

# Including Hard of Hearing & Deafened Employees at Work

Just as there are many causes, types, and degrees of hearing loss, people with hearing loss function in very different ways. Hearing loss behaviour, therefore, varies from person to person and the following examples may not apply to everyone.

- Hard of hearing or deafened people often miss the auditory cues taken for granted by hearing people. For example, a hearing person hears the intake of breath that indicates someone is about to speak. A hard of hearing person may miss this and start “talking over” the other person, a common and often embarrassing hallmark of hearing loss.
- Judging the level of sound is sometimes difficult and a person with hearing loss may speak unnecessarily loudly. A discreet hand motion will signal the problem to the speaker.
- In meetings or other situations involving a great deal of information, people with hearing loss may “tune out” due to the strain of concentrating to keep up with the conversation.
- Hard of hearing people also commonly frown when listening, another indicator of the enormous amount of energy required to communicate.

Rather than make assumptions about a worker’s communication abilities or needs, ask the employee and then provide access whenever possible. Communicating with a person with hearing loss is straightforward when a few key tips are followed.

- Choose a well-lit area.
- Speak with the light on your face to make speechreading easier.
- Write down key phrases and words if required.
- Maintain eye contact, and minimize head and body movement.
- Speak clearly and at a normal or slightly slower pace.
- Sit as closely together as is comfortable and professional.
- Facial expressions should match words, and are helpful when a tone of voice can’t be heard.
- Do not shout or over-enunciate, which distorts the face and lips.
- Do not indulge in side chat. Although second nature to hearing people, side conversations make deaf, deafened and hard of hearing people feel they are missing important information, which may indeed be the case.

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These tips are provided by the Canadian Hearing Society. For more tips on communication visit their website <[www.chs.ca/info/es/hofhdeafend.html](http://www.chs.ca/info/es/hofhdeafend.html)>.