

## What is deafness or hearing impairment?

Around 10% of Australians have a hearing loss which is measured in decibels (loudness) and frequency (pitch). Audiograms show the levels of hearing loss: Mild (40-50dB), Moderate (55-70dB), Severe (70-90dB) or Profound (90+dB). Human speech is around 60dB so it is difficult to hear or understand speech if you have more than a mild or moderate hearing loss.

Generally, the more hearing a person has, the more they will speak and rely on lip reading. The less hearing they have, the more likely they will prefer to use Auslan. Each individual has a particular communication preference which is often related to family upbringing and the schools they have attended.

**Hearing aids** can help some people, but they only amplify whatever sounds can be heard. Unclear sounds remain unclear; they are just louder.

### Finger spelling alphabet



**Adjustments** may need to be provided to enable a person with a disability to gain equitable access to education. Reasonable adjustments may include:

- modifying or providing equipment
- modifying assessment procedures
- changing course delivery
- modifying educational premises.

Adjustments must be determined in consultation with the student concerned.

For further advice contact your  
**TAFE NSW Teacher/Consultant**

### Other sources of support

#### Deaf Society of NSW

<http://www.deafsocietynsw.org.au/>

#### The National Relay Service

<http://www.relayservice.com.au/>

#### Choosing Your Path—

#### Disclosure: It's a Personal Decision

<http://pubsites.uws.edu.au/rdlo/disclosure/>

#### Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission

[www.hreoc.gov.au](http://www.hreoc.gov.au)

#### Disability Discrimination Act 1992

#### Disability Standards for Education 2005

NEW SOUTH WALES  
DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING



## Deaf and Hearing Impairment Awareness

*Some advice and strategies  
for teachers*

TAFE NSW

TAFE NSW

## A few communication tips

- Reduce background noise, particularly for students who use a hearing aid or have a cochlear implant.
- Ensure adequate lighting.
- Use diagrams, pictures and clear written language.
- Ensure the student is looking at you and can see your lips and facial expression before you start speaking.
- Check if captioned videos on the topic are available from the college library.
- Utilise an FM microphone system when available.
- Speak normally, do not exaggerate mouth movements.
- Use your normal pace and volume of speech.
- Don't expect the student to watch you and write things down at the same time.
- Avoid the use of slang and clichés.
- Where practical use demonstration rather than just talking about it.
- Colleges which have designated facilities should display symbols such as:

a teletypewriter phone (TTY)



audio loop



telephone with volume control



## Positive interactions in the learning environment

### The Australian Deaf Community

People with a hearing loss can be considered as two groups:

- 'Deaf' with a capital 'D' refers to people who use Auslan and identify with the Deaf community and culture; and
- 'deaf', 'hearing impaired', or 'hard of hearing' people who, (after acquiring speech), experience various degrees of hearing loss e.g. from the effects of ageing, industrial accidents or exposure to excessive noise. They do not necessarily see themselves as part of a separate culture or community.

The Australian Deaf Community is made up of diverse individuals and families who share a common culture and language, generally not known to the hearing community. Many Deaf people identify with the Deaf community and see themselves as members of a cultural and linguistic group whose first language is Auslan and second language is written English. They do not necessarily see themselves as a person with a disability.

### Auslan

Auslan (Australian Sign Language) is the language used by the Australian Deaf Community. Deaf communities have developed different Sign Languages in different places. Auslan was derived from British Sign Language (BSL) but has since developed into a distinct language used by Australian Deaf people.

Auslan is recognised by the Australian Government as an Australian Community Language. Auslan is a visual language that includes: sign vocabulary, complex grammatical rules, facial expression, body language and finger-spelling. It is not the same as English.

### Auslan Interpreters

The role of the Auslan interpreter is to facilitate communication between the Deaf or hearing impaired student, other students and the teacher. The interpreter is not a teacher and responsibility for the educational exchange remains with the class teacher. You may find the following tips useful when working with an interpreter in the classroom.

- Take time at the onset of the class to become familiar with the interpreter and the Deaf or hearing impaired student.
- Inform the interpreter on the class format for that lesson and position him/her as near to you as possible.
- Avoid speaking too rapidly.
- Be aware that the interpreter will need regular breaks.
- Speak directly to the student, not to the interpreter.
- Provide a copy of the lesson to the student as it is impossible to focus on the interpreter and write simultaneously.

### Oral Communication/Lip-reading

Many people with a mild or moderate hearing loss use oral communication. This is where a deaf person speaks for themselves and reads the lips of the other person. However, this is not an easy thing to do. The more you can hear, the easier it is to distinguish the sounds you are lip-reading. If you have never heard speech, then lip-reading takes much longer to achieve. Even people with highly developed lip reading skills can only read about 30% of what is visible on the lips.

