

Tips for teachers

Seating

- Ask a student who is Deaf or hard of hearing where they would most like to sit in the room.
- Where possible, a student who is Deaf or hard of hearing will learn best when seated so they can see both the teacher and their peers. This allows them to pick up cues from their peers, particularly when responding to the teacher questions.
- Make sure the student is sitting with a clear view of the whiteboard or screen and be aware of any glare that may affect their view.

Teacher communication

- Check you have the attention of a student who is Deaf or hard of hearing before you begin to speak to him or her. Say his/her first name when addressing the student.
- Speak clearly but naturally.
- Be aware of possible misunderstandings – avoid idioms, sarcasm, slang (if you use them, explain).
- You do not have to exaggerate your speech or shout at the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing. This can cause distortion of words through hearing aids or cochlear implants.
- Try and use natural mime or gesture if appropriate, while you are speaking.
- Ensure you are not standing in front of a window with glare i.e.: avoid your face being in shadow.
- Try not to move around too much when speaking.
- Face the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing when you are talking. Try to avoid talking while looking at the board or when you are standing behind the student.
- If you need to write on the board or flip chart, speak first then turn and write.
- Introduce new concepts in small steps and give clear directions and explanations.

Noise

- Try and keep noise, including general student talking, to a minimum to reduce background noise.
- Avoid seating the student near noisy fans or air- conditioners.
- Shut doors and windows if there is noise outside.
- Background noise and reverberation can be minimised by carpets or mats on the floor.

Hearing systems and aids

- Use assistive technology required by the student. If the student uses an FM system, wear the transmitter and understand how to use it correctly. Don't forget to mute it when having one-on-one conversations with other students or when you leave the classroom.
- Encourage the student to manage amplification devices independently.
- It is important to remember that a student who is Deaf or hard of hearing with a cochlear implant or hearing aid may be able to hear your voice but unable to distinguish the words you are saying.

AUSLAN interpreters/note takers

- Speak to the student, not to the interpreter/note taker.
- Be aware the interpreter may be signing slightly behind the spoken message. Allow for the time lag when asking questions.
- A student who is Deaf or hard of hearing can experience fatigue from the additional effort required to hear or watch the interpreter. Alternate written work with group discussions to allow rest breaks for the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing and the interpreter. Consider a rest break of five minutes for each twenty minutes.
- A student who is Deaf or hard of hearing is unable to watch you or the interpreter and write notes at the same time. If a student who is Deaf or hard of hearing does not have a note taker, allow the student time to write during breaks in your speaking or once your speaking has stopped. You can also provide notes for the student if helpful.
- Where possible give preparation material to the interpreter and note taker well before classes, particularly when using DVD's or audio mediums.

Closed captions

- When showing videos clips, use captioning. Captions are the on-screen text version of all audio including speech, sounds and music.
- Captioning can help improve literacy by linking text, image and spoken word.
- YouTube, for example, automatically makes captions by using speech recognition technology. It is important to preview for the quality of captioning before the lesson to ensure it is accurate.
- For help with captioning, you can approach the School of Special Educational Needs: Sensory (SSEN:S) Captioning Centre, Media Access Australia or <http://www.capthat.com.au/>. You can also use iMovie to create captions on their videos.

Peer support

- Identify a buddy who the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing can partner with who can help by sharing notes or explaining instructions if required.
- Encourage buddy rotation so the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing does not become dependent on one classmate or friend. This also helps students to build friendships.
- Do not expect the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing's peers to become their interpreters in the classroom.

Teaching instructions and strategies

- Move from the known to the unknown to assist the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing to make links between what they already know and new information in lessons.
- Visually show connections and links between different topics using mind maps, graphic organisers, flow charts, tables, diagrams, pictures and objects.
- A student who is Deaf or hard of hearing may have difficulty understanding words that have multiple meanings, complex sentences or idioms. Be explicit or provide explanation to aid understanding.
- If a student in the class asks a question, repeat the question before giving your answer and repeat answers to questions given by the other students in the class.
- Group work may be difficult for the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing as the pace and exchange of information may be too fast to follow. Arrange for the student to work in a smaller group and/or ask the teacher/integration aid to assist.
- Be aware that a student who is Deaf or hard of hearing may have varying degrees of language development and be still developing their written skills.
- A student who is Deaf or hard of hearing may have difficulty self-correcting their spoken or written language because they have not acquired the particular language rule.
- Spelling may be difficult for a student who is Deaf or hard of hearing as they may not have the phonological skills to sound out words. Many students who are Deaf or hard of hearing rely on visual letter patterns to learn to spell and this strategy can be used when teaching spelling.

Completing classroom assignments and activities

- If the activity relies heavily on hearing, you may need to give the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing information in a different format such as written or visual.
- Provide the student who is Deaf or hard of hearing with written instructions for work, either typed or neatly written. It helps to underline key terms in written directions. Give written due dates for homework or assignments either on the assignment or on the whiteboard.
- When choosing videos for lessons try to choose ones that don't rely totally on sound and that use captions. If a video is not captioned, if possible, allow the DHH student the opportunity to take the video home to watch in a quiet space before using it in the classroom.

When a student who is Deaf or hard of hearing is having difficulty following a lesson

A few clues that may tell you that a student who is Deaf or hard of hearing is having difficulty in following the lesson are:

- The student may copy peers.
- The student lacks concentration and may have difficulty remembering instructions.
- The student becomes tired easily.
- The student is misbehaving or acting out.
- Teachers can assist by gently (i.e. without embarrassing the student):
- Asking the student questions to check they have understood.
- Asking open ended questions rather than “yes” or “no” type questions. Students who are Deaf or hard of hearing will often nod their head to indicate they have understood when in reality they may not.
- Asking the student to repeat what others have said.
- Giving the student extra time to respond.

Compilation of tips from:

1. School of Special Educational Needs Sensory, Deaf Children Australia 2012
2. Hearing loss in the classroom – Teacher fact sheet – Telethon Speech and Hearing (no date)
https://deafchildreinaustralia.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2017/05/Information_and_Teaching_Tips_for_Teachers_of_Students_with_a_Hearing_Loss_Australia.pdf