

## Making listening easier

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Approximately 1 in every 6 people has a hearing loss. For people over 60, this number increases to 1 in 3. However, a hearing impairment is invisible to other people and, unless you tell them, they will not be aware of the difficulty that you may experience in holding conversations. It is important to take control of your own listening needs!

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There are a number of ways in which you can improve listening situations for yourself, as well as good habits you can ask friends and family to put into practice. This sheet lists a number of useful tips that can be simple, but effective, in making communication less stressful.

### To find the best listening conditions:

-  Keep the speaker's face clearly visible and in the light. ☺
-  If you hear better on one side, ask friends and family to try to remember to talk to you from this side.
-  In churches, theatres and similar, sit near the front or close to a loudspeaker.
-  In pubs and restaurants, try to sit away from any loudspeakers, and in a corner or with your back to a wall. This reduces background noises.
-  Turn off, or move away from TV, radio or noisy household appliances.
-  Discourage people from trying to talk to you from a different room.
-  Close any doors or windows that let in additional noise.
-  In your own home, favour soft furnishings (such as thick carpets and heavy curtains) and double-glazing.
-  When listening to the TV or a music system, use headphones if possible. Reduce the volume if the sound is distorted; increase the **treble** for listening to **speech** and the **bass** when listening to **music**.

### Some useful communication tactics to try:

-  Tell others that you have difficulty hearing.
-  Ask the speaker to catch your attention before talking.
-  Ask the speaker to face you when talking.
-  Watch the speaker's lips.
-  Pay attention to the speaker's facial expressions and gestures.
-  Ask friends / family to introduce a topic before talking about it – an awareness of the subject makes it easier to follow a conversation.
-  Request that the speaker does not cover their mouth or chew whilst talking to you.
-  If necessary, ask the speaker to talk more slowly and clearly (though not in an exaggerated fashion!)
-  Ask a softly-spoken person to speak with slightly more volume (but not to shout, as this distorts speech)
-  If you fail to hear, ask the speaker to *rephrase*, rather than to repeat.
-  If you miss a key word or phrase, ask the speaker to write it down for you.
-  Mentally replay the sounds you heard – in this way the sentence can often be re-captured.
-  Repeat the gist of what you have heard back to the speaker and ask them to confirm the details.
-  Use your knowledge of the context of the conversation, or what was said most recently to fill in any words or segments of the speech that you may miss.
-  Do not bluff! This often confuses matters more! Instead, let your face convey when you are following, but don't be afraid to look puzzled if you are not. A good communicator will respond to this by offering to clarify what they have said.
-  **KEEP CALM!!!** If you become flustered and reflect for too long on words you have missed, it will become harder to rejoin the flow of the conversation.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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