Communication Tips
for the general public

Remember that people who are deaf or have hearing loss have individual communication needs and you should ask someone how best you can communicate with them.

Not every tip below will be appropriate for every person who is deaf or has hearing loss.

Be patient and considerate, it is a stressful time for us all, but people with deafness and hearing loss who rely on facial expressions and lipreading are finding things especially difficult right now.

The below are particularly important when someone cannot use visual cues, such as on the telephone or when wearing a mask:

- **Rephrase**
  - If someone doesn’t understand you, repeat what you said or phrase it differently, use plain language

- **Face to face**
  - Make sure you are facing the person you are talking to and speak clearly – avoid shouting, speaking too fast or unnecessarily slow

- **Interpreter**
  - If they ask, speak to a relative or friend

- **Write it down**
  - Use pen on paper, text on device screens, or whiteboards

- **Full Attention**
  - Use simple gestures such as pointing or waving to get someone’s attention

- **Background noise**
  - In a noisy place, move to a quieter area if possible

Please be aware that different rules apply in health and social care settings. You can find guidance for health and social care professionals on the [RNID website](https://www.rnid.org.uk).

RNID is the trading name of The Royal National Institute for Deaf People. A registered charity in England and Wales (207720) and Scotland (SC038926).