



A quick guide to communication

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As your child grows, it will be important to use good communication with them, and with the deaf adults you meet. The following tips for good communication can be used with deaf children, young people and adults who use either speech or sign language (such as Auslan) and with those children who use a combination of both speech and signing.

- Make sure that you have your child's attention before starting a conversation.
- Make sure you are facing your child and maintaining good eye contact. Try to be on the same level as them and allow some space for signing or lip-reading. (So, keep a distance of about one to two metres between you and your child).
- Use a well-lit room and don't have your back to a window, as this creates a shadow and makes it difficult to read facial expressions or lip-read.
- Speak clearly, naturally and at a normal pace. Don't shout, as it can appear to your child that you are angry and it also distorts lip patterns.
- Try to make sure that background noise is kept to a minimum. Children with hearing aids, cochlear implants or those children with mild or unilateral deafness who do not use hearing aids may find it particularly difficult to pick out what is being said. A room that is carpeted or curtained will help to cut down the effects of noise in a room.
- If your child does not use sign language, it is still helpful to use your hands and facial expressions to gesture and support what you are saying.
- Don't eat, smoke, or block the view of your face while you are speaking. If you have a beard or moustache, keep it trimmed. Also remember that glasses and sunglasses can make it difficult to maintain eye contact.
- When in a group, speak one at a time. It is helpful if the speaker raises their hand before talking so that your child knows who is speaking.
- Make sure you let your child know when there is a new topic of conversation.
- If a word or sign is not easily understood, use a more common word or sign with the same meaning. Be wary of using unusual words.
- Pause between sentences and check that your child has understood you, and that you have understood them. Encourage them to stop you if they don't understand what the conversation is about.

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