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CHHA-NL  
CANADIAN HARD OF HEARING ASSOCIATION  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR



# Volunteer Training Manual Level 5

Aids to Communication





Level 5 - Aids to Communication  
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*Some of the material in this training manual has been taken or adapted from other CHHA-NL information materials, particularly “Better Hearing for Seniors” project manuals as well as the booklet “All You Need to Know About Hearing Loss”.*



## Introduction

Living in a world which relies heavily on communication, hard of hearing people often find themselves excluded from conversation at home, in the work place, and social settings. Therefore, anything that can be done to improve their ability to communicate and understand their environment will also decrease their isolation. This module will examine just that, different “Aids to Communication” for hard of hearing persons.

## How To Communicate with the Hard of Hearing

One way to improve communication with the hard of hearing is to tailor your communication patterns to best suit their needs by:

1. Being aware of who has a hearing problem and who wears a hearing aid.
2. Using the access symbol for hearing impairment.
3. Following some simple rules for communication:
  - a.) Don't do anything else while talking to the hard of hearing person.
  - b.) Get the person's attention
  - c.) Face the person so that the light is on your face; look up and tilt your face so your mouth can be seen.
  - d.) Avoid talking against background noise if possible since talking, TV, can block out your voice.
  - e.) Don't hide your mouth. Anything: food, gum, hands, can prevent speechreading.
  - f.) Do not shout.
  - g.) Speak clearly and slowly.
  - h.) Rephrase a misunderstood sentence. Say it in a different way.
  - i.) Use facial expressions, gestures. This adds meaning to your words.
  - j.) Write key words for the person to read.
  - k.) Bluffing may be a problem.. Hard of hearing people often smile and nod as if they understand you when they do not. To be sure you have been understood, ask the person to repeat back what you said.

## Psychological Considerations

There are a number of factors that affect a hard of hearing person's ability to communicate with others. Training on these factors can all help the hard of hearing person to communicate more effectively.

1. Attitude

The individual's attitude towards his/her hearing loss has an effect on communication. The individual who is willing to admit that he/she has a hearing loss tends to adapt better in communication situations.

2. Analytical Skills

An individual who has the ability to analyze situations and determine why communication has broken down is better equipped to handle communication situations.

3. Type of Situation

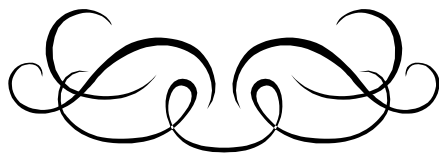
How people react, their degree of stress and how assertive they may be will vary according to the type of situation. Individuals may be more relaxed at a family gathering than at a business meeting.

4. Preparation

If people are prepared for a particular situation, they may feel more relaxed and be more successful in that situation.

5. Personality

Individuals who are aggressive or passive tend to be less adaptable and have more trouble communicating.



## Accessibility



*International Symbol of  
Access for Hearing Loss*



*International TTY  
Symbol (Text Telephone)*



*International Volume  
Control Telephone  
symbol*

### International Symbol of Access for Hearing Loss

Accessibility for the hard of hearing means creating an environment where all individuals can communicate and actively participate.

To be accessible to deaf and hard of hard people, a public place or service facility should provide one or more of the following:

1. Telephones with volume control handsets and hearing aid compatibility.
2. TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf) - a compact portable device for use with a regular telephone.
3. Interpreter - sign language and/or oral interpreter.
4. Captioned movies, videotapes, TV programmes.
5. Special sound systems installed for hard of hearing patrons - FM, infra-red, or loop.
6. Visual alert system (flashing light) for emergencies such as fire.

The International Symbol is also used to identify deaf and hard of hearing:

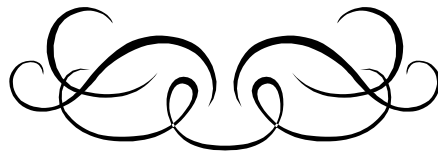
- patients on a hospital chart
- guests on a hotel or motel register
- children, on road signs near schools or homes
- on a wallet card.

## Accessibility (con't)

### Public accessibility

Deaf and hard of hearing people are denied full use of public facilities such as museums, libraries, movie theatres, concert halls, churches, buses, planes, and transportation terminals. The following suggestions would improve accessibility:

- sign language interpreters
- captioned films
- printed information
- signs
- assistive listening devices
- compatible and amplified telephones
- portable TDDs
- visual fire and smoke alarm systems
- adequate lighting
- trained staff that are aware of and sensitive to the needs of the hearing impaired.





## Lipreading

Lipreading is also referred to as speechreading. It is the art or skill of understanding what a person says by watching lip, jaw, and tongue movements as well as facial expressions and gestures. You do not have to hear each and every individual sound or word to understand speech. A hard of hearing person can use their remaining hearing, eyesight and knowledge of language.

Lipreading classes train the hard of hearing to:

- be aware of speech sounds which can be seen on the lips
- recognize speech patterns, phrases and the grouping of syllables and their corresponding shapes and movements as seen on the lips
- make use of the context in which words occur
- make maximum use of the environment – good lighting and reduction of background noise make lipreading easier
- Develop good listening skills

Lipreading is a skill and like any other skill requires training and diligent practice. A hard of hearing person can do the following to help them lipread more effectively:

- make their needs known to other people by explaining that they are hearing impaired and that they are trying to lipread. Most normal hearing people will make every effort to accommodate their needs.
- when possible, the hard of hearing person should ask to be briefed on lectures or conversations before they actually begin. This will give them a head start by allowing them to anticipate the context of the conversation
- be alert and attentive. A hard of hearing person may become tired if they have to lipread for a lengthy period of time. Where possible, regular breaks should be scheduled to allow them to rest between conversations
- eliminate sources of noise
- make sure the room is well lit and situate themselves so that they can see the speaker's face.

## Sign Language



Sign language is a language which consists of arm and hand movements, commonly called signs, facial expressions and body language. In North America this language is referred to as American Sign Language (ASL).

As with any other language, ASL has its own grammatical structure and syntax. Movements of the arms and hands convey different meanings, just as the use of words in the English language convey different meanings. Similarly, in ASL, changes in body movements and facial expressions can change the meaning of intended messages, whereas, in the spoken English language the tone of voice can change the meaning of messages.

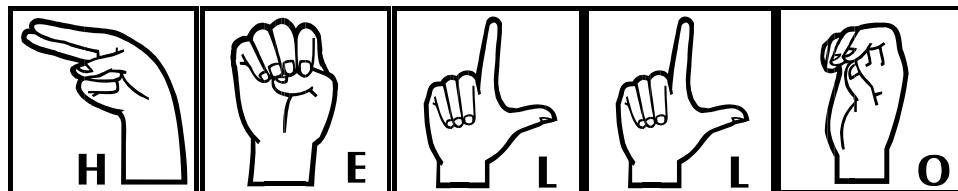
### Who uses sign language?

More often than not, those who use ASL as their first language are profoundly deaf. This does not mean that every deaf person communicates through sign language. There are some deaf people who prefer to communicate orally through speech and use lipreading and other forms of speech and auditory training to develop their communication skills.

Many people with varying degrees of hearing loss, ranging from mild to profound, learn sign language. By doing so, some feel that they will have another method of communicating, should the need arise, and will be able to communicate with those who only use sign language.

### Is sign language difficult to learn?

No. Many people say it looks more difficult than it actually is to practice. Sign language is a beautiful expressive language and is fun to learn. Courses are available in most provinces in Canada. For further information about courses offered in your area, contact local colleges and universities.



## TECHNICAL DEVICES

Living in a world which relies heavily on communication, hard of hearing people often find themselves excluded from conversation at home, in the work place, and social settings. However, there are many technical devices that make communication easier.

### Assistive Listening Devices

#### Telephone Devices

When Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone over a century ago, he was actually attempting to develop an assistive listening device for the hearing impaired. Ironically, Bell's telephone, while improving communication for most people, is often a major source of frustration for the hearing impaired. However, modern technology has provided many devices to facilitate better communication. These devices can be used with or without hearing aids.

The type of device selected will depend on:

- the degree of hearing loss
- whether or not you wear a hearing aid
- the type of hearing aid
- the model of telephone

#### The Compatible Telephone

A flux coil in the ear piece of a telephone makes it compatible with a hearing aid which has a telephone switch. With the switch turned to the "T" position and the volume control adjusted, the incoming voice is amplified, and background noises are practically eliminated. All telephones manufactured or sold in Canada are required to be hearing aid compatible.

#### Telephones with Built-in Amplifiers



These telephones can be used with or without a hearing aid and the volume can be controlled at a level that is comfortable for the user. The volume control switch located on the underside of the receiver can be adjusted to a higher or lower volume. Hearing impaired people can use the telephone by adjusting the volume upwards. People with normal hearing can use it at a lower setting.

## Assistive Listening Devices

### Telephone Devices (con't)

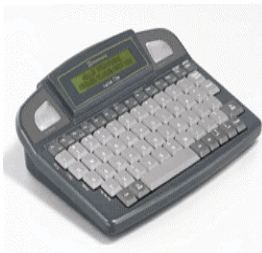
#### Portable Amplifiers



Compact portable amplifiers with and without flux coils are available and can be used with most telephones. They can be carried in a pocket or handbag and fitted over the receiver of most telephones.



#### Telephone Relay Systems



For those with more severe losses who are unable to hear and/or speak on the phone, there is the TTY (teletype) device, also referred to as TDD (telecommunication device for the deaf) and TT (teletext). The individual using a TTY can call another individual who has a similar machine. When the message is typed into the teletype machine, the person on the other end will receive the message typed through on their machines. They can then type a message back to the sender. Fire departments and police stations have TTY's so that emergency calls can be received from hearing impaired people.

Most provinces now have Telephone Relay Operators on duty 24 hours. This service allows the hard of hearing person to call the relay operator using a TTY and the operator then relays this information verbally to the person being called. The operator then relays the conversation to the hard of hearing person through typing in the TTY. This service is free of charge.

#### Voice-Over Relay System

For people who are late-deafened and prefer to use their own voice in TTY calls, they can use the Voice-Assisted or Voice-Over Relay. When placing a TTY call, the deafened person should advise the Relay operator that he/she wishes to place a voice assisted call. This consists of speaking into the mouthpiece directly to the other person and receiving the other person's speech via typing by the relay operator. If this Voice-Over option is not yet available in your area, ask the area telephone company to provide it.

## Assistive Listening Devices (con't)

### Individual Listening Systems

#### One-to-One Conversation

Some hard of hearing people find it difficult to communicate in one to one conversation even with the help of a hearing aid and quiet surroundings. Several devices are available to help these situations. These one-on-one devices are ideal for:

- conversations in noisy environments
- patient care situations
- very elderly people who can't or won't wear a hearing aid

#### Direct audio input

Audio is transmitted directly into hearing aids through jacks that attach directly on the aid. Because the signal is brought directly to the hearing aids distortion is reduced and clarity is increased.

#### Individual FM system



An individual FM system consists of a receiver, worn by the hard of hearing person, and a separate remote transmitter with microphone, worn by the speaker. The run on batteries and is more expensive than the audio input but is generally more powerful and versatile.

#### Individual Infra-Red system

This consists of an infra-red emitter about the size of a small book. Used with an infra-red receiver with a silhouette or neck loop and T-switch hearing aid. It can also be used with a lightweight headset instead of a hearing aid; or a direct audio input cord.



#### Television



Most hard of hearing people have difficulty hearing the television if it is at normal volume. If they turn it "up" then it is too loud and annoys everybody else. Direct audio input, FM, and infrared systems are very effective ways of alleviating this situation.

## Assistive Listening Devices (con't)

### Group Listening Systems

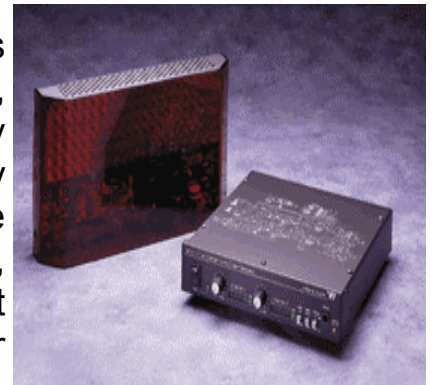
Listening in a large hall, church or theatre presents many problems for hard of hearing people. For some, the situation is so difficult they avoid meetings, theatre and concerts. The problems encountered are due to:

- distance from the speaker
- echo and reverberation
- background noises

There are amplification systems that create a better listening environment for hard of hearing people. They are:

- FM Systems
- AM Broadcasting Systems
- Infrared System
- Magnetic Induction Loop

Induction loops, FM systems, and Infra-red systems are all devices that use electromagnetic impulses, radio waves or infrared light to bring sound directly to the user via the T-switch on the hearing aid or by means of a volume controlled handset. The induction loop is compatible to the T-switch directly, whereas the FM and Infra-red systems require that you use an extra accessory such as a neck loop or silhouette, together with the appropriate receiver.



Infrared system

Group listening systems are used in various meeting rooms. The type of system selected will depend on the room specification, acoustics and intended use. Loop systems are cheapest and easiest to install, but each system has its advantages and drawbacks. Technical experts and the hard of hearing should be involved, to decide what is best for each environment.

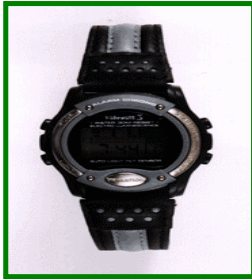


## Assistive Signalling Devices

### Alerting Devices

Visual alert systems are designed to make activities of daily living easier and safer. There are devices that help you know when:

- it is time to get up
- the doorbell is ringing
- the phone is ringing
- the baby is crying
- the fire alarm is going
- the burglar alarm has gone off



These devices use loud sounds, flashing lights, or vibrations to draw attention to doorbells, fire alarms, telephone rings, alarm clocks, baby cries, etc. Portable ones such as the Watchman are quite versatile, relatively inexpensive, and can be used just about anywhere.

## Captioning

### Television Decoder

This is a television converter device about the size of a small VCR, which contains a chip for decoding closed captions. Many televisions on the market now have a decoder chip built in, so no additional device is needed. Captions appear as subtitles at the bottom of the TV screen, or in some cases, at the top of the screen.

### Real-Time Captioning for Meetings

For the very hard of hearing and late deafened, who cannot follow speech in a group, print interpreting could be provided. This service includes a captioner who types at a computer keyboard, with dialogue projected on-screen, to be read by the viewer.