

Communicating with deaf children

Do:

- ✓ Speak clearly and naturally. Try to use an expressive face.
- ✓ Get a deaf child's attention before you start speaking. Try waving, knocking a table or tapping their shoulder lightly.
- ✓ Face a deaf child when you're talking. Try to get down to their level if possible and always leave enough room for the deaf child to see your face clearly.
- ✓ Use visual cues, where possible. Point to what you're talking about.
- ✓ Make it clear what the topic of conversation is – and let the deaf child know if it's changed.
- ✓ Stand with your face to the light.
- ✓ Use whole sentences to help a deaf child pick up clues to what's being said
- ✓ Group conversations can be difficult for deaf children. Try to keep a deaf child involved, and avoid all speaking at once.
- ✓ Ask a deaf child to repeat what you've said if you're not sure if they've understood.

Don't:

- ✗ Speak too slowly or shout – this will distort your lip patterns.
- ✗ Move your head or walk around while you're talking. Speech movements can easily be missed.
- ✗ Have lots of noise on in the background like a TV or washing machine. Hearing aids amplify all noises, not just your voice.
- ✗ Take forever to get to the point. Avoid rambling.
- ✗ Cover or put anything in your mouth while talking. Eating or smoking while talking is a definite no-no.
- ✗ Stand with your back to a window – this can turn your face into a shadow and make it harder to lipread.
- ✗ Make a deaf child lipread for too long without a break. Lipreading involves a lot of concentration and can leave deaf children feeling tired.
- ✗ Give up. If stuck, try explaining in a different way or writing it down. Or if you have a mobile to hand, text it on your screen.

Remember – every deaf child and young person is different and deafness can range from mild to total. Some deaf children may sign, some may lipread, some may listen and some may speak. Some may do all these things. Always ask how they prefer to communicate.

NDCS is the national charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people. There are over 35,000 deaf children in the UK and three more children are born deaf every day. NDCS represents the interests and campaigns for the rights of all deaf children and young people from birth until they reach independence.

www.ndcs.org.uk

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every deaf child