

People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL) is an entirely different language from English, with a syntax all its own.

Speech reading (lip reading) is difficult for people who are Deaf if their first language is ASL.

Because the majority of sounds in English are formed inside the mouth, and it's hard to speech read a second language.

People who are hard of hearing, however, communicate in English.

They use some hearing but may rely on amplification and/or seeing the speaker's lips to communicate effectively.

When the exchange of information is complex such as during a job interview or doctor's visit or when reporting a crime.

The most effective way to communicate with a person who is Deaf is through a qualified sign-language interpreter.

For a simple interaction-such as ordering in a restaurant or registering for a hotel room, writing back and forth is usually okay.

Follow the person's cues to find out if they prefer sign language, gesturing, writing or speaking.

If you have trouble understanding the speech of a person who is Deaf or hard of hearing, let them know.

When using a sign-language interpreter, look directly at the person who is Deaf, and maintain eye contact to be polite.

Talk directly to the person ("What would you like?"), rather than to the interpreter. ("Ask her what she'd like.").

People who are Deaf need to be included in the decision-making process for issues that affect them.

Don't decide for them.

Before speaking to a person who is Deaf or hard of hearing, make sure that you get their attention.

Depending on the situation, you can wave your hand, tap them on the shoulder or flicker the lights.

Rephrase, rather than repeat, sentences that the person does not understand.

When talking, face the person.

A quiet, well-lit room is most conducive to effective communication.

If you are in front of the light source-such as a window with your back to it, the glare may obscure your face and make it difficult for the person who is hard of hearing to speech read.

Speak clearly.

Most people who are hard of hearing count on watching people's lips as they speak to help them understand.

Avoid chewing gum, smoking or obscuring your mouth with your hand while speaking.

There is no need to shout at a person who is Deaf or hard of hearing.

If the person uses a hearing aid, it will be calibrated to normal voice levels, your shout will just sound distorted.

People who are Deaf (and some who are hard of hearing or have speech disabilities) make and receive telephone calls with the assistance of a device called a TTY (short for teletypewriter; also called a TDD).

A TTY is a small device with a keyboard, a paper printer or a visual display screen and acoustic couplers (for the telephone receiver).

When a TTY user calls a business that does not have a TTY, they place the call through their state's relay service.

Likewise, a business that does not have a TTY can reach a customer who is a TTY user through the relay service.

The relay service can be reached anywhere in the US by dialing 711.

If you receive a relay call, the operator will identify it as such. Please do not hang up this is the way that people who are Deaf are able to place an order at your pizza parlor, call your store to find out what hours you are open, or make a reservation at your restaurant.

Many people today choose to utilize text messaging, or smart phone application of various kinds.

Some applications provide voice to text translation so the person who is Deaf can see what you are saying.

Some applications in development actually translate the spoken word or text messages into on screen representations of American Sign language.