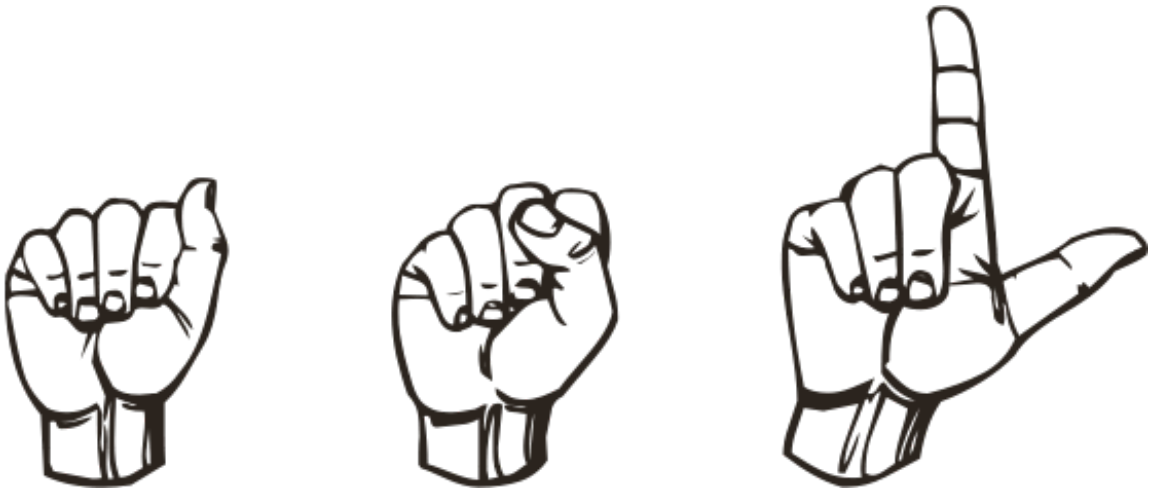
Deaf-Hearing Communication Centre

American Sign Language Class Reference Handout



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Introduction to the Deaf-Hearing Communication Centre, Inc.

The Deaf-Hearing Communication Centre, Inc. (DHCC) is a non-profit organization located in Swarthmore, PA. Our mission is to promote equal communication accessibility and cultural awareness to the Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing populations by providing quality communication services, advocacy and educational programs.

DHCC was founded in 1972, and is governed by a Board of Directors. The majority of the members on our Board are Deaf or hard of hearing, allowing DHCC to remain true to its roots and ensure all communities we serve have input into the organization's development.

DHCC is best known for our American Sign Language/English interpreting services. In addition to providing quality communication services between 9-5 on weekdays, we also have an emergency interpreting service that provides interpreting services 24/7 for medical and police emergencies. Our services also include Communication Access Real-Time Translation - CART (also called Real-Time Captioning) for hard of hearing consumers and tactile interpreting for Deaf-Blind consumers.

In addition to interpreting and captioning services, DHCC provides a variety of educational opportunities as stated in our mission. These services include American Sign Language classes (community classes, private organization classes, private tutoring), sensitivity trainings, and workshops. DHCC advocates for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals to ensure they receive the communication access they need. This advocacy work is on an individual basis, as well as working for legislative and policy changes. Last, DHCC has an information and referral service that provides information about services and community activities, and keeps up-to-date resource files.

DHCC is successful because we work in partnership with Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing individuals who are concerned about improving communication access in the Delaware Valley.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please feel free to contact Tanya Sturgis, Education Coordinator, at (484) 470-6409 or tsturgis@dhcc.org. **Enjoy!**

American Sign Language Course Rationale

Welcome to DHCC's American Sign Language (ASL) program! ASL classes were part of the agency when it was founded in 1972, and we are proud to still offer classes today. The goal of the ASL program is to provide interested individuals with the opportunity to acquire functional communication skills in ASL. Please note that the goal is NOT to train individuals to become ASL/English interpreters. Although many interpreters have started in our community classes, the requirements to become an interpreter are far beyond what is covered in our beginner classes.

Our classes focus on both receptive and expressive skills. Receptive acquisition of ASL is your ability to comprehend what someone signs to you. Expressive output of ASL is your ability to sign and be understood by others. Beginner classes will stress your receptive skills first as opposed to your expressive skills. Expressive skills will come in time as you gain more vocabulary and a better understanding of ASL. This follows any language acquisition; observe children and you will note that they understand what is being said to them (receptive skills) long before they are able to convey their thoughts to others (expressive skills).

ASL is not simply a representation of English using your hands. ASL has a syntax and grammatical structure that is completely different from English. Therefore, in keeping with the goal of the course, there will be NO use of voice once students have entered the classroom. Out of respect to Deaf culture, the language, and your instructor, students are asked not to use their voice even with each other and certainly not when a Deaf instructor turns his/her back (e.g. to write on the board).

DHCC classes use textbooks and DVDs during class, however the majority of this type of work should be done at home to reinforce what has been covered during the class sessions. DHCC encourages direct communication between students and instructors during the classroom time through dialogue, activities and games.

Students should be aware that courses alone cannot provide the level of ASL skills necessary to communicate fluently with Deaf individuals. Students are encouraged to participate in activities in the Deaf community whenever possible, and to interact with a variety of Deaf individuals. The more contact with Deaf people you have, the more insight and feedback you will gain. In addition, students will have opportunities to observe different styles of signing. Ask your teacher about events, check websites and join online listservs such as PSDNews.

If you have any questions over the next 10 classes, please feel free to discuss them with your instructor or contact Tanya Sturgis, Education Coordinator, at (484) 470-6409 or tsturgis@dhcc.org. **Enjoy!**

Learning A Second Language

A language is a system of relatively arbitrary symbols and grammatical signals that change across time and that members of a community share and use for several purposes: to interact with each other, to communicate ideas, emotions, and intentions, and to transmit their culture from generation to generation."

--American Sign Language: A Teacher's Resource Text on Curriculum, Methods, and Evaluations. Dennis Cokely and Charlotte Baker-Shenk.

Learning a second language is not an easy task. In fact, although learning your first language was probably the easiest thing you've ever done, learning your second language may be among the most difficult things you ever do. Learning a second language (and learning it well) means learning more than the vocabulary and grammar of that language. It means learning about the people who use that language: their attitudes, their cultural values, and their way of looking at the world.

Thus, learning ASL as a second language means learning about the group of people who use ASL: the Deaf community. It means recognizing the Deaf community as a separate cultural group with its own set of values, attitudes and world view. Whatever your personal or professional motivations for wanting to learn ASL, you will find that the more you know about, appreciate and understand the people who use ASL, the easier it is for you to learn their language.

For most hearing people, learning ASL is quite a different experience than learning a spoken language. First, to understand someone using ASL, you have to "listen" with your eyes. Most hearing people do not have extensive experience with this since they have grown up depending mostly on their ears to receive linguistic information. Second, to produce ASL, you must use your eyes, face, hands and body in ways that are not required in spoken language. Most hearing people tend to be somewhat inhibited about using these parts of their body for communication. This is especially true for many hearing Americans who have learned that it is not polite to stare or point, two things that have grammatical significance in ASL.

Another important difference is English has both a spoken and written form; ASL only has a signed form, with no written counterpart. This means there are no newspapers, books, magazines etc. written in ASL. When trying to translate the meaning of ASL signs to written form, Deaf people use English words to represent ASL signs. However, ASL grammar does not look like English, so the "words" (signs) are a combination of English words put in ASL word order (grammar). Imagine writing a Swahili sentence using English words - the result would be a garbled mess because of the two very different grammar systems. With ASL and English, this has often led people to incorrectly deduce that ASL is "bad English" or "broken English," when in fact, it is not English at all.

Course Goals

DHCC's ASL community classes give students the opportunity to achieve the following goals:

1. Become comfortable with communicating in a visual language
2. Learn about the importance and variations of facial expressions and body language in ASL
3. Gain an appreciation of the history of ASL
4. Learn basic information about the Deaf community and Deaf culture
5. Develop basic conversation skills in ASL, including both receptive and expressive skills
6. Develop a basic understanding of the grammatical structure of ASL
7. **Have fun!**

Classroom Procedures

1. **NO VOICE.** There is absolutely no use of voice once students have entered the classroom. This includes conversations with the instructor AND with other students. Please respect our instructors by following this rule, especially when the the teacher's back is turned (e.g. when they are writing on the board).

    a. If you're communicating with other students or the instructor and you don't know how to sign something, please remember not to use your voice. First try **gesturing**, then **miming** (acting out), and finally **writing** as a last resort.

    b. If you need to get a person's attention, please do so without using voice by either **tapping** them lightly on the shoulder, **waving** your hand, **stomping** your foot, or **flicking the lights** on and off a few times.

2. **Class Set Up.** Chairs should be arranged in a semi-circle so all students can see each other and the teacher while signing. Please help to arrange the chairs at the beginning of class if needed, as well as putting the chairs back where you found them at the end of class.

3. **Warm Up.** Classes will begin with a warm-up exercise and/or brief review of the lesson from the previous week.

4. **Break.** Each class will be held for two hours with a ten-minute break halfway through the session.

5. **Attendance.** Attendance is important in any language class, but is **very** important when learning ASL. Because the language is visual, you need to physically see the instruction. Although there are DVDs included with the workbook, this is meant to be supplementary information, and not a replacement for attending class. Students who miss 3 or more classes, or those who are struggling with the material, will be asked to repeat the level before moving on. DHCC understands that situations arise that cause you to miss class. If this happens, it is your responsibility to get in touch with your classmates outside of normal class time (e.g. before class, during break) concerning the work you missed. Please remember that students should not ask the instructor to review materials that have previously been taught, as this disrupts the class.

6. **Preparation and Materials.** Please bring your workbook, paper and pen to every class. Students are required to complete any homework assignments prior to class. Keeping up with assignments will allow you to move smoothly along with the curriculum.

Terminology

- **American Sign Language (ASL)**: A visual language predominantly used in the United States and parts of Canada that utilizes articulated hand movements along with grammatically relevant non-manual markers such as facial expressions, body/head movements, and fingerspelling to express an infinite set of utterances. ASL is a true language, and has its own grammar, syntax and vocabulary which are separate from English. Like all languages, ASL evolves and grows over time.

- **CART (Communication Access Real-Time Translation)**: Also called Real-time captioning, CART uses qualified captioners with specialized equipment to print a word-for-word version of spoken language on a laptop computer, TV monitor or overhead screen.

- **deaf (with a lowercase "d") or "little d deaf"**: Medical term used to describe a significant hearing loss, and is independent of an individual's use (or lack of) hearing aids or signing preference.

- **Deaf (with an uppercase "D") or "big D Deaf"**: Used to describe a particular group of individuals who use American Sign Language as their primary language and have a shared culture. A person who self-identifies as Deaf does not view themselves as impaired or disabled. Identifying oneself as Deaf is independent of his/her level of hearing loss.

- **Deaf Culture**: A group of individuals that use American Sign Language and have shared attitudes, beliefs, goals, and values. This is a positive term, and represents pride and communal identity. Just like members of any culture, those who belong to the Deaf culture have their own art, stories, social mores, and entertainment.

- **Fingerspelling:** Each letter of the English alphabet has a corresponding hand shape in ASL (called "The Manual Alphabet"). Fingerspelling is when these letters are used to spell out a word (ex. spelling F-L-O-W-E-R instead of using the sign for FLOWER). Fingerspelling is used when discussing proper nouns, for emphasis, or when there is no corresponding sign in ASL for an English word.

- **Hard of Hearing:** A term that has a variety of definitions, but is typically used as a self-identifier by individuals who have a hearing loss and prefer auditory language and spoken English for communication. Sometimes hard of hearing individuals may also use American Sign Language, and other times individuals may identify themselves as hard of hearing to purposefully separate themselves from being a member of the Deaf Community.

- **Speechreading:** A technique of understanding speech by visually interpreting the movements of the lips, face, tongue, and body movements in conjunction with using context and residual hearing. Speechreading alone is not an accurate form of communication.

Terms No Longer Used

- **Deaf and Dumb**: An individual's level of hearing and intelligence are not related.
- **Deaf-Mute**: An inaccurate term as the function of the auditory system is separate from the function of the vocal system. A Deaf individual has the ability to use their vocal cords (unless there is specific and separate damage). Furthermore, many Deaf people use vocalizations, even if their primary language is ASL.
- **Hearing Impaired**: A term that was recently considered to be the politically correct way of describing all individuals with a hearing loss, and is still (incorrectly) used by people today. This term is viewed as negative because it focuses on what an individual *can't* do. It implies that hearing is normal, and anything different as substandard, or impaired. The preferred term by this group of individuals is "Hard of Hearing."
- **Lipreading**: This term implies that the lips are the only thing involved in spoken communication. In reality, speech involves the lips, tongue, teeth, cheeks, eyes, gestures and body language. The preferred term is Speechreading, however many people still use lipreading (and mean speechreading) out of habit.

Difference Between Signers and Interpreters

A big misconception is that individuals who have taken a few American Sign Language classes, or even those who are fluent but do not have interpreter training, can work as an ASL/English interpreter. A signer is NOT an interpreter. A signer is someone who has some level of ASL proficiency - this can range from a beginning student to someone who can use the language fluently. An interpreter, however, is someone who has bilingual and bicultural proficiency, and is able to impartially and effectively interpret or transliterate between the two languages. To become an interpreter takes years of diligent and intensive training. While ASL fluency is an obvious skill that an interpreter must to possess, an interpreter also must have excellent English fluency as well as proficiency with the actual skill of interpreting. Just because a person may be fluent in both ASL and English does not mean they will be able to interpret. Below is a list of some differences between signers and interpreters.

Signer	Interpreter
Has some level of signing ability, ranging from a beginner to a fluent user	Is fluent in and highly skilled with ASL
Level of English fluency is irrelevant	Is fluent in and highly skilled with English
May have had one or two classes in sign language, or learned some signs from a book or Deaf friend/family member	Has had extensive formal training in language systems, interpreting theory, cross cultural communication and ethical decision-making
Can communicate *their own* thoughts with Deaf people (at varying levels)	Can interpret *someone else's* message (signed or spoken)
Is not required to follow the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID's) Code of Professional Conduct	Is required to follow the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID's) Code of Professional Conduct
Is not certified by RID or state screened	Is nationally certified registered with the state (or registered as pre-certified)
May not be knowledgeable about an interpreter's professional responsibilities, and may see themselves as a "helper"	Is highly knowledgeable about their professional role, is not a "helper" or "aide," and acts accordingly as a professional
Has varying degrees of involvement in the Deaf community, from virtually none to having Deaf family members	Is involved in the Deaf community on a regular basis
Is not ready or qualified to interpret	**Is qualified to interpret**

Cultural Differences

It is important to remember that languages are intimately linked to culture. So, when there are language differences present, there are also cultural differences. As such, it is important to take note of the following cultural differences. Please note this information is only a guideline, and it is always best to ask the individual what his/her communication preferences may be.

	American Hearing Culture	American Deaf Culture	Possible Conflicts
Getting Attention	Vocal attention: call name, say "excuse me"	Visual or tactile attention: tap, wave, bang table, stomp on floor, flash lights	Hearing individuals may be uncomfortable with physical contact or not used to visual distractions Deaf individuals may be offended by people yelling or "over-mouthing" to get their attention
Intonation	Use tone of voice to distinguish question, statement or command	Use of facial expression to distinguish sentence types; facial movements have grammatical function in ASL	Hearing individuals may misinterpret facial expressions of a Deaf person (i.e. a wrinkled nose means "I agree" not "that smells") A Deaf individual may misunderstand the meaning of a sentence if there is no visual cue to represent the intonation
Value of Speech	Speech is highly valued. People are judged based on their speech.	Speech is devalued, and the ability to speak is irrelevant. This belief stems mostly from old, widely unsuccessful, education systems for Deaf individuals that only allowed speech, and disallowed signed communication.	Hearing individuals may assume all Deaf people can speak, or may incorrectly associate education/intelligence with speaking. Deaf individuals may have different beliefs about the importance of English fluency, as it is not representative of their intelligence.
Privacy	Tend to be relatively private about personal information. For example, there are clear separations between work and personal life.	Deaf culture is relatively open, honest, and blunt. People are sometimes criticized if they try to keep their life too private. Deaf people may be suspicious of hearing people who seem to keep secrets. Most of this stems from the long history of Deaf individuals being cut off from access to information.	Hearing individuals may feel a Deaf person tells them too much, or asks too many personal questions. While you can still keep information private, it is important to recognize that the intention is not to be rude. Deaf individuals may feel cut off from information.

	American Hearing Culture	American Deaf Culture	Possible Conflicts
Eye Contact	Limited eye contact; too much eye contact can be seen as too aggressive or intimate. Breaking eye contact is done frequently with little repercussion	Integral to communication. Eye contact is maintained for long periods of time, and breaking eye contact can sometimes be considered rude (equivalent of a hearing person covering their ears).	Hearing individuals may feel uncomfortable with continuous eye contact. Deaf individuals may be distracted by regular breaks in eye contact.
Movement/ Use of Body	Learn to keep movement or "squirming" to a minimum. Children are taught to "sit still".	Movement is required for communication	Hearing individuals may perceive Deaf ASL users as animated or too extreme with their body movements. Deaf individuals may feel limited in their movements, or that their movements are incorrectly interpreted by hearing individuals.
Auditory Noise	Noise sensitivity - cautious to eat quietly and monitor body sounds	Often unaware of the noises they are making (i.e. eating sounds, body sounds).	Hearing individuals may incorrectly judge Deaf people as being "uncouth". Deaf individuals may not realize the noise they are making.
Visual Noise	Often go unnoticed - communication is focused on hearing.	Are very aware of visual distractions, e.g. difficult to see signs when someone is standing in front of a light source	Hearing individuals may be unaware of slight visual distractions that are extremely distracting to Deaf individuals.
Touching	In general, do not frequently touch other people as it may be considered "overly-friendly" or "touchy-feely"	Much more comfortable with contact, as it is often used to get attention (instead of calling name) or when passing by (instead of saying excuse me)	Hearing individuals may feel a Deaf person is overly touchy. Deaf individuals may be uncomfortable with using their voice to get attention.
Pointing	Taught that pointing is rude.	Part of the grammar and vocabulary of ASL. Used for spatial representation, and words like YOU, and directions.	Hearing individuals may feel offended at the bluntness of pointing. Deaf individuals may be incorrectly labeled as rude, or may have trouble understand a hearing person who is hesitant to point.
Proximity (Body Space)	Usually stand about 1-2 feet from each other when talking	Stand farther from each other, more distance is needed to fully see signs	Hearing individuals may feel a Deaf person is standing far away. Deaf individuals may feel a hearing person is standing too close.

Communication Preferences

Deaf and hard of hearing people us various modes of communication. When communicating with a Deaf or hard of hearing person, you should always ask them what his/her communication preferences may be. The following are some examples (which may be used alone or in combination with one another):

- **American Sign Language** - May prefer/require a qualified ASL/English interpreter for communication. This can include one hearing interpreter, a team of two hearing interpreters, or a team of one hearing and one Deaf interpreter.

- **Speechreading** - May rely on speechreading in combination with residual hearing, or with assistive devices or CART. *Be aware that relying solely on speechreading is not an effective means of communication.*

- **Reading and Writing** - Be aware that English skills can vary greatly from person to person, and it is important that the person have adequate English skills to communicate using written English. Otherwise, an ASL/English interpreter may be necessary. Remember that for many Deaf individuals, English is a second language. In addition, keep in mind that intelligence is not related to English fluency.

- **Total Communication** - A combination of different communication modalities.

- **Technology and Devices** - May include devices such as hearing aids, Teletypewriters (TTYs)/ Telecommunication Devices for the Deaf (TDDs), text messaging, email, Video Relay Services (VRS), FM Systems, CapTel (Captioned Telephone), Voice Carry Over (VCO) telephone, and volume control (e.g. amplified telephones). Some of these are relatively simple and inexpensive, while others are more expensive and require training to use.

Tips for Communicating with Deaf Individuals

One-On-One

- Always ask the Deaf person for their individual communication preferences!
- When possible, use supports such as a qualified ASL/English interpreter
- Discuss communication strategies in advance, especially when an interpreter is needed
- If an interpreter is needed, use only QUALIFIED, STATE REGISTERED interpreters
- Do not assume that the Deaf individual can speechread. Additionally, keep in mind that only a third of spoken English can be understood via speechreading.
- Keep in mind when someone nods their head, this does not always denote understanding.
- Speak clearly and at a normal pace. There is no need to exaggerate or overemphasize speech - in fact, this makes communication more difficult
- Maintain eye contact and face the person when speaking - the Deaf person's ability to see your face will increase communication effectiveness
- Use any combination of the following: facial expressions, gestures, body language, paper and pencil
- Rephrase (instead of repeat) or write down information when you are not understood. Some words are more difficult to speechread and/or understand in English than others.
- Consider the visual environment. An environment with a lot of movement (especially when it is behind the speaker) environment can also be distracting.
- Try to sit where there is light on your face, and not behind you.

In a Group Setting

The wide majority of Deaf people will require an ASL/English interpreter or services in a group setting. The following are additional ways to improve communication in a group:

- If possible, make available a brief outline of the major issues to be discussed
- The Deaf person will most likely sit where it is easiest to see the speaker and the interpreter
- Visual aids are effective as Deaf people are visually oriented
- Try to speak at a normal pace (not exceptionally fast, not overly slow)
- The speaker should repeat questions and comments from around the room for the interpreter
- If possible, minutes should be recorded and distributed afterwards so all information is clear

Tips for Communicating with Hard of Hearing Individuals

- Always ask the hard of hearing person for their individual communication preferences!
- Talk TO the person with a hearing loss - not about them.
- Get the individual's attention before speaking.
- Speak clearly and at a normal pace; don't shout or over-articulate.
- Face the person when speaking.
- Avoid putting obstacles (e.g. hands) in front of your face and mouth. Be aware that facial hair can make speechreading more difficult.
- Rephrase (instead of repeat) or write down information when you are not understood. Some words are more difficult to speechread than others.
- Ask questions to ensure everyone understands each other.
- Consider the auditory environment. A noisy area can make communication much more difficult.
- Consider the visual environment. An environment with a lot of movement (especially when it is behind the speaker) environment can also be distracting.
- Try to sit where there is light on your face, and not behind you.
- When possible, use supports such as a computer, assistive listening devices, or CART services. Be sure to arrange these services in advance.
- Patience!

Speechreading Facts and Information

Although speechreading can be a useful tool for individuals with a hearing loss, you may be surprised to read the following facts:

- Only 30-35% of English sounds can be speechread. This means even a highly skilled speechreader can only understand about one third of the words being said.
- Many words look exactly alike when pronounced - e.g. "shoot," "chews," "shoes," "juice," and "June"
- Speechreading requires a very high level of concentration, and is easily (and quickly) exhausting
- The following things affect a person's ability to speechread:
    - ✦ The speaker's pronunciation (including accent) and speech patterns
    - ✦ The speaker's facial expressions and body language
    - ✦ The hard of hearing person's familiarity with the speaker
    - ✦ The length of the utterance
    - ✦ The hard of hearing person's awareness of the topic being discussed

Fingerspelling Dos and Don'ts

Dos

1. Keep your hand steady
2. Keep your hand near your shoulder
3. Keep your hand facing your listener
4. Keep your hand vertical
5. Think about the complete word, and not individual letters
6. Spell only as fast as you can and still be clear to others. Slow and clear is always better than fast and messy.
7. When you are watching fingerspelling, ask the person to repeat as necessary. It takes time to read fingerspelling!

Don'ts

1. Bounce your hand between letters
2. Spell directly in front of your face or the other person's face
3. Spell towards yourself
4. Tilt your hand
5. Mouth or sound each letter. Always say the word - not the letters.
6. Spell fast if you can't spell clearly
7. Move the hand sideways while spelling
8. Try not to ask the person to slow down - ask them to repeat instead. Your receptive skills will increase faster if you focus on the word, instead of asking the speller to slow down so you can see the individual letters.

Deaf Community and Culture - FAQ

Reproduced from the National Association of the Deaf, www.nad.org

What is the difference between a person who is "deaf," "Deaf," or "hard of hearing"?

The deaf and hard of hearing community is diverse. There are variations in the cause and degree of hearing loss, age of onset, educational background, communication methods, and how individuals feel about their hearing loss. How people "label" or identify themselves is personal and may reflect identification with the deaf and hard of hearing community, the degree to which they can hear, or the relative age of onset. For example, some people identify themselves as "late-deafened," indicating that they experienced a loss of hearing later in life. Other people identify themselves as "deaf-blind," which usually indicates that they have some degree of hearing loss and some degree of vision loss. Some people believe that the term "people with hearing loss" is inclusive and efficient. However, some people who were born deaf or hard of hearing do not think of themselves as having lost their hearing. Over the years, the most commonly accepted terms have come to be "deaf," "Deaf," and "hard of hearing."

"Deaf" and "deaf"

According to Carol Padden and Tom Humphries, in *Deaf in America: Voices from a Culture* (1988):

> *We use the lowercase deaf when referring to the audiological condition of not hearing, and the uppercase Deaf when referring to a particular group of deaf people who share a language – American Sign Language (ASL) – and a culture. The members of this group have inherited their sign language, use it as a primary means of communication among themselves, and hold a set of beliefs about themselves and their connection to the larger society. We distinguish them from, for example, those who find themselves losing their hearing because of illness, trauma or age; although these people share the condition of not hearing, they do not have access to the knowledge, beliefs, and practices that make up the culture of Deaf people.*

Padden and Humphries comment, "this knowledge of Deaf people is not simply a camaraderie with others who have a similar physical condition, but is, like many other cultures in the traditional sense of the term, historically created and actively transmitted across generations." The authors also add that Deaf people "have found ways to define and express themselves through their rituals, tales, performances, and everyday social encounters. The richness of their sign language affords them the possibilities of insight, invention,

and irony." The relationship Deaf people have with their sign language is a strong one, and "the mistaken belief that ASL is a set of simple gestures with no internal structure has led to the tragic misconception that the relationship of Deaf people to their sign language is a casual one that can be easily severed and replaced." (Padden & Humphries)

"Hard of Hearing"

> *"Hard-of-hearing" can denote a person with a mild-to-moderate hearing loss. Or it can denote a deaf person who doesn't have/want any cultural affiliation with the Deaf community. Or both. The HOH dilemma: in some ways hearing, in some ways deaf, in others, neither.*
>
> *Can one be hard-of-hearing and ASL-Deaf? That's possible, too. Can one be hard-of-hearing and function as hearing? Of course. What about being hard-of-hearing and functioning as a member of both the hearing and Deaf communities? That's a delicate tightrope-balancing act, but it too is possible.*
>
> *As for the political dimension: HOH people can be allies of the Deaf community. They can choose to join or to ignore it. They can participate in the social, cultural, political, and legal life of the community along with culturally-Deaf or live their lives completely within the parameters of the "Hearing world." But they may have a more difficult time establishing a satisfying cultural/social identity.*
>
> *Deaf Life, "For Hearing People Only" (October 1997).*

Individuals can choose an audiological or cultural perspective. It's all about choices, comfort level, mode of communication, and acceptance. Whatever the decision, the NAD welcomes all Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, late-deafened, and deaf-blind Americans, and the advocacy work that the NAD does is available to and intended to benefit everyone.

What is wrong with the use of these terms "deaf-mute," "deaf and dumb," or "hearing-impaired"?

Deaf and hard of hearing people have the right to choose what they wish to be called, either as a group or on an individual basis. Overwhelmingly, deaf and hard of hearing people prefer to be called "deaf" or "hard of hearing." Nearly all organizations of the deaf use the term "deaf and hard of hearing," and the NAD is no exception. The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) also voted in 1991 to use "deaf and hard of hearing" as an official designation.

Yet there are many people who persist in using terms other than "deaf" and "hard of hearing." The alternative terms are often seen in print, heard on radio and television, and picked up in casual conversations all over. Let's take a look at the three most-used alternative terms.

Deaf and Dumb -- A relic from the medieval English era, this is the granddaddy of all negative labels pinned on deaf and hard of hearing people. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, pronounced us "deaf and dumb," because he felt that deaf people were incapable of being taught, of learning, and of reasoned thinking. To his way of thinking, if a person could not use his/her voice in the same way as hearing people, then there was no way that this person could develop cognitive abilities. (Source: Deaf Heritage, by Jack Gannon, 1980)

In later years, "dumb" came to mean "silent." This definition still persists, because that is how people see deaf people. The term is offensive to deaf and hard of hearing people for a number of reasons. One, deaf and hard of hearing people are by no means "silent" at all. They use sign language, lip-reading, vocalizations, and so on to communicate. Communication is not reserved for hearing people alone, and using one's voice is not the only way to communicate. Two, "dumb" also has a second meaning: stupid. Deaf and hard of hearing people have encountered plenty of people who subscribe to the philosophy that if you cannot use your voice well, you don't have much else "upstairs," and have nothing going for you. Obviously, this is incorrect, ill-informed, and false. Deaf and hard of hearing people have repeatedly proved that they have much to contribute to the society at large.

Deaf-Mute – Another offensive term from the 18th-19th century, "mute" also means silent and without voice. This label is technically inaccurate, since deaf and hard of hearing people generally have functioning vocal chords. The challenge lies with the fact that to successfully modulate your voice, you generally need to be able to hear your own voice. Again, because deaf and hard of hearing people use various methods of communication other than or in addition to using their voices, they are not truly mute. True communication occurs when one's message is understood by others, and they can respond in kind.

Hearing-impaired – This term was at one time preferred, largely because it was viewed as politically correct. To declare oneself or another person as deaf or blind, for example, was considered somewhat bold, rude, or impolite. At that time, it was thought better to use the word "impaired" along with "visually," "hearing," "mobility," and so on. "Hearing-impaired" was a well-meaning term that is not accepted or used by many deaf and hard of hearing people.

For many people, the words "deaf" and "hard of hearing" are not negative. Instead, the term "hearing-impaired" is viewed as negative. The term focuses on what people can't do. It establishes the standard as "hearing" and anything different as "impaired," or substandard, hindered, or damaged. It implies that

something is not as it should be and ought to be fixed if possible. To be fair, this is probably not what people intended to convey by the term "hearing impaired."

Every individual is unique, but there is one thing we all have in common: we all want to be treated with respect. To the best of our own unique abilities, we have families, friends, communities, and lives that are just as fulfilling as anyone else. We may be different, but we are not less.

What's in a name? Plenty! Words and labels can have a profound effect on people. Show your respect for people by refusing to use outdated or offensive terms. When in doubt, ask the individual how they identify themselves.

Resources

Organization	Description	Contact Information
Deaf-Hearing Communication Centre, Inc. (DHCC)	**Non-profit agency that provides ASL/ English interpreting, education services, and advocacy**	**630 Fairview Road Swarthmore, PA 19081 610-604-0450 (V/TTY) 610-604-0456 (Fax) www.dhcc.org info@dhcc.org**
Center for Community and Professional Services (CCPS)	Regional resource center that provides vital services and programs for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals, their families, professionals in the field, and hearing people interested in some aspect of deafness or hearing loss.	100 West School House Lane Philadelphia, PA 19144 215-754-4770 (V/TTY) 215-331-4372 (VP) http://www.psd.org/page.cfm?p=414
PAHrtners	Program of Salisbury Behavioral Health that provides services for those who have a hearing loss with behavioral and/or cognitive challenges	614 North Easton Road Glenside, PA 19038 215-884-5566 (V/TTY) 215-884-9774 (Fax) www.pahrtners.com
Directory of Organizations and Agencies Serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing People in the Philadelphia Area	Directory compiled by Deaf and Hard of Hearing Council of Southeastern PA	http://www.captionlit.com/resource/directory.pdf
Hands UP Productions	Provides high quality sign language interpreting services for theatrical events	856-302-5115 (Fax) www.handsupproductions.com info@handsupproductions.com
Harris Communications	Products and assistive devices for Deaf and hard of hearing people	15155 Technology Drive Eden Prairie, MN 55344 800-825-6758 (V) 800-825-9187 (TTY) 952-906-1099 (Fax) www.harriscomm.com

Organization	Description	Contact Information
Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) Hearing Loss Association of Pennsylvania (HLA-PA)	A non-profit organization that provides assistance and resources for people with hearing loss and their families to learn how to adjust to living with a hearing loss.	HLAA 7910 Woodmont Avenue Suite 1200 Bethesda, MD 20814 301-657-2248 (V/TTY) 301-913-9413 (Fax) www.hearingloss.org HLA-PA (Various locations) www.hla-pa.org
National Association for the Deaf (NAD)	National civil rights organization of, by and for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States of America	8630 Fenton Street Silver Spring, MD 20910-3819 301-587-1788 (V/VP) 301-587-1789 (TTY) 301-587-1791 (Fax) www.nad.org
The Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (PSD)	School for Deaf and hard of hearing students (Early Childhood, Elementary, Middle and High School)	100 West School House Lane Philadelphia, PA 19144 215-951-4700 (V/TTY) 215-951-4708 (Fax) www.psd.org info@psd.org PSDNews listserv: psdnews@psd.org
Pennsylvania Society for the Advancement of the Deaf (PSAD)	Volunteer organization that advocates for the rights of Deaf and hard of hearing individuals	www.psadweb.org