



Be sensitive to student fatigue. Try to understand what this child is going through. It's hard work straining to listen and to understand, trying to fill in the gaps.

## COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR TEACHERS

### HOH = Hard of Hearing

- **Find out what works for the student.** Open communication is essential. Speak to them. Under what circumstances do they experience difficulty? You might find if you change a few small things it could make a world of difference.
- **Keep a clear channel of communication** open with the parents. You can learn a lot from each other.
- **Decrease the distance between you and the listener.** This is the single most effective way to increase understanding. Moving a little closer can make a big difference.
- **Don't eat, drink,** or chew gum while speaking.
- Wait until passing noises subside. Wait for that plane to pass overhead or for the students to settle down.
- **Don't talk while children are retrieving material.** First of all, people make noise when they gather material. And the HOH student cannot rummage through things and hear you at the same time because they are looking at you.
- **Be sure the listener is ready to hear you.** They will need a moment to focus because understanding speech requires more concentration for them. To see why this is so, think of listening to someone with a thick accent; it's much more difficult to understand their first few words if you are unprepared to listen.
- **Face them so they can see your lips,** your entire face, and hands and body gestures. These all provide valuable cues and can help fill in for sounds they are not getting. Try to avoid bushy moustache or other facial hair that obscures the lips. Avoid shadows.
- **When addressing the student, say their name first.**
- **Lighting should be above or in front of you,** never coming from behind you. Don't stand in front of the window while talking. As discussed earlier, they need to observe facial and body gestures. This is particularly important if the listener is further away, as in a classroom.
- **Face them and talk directly to them** so the volume of your voice doesn't fluctuate. Turning away from someone while talking sharply decreases the volume. Talking into the supply cabinet is even worse. Don't talk while writing on the board (this is tough on all students) and try not to talk while moving around so volume level and visual cues don't fluctuate.

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- **Speak louder and enunciate clearly,** but don't exaggerate sounds and don't shout. Exaggerating can distort sounds as well as the shape of the lips while speaking. Shouting can be very disruptive to the HOH person for two reasons: first, the HOH person, depending on the degree of hearing loss, may dwell in silence where ambient sounds we take for granted are severely reduced or absent. A sudden loud sound can be startling. Second, there is a reduced listening comfort range between what can be heard and what becomes uncomfortably loud.
- **Rephrase, don't repeat.** Vary the words. Some words are more difficult to understand than others and/or may be more difficult to lipread.
- **Introduce topics clearly, as well as transitions.** For example, "John, (pause), let's consider Phil's problem. He misses the last train. What are his options?" When presenting new or complex subject matter, good organization and clear transitions will aid all your students' understanding. This is critically important. Why? It's related to the way we listen and absorb information. If we're prepared, it goes more smoothly.
- **Be sensitive to signs of confusion or uncertainty.**
- **In group conversations, try to have only one person speak at a time.** The person who is about to speak, if at all possible, should provide a subtle visual cue such as a hand gesture. The HOH person can't understand one voice over another and needs to be facing the speaker for maximum clarity. In more formal settings, such as book clubs, the leader should indicate who is to speak by pointing and saying their name.
- **In group discussions, arrange the seating** so the student can see and hear as clearly as possible.
- **Be aware that the student's hearing ability may fluctuate** from day to day (or hour to hour). Fatigue, background sounds that you are unaware of, or health conditions such as ear infection can impede clear hearing. They may not be bored or tuning you out.
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- **Announcements made over public address systems are particularly difficult to understand.** Perhaps someone can translate for the HOH student.
- **Speak clearly with good diction.**
- **Give good directions,** repeating key elements when necessary or writing them on the board.
- **Switch to visuals frequently** (handouts, posters, etc.) to provide breaks from listening.
- **Seat the student about a third of the way back in the middle of the room** (away from the windows and noisy hallways) so they can hear and see clearly without having to look up to see you.
- **Print new vocabulary on the board.**
- **Be aware of situations when the student will not be able to lipread and prepare beforehand.** For example, if you are going to present a slide show with the lights out, some options might be to try for a captioned set of slides, provide them a transcript if one is available, or to seat the student next to you.
- **Institute a buddy system to always let them know what they're doing,** what page they're on, and possibly to take notes for them. The teacher should be considerate of the "buddy" and make sure they doesn't miss out on crucial information while helping.
- **Assignments and homework should be printed on the blackboard or passed out as handouts.** Daily and weekly agendas are very helpful in maintaining a strong context.
- **Be aware that it is impossible to lipread and take notes at the same time.**
- **If you are reading from the blackboard or flipchart,** stand next to it so they can lipread and see the printed material easily. Make it easy for the student to focus their attention in one area of the room at a time. Avoid presenting too many visual stimuli at the same time.
- **Learn the basics of hearing aids, their strengths and their limitations;** i.e., under what circumstances they will experience difficulty.
- **Find out what assistive listening devices may be appropriate and how they work.** (Personal FM systems are very effective.)

source: <http://www.hdhearing.com/learning/part3.htm>