

Helpful Hints to Friends and Family of the Hard-of-Hearing

This applies to conversations at work, home, church, or in social situations. When talking to a hard-of-hearing person, regardless of the type of hearing loss he or she has, they will be able to understand you more easily if you follow these simple suggestions:

1. Talk at a moderate rate—not too fast, but not too slow.
2. Keep your voice at about the same volume (loudness) throughout each sentence, without dropping your voice at the end of each sentence.
3. Always speak as clearly and precisely as possible. Consonants (p,t,k,s,sh,f,g, etc.) especially, should be pronounced with care.
4. Do not over-articulate, i.e., mouthing or exaggerating articulation is just as bad as mumbling.
5. Pronounce names with care. Add a reference to the name for easier understanding, such as: Joan, "the girl from the office", or the Bay, "the big downtown store".
6. Change to a new subject at a slower rate, making sure that the person follows the change to the new subject. A key word or two at the beginning of a new topic is a helpful to hint that a new topic has started.
7. Do not speak while you have something in your mouth, such as a pipe, cigar, cigarette, or chewing gum. Do not cover your mouth with your hand. Be aware that a moustache or beard may make your lips harder to see and be read.
8. Talk in a normal tone of voice. Shouting does not make your voice more distinct. Shouting often makes it *more* difficult for a hard-of-hearing person to understand.
9. Face the listener directly. Do not turn away in the middle of a remark or story. Make sure the listener can see your face easily and that a good light is on it.
10. Use longer phrases which tend to be easier to understand than short ones. For example, "Will you get me a drink of water?" is less difficult than, "Will you get me a drink?" Word choice is important too. Fifteen and fifty cents may be confused, but a half a dollar is clear.

