place to sit or a seat in a restaurant that is away from the kitchen or large gatherings.
- Feel free to use gestures and visual cues, such as holding up items that you are discussing.
- Explain if there is an interruption such as a phone ringing, knock at the door, a person entering the room or group or any activity that is disruptive.
- Talk into their "good ear" or good side. Many people who suffer from hearing loss tend to have one ear that is stronger than the other. Look for cues as to which ear that is, ask them if appropriate, and situate yourself on that side of your listener.
- Be attentive. Watch and pay attention to your listener's body language and facial expressions to make sure they are not confused and that they understand you. Should your listener seem confused, ask if they understand or if they need any clarification.
- If your listener uses an interpreter, speak to your listener and not to the interpreter! Make sure you maintain eye contact with your listener.
- Be patient and understanding. When interacting with a person with a hearing impairment, you may feel frustrated, but try putting yourself in their shoes as this is a daily reality for them. Communicating with people with hearing loss is a cooperative effort and requires understanding from both sides.



## ONE LAST TIP: COME TO THE DRU.

This is what we can do for you. If you are Deaf, deaf, or hard of hearing, DRU can offer a range of support services, strategies and resources to enable you to perform to your potential and participate in university life. DRU will liaise with academic staff so that the modification of materials, necessary reasonable accommodation, permission to record lectures or video-record interpretation, provision of lecture notes and reading/book lists are sorted out well in advance and any necessary psychological or social support is provided through Student Counselling and Health.

At the DRU we will consult with you on the support you need, your preferred methods of communication and access to written information. In order to fully support you, we will need you to come to DRU and apply for the necessary accommodation/concessions. We also advise the academic staff on ways to help you access lectures, seminars and tutorials.



We can also assist you in finding Sign Language interpreters or lip speakers to provide support in class, when attending lectures. In helping you identify your individual support needs, DRU can also offer the following:

- Modified exam arrangements in consultation with your faculty.
- Concessions applications.
- Other reasonable accommodations.
- Access to study material in alternative formats.
- Liaison with academic staff.
- Training, assistance and advice regarding assistive technology, hardware and software. The aim of these services/technologies is to help level the play field for students with hearing impairments, not to give them an added advantage over non-disabled students

## Definitions:

### **Deaf (capital D)**

Little or no hearing. The person generally makes use of Sign Language and typically subscribes to Deaf culture. Does not align with hearing impairment/disability.

### **deaf (lowercase d)**

Little or no hearing. The person does not make use of Sign Language as a medium of communication, but makes use of other means of communication such as speech, speech reading, cochlear implants or a combination of these. Aligns with impairment/disability and the hearing world.

### **hard of hearing**

Persons with different degrees of hearing loss. Make use of appropriate hearing technology, i.e. hearing aids. Align themselves with impairment and the hearing world. People with hearing impairments often have difficulties in the following areas: Inability to interpret speech sounds. Reduced ability to communicate.

### **Delay in language acquisition.**

Education disadvantages. Stigma and social isolation. People with hearing impairments are often excluded in society, as they find it difficult to interact with others because they cannot hear or have difficulty hearing. Often, they find it difficult to ask others to repeat what has been said and, as a result, they become withdrawn.

