

Tips for helping your child hear

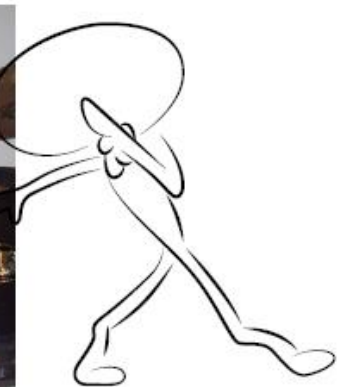
- **Start Young** If your child has hearing loss and has been fitted with hearing technology, encourage them to wear their hearing aids or cochlear implants as much as possible. Young children are especially notorious for removing their hearing devices, but it's important that you keep putting them back on, and encourage them to wear them as much as possible during the waking day. This will ensure they have optimal access to your voice and other stimulating sounds.
- **Provide a Calm Environment** If your child is having a difficult time focusing on a conversation, try to reduce the level of background noise when talking with them. This could mean turning off the TV, music or other noise.
- **Utilize Additional Devices** Hearing aids or cochlear implants allow most children to understand speech from about 6 feet (1.8 meters) or less. There are additional devices that can be used to improve your child's listening ability over distance.
- For example, a Phonak Roger or FM system is proven to be significantly beneficial in improving speech understanding across distance and in noise. The Roger/FM microphone can be worn by a teacher, placed on a table for small group discussions, or passed around between students to ensure the child is able to fully participate and interact in classroom discussions. These solutions can also be useful at home, in the car, at the park, when playing sports, at restaurants or when shopping.
- Roger, FM and other wireless devices can also connect to multimedia devices like TV, MP3 players and mobile phones, allowing the child to hear those devices clearly
- **Be Patient and Repeat if Necessary** Hearing loss makes it so certain sounds are more understandable than others. It's important that everyone around the child is able to remember this, practice patience if the child doesn't understand, and be prepared to repeat key points or rephrase sentences using different words.
- **Inform Others** Ensure your child has a good relationship with their teachers or caretakers, and they understand the needs and expectations of your child. This may mean facilitating communication techniques, such as setting up a signal for your child to let the teacher know when they are struggling to hear. This allows the teacher to change their techniques, without interrupting the entire classroom.
- **Encourage Independence** Encourage your child to become their own hearing technology specialist. As they grow older and gain independence, they should be able to identify when their devices are not working and to do basic troubleshooting.
- **Continue Advocacy and Awareness** Stay in frequent contact with the teacher or professional who specializes in working with the students with hearing loss in your school or school district. Ensure the communication needs of your child are supported. Find out if your school district provides or funds devices such as a Roger or FM system, and advocate for communication accessibility in the classroom.

Helping Your Child to Hear



1 | Get Attention First

2 | Be on the Same Level



3 | Lighting on Speaker's Face

4 | Avoid Background Noise When Possible



5 | Speak Slowly & Clearly, But Don't Shout!



6 | Use Simple Language



7 | Be Understanding



8 | Repeat & Rephrase When Necessary

"Do You Want a Drink?" REPHRASE: "Would You Like Some Water?"

Positive Attitude about Hearing Aids

The behavior of parents sends powerful messages to their children. Your child learns about himself from you, his first and most important teachers.

- **If you encourage him to hide his hearing aids** he will believe that you are embarrassed or ashamed of him. He needs to hear in the store, at church, at community events, etc. Being able to select bright colors for hearing aid cases and earmolds involve him and make him feel good about these neat 'ear computers'.
- **If he is not wearing his hearing aids at home** you are showing that it is okay with you if he does not participate fully in family conversations. This sets up feelings of being ignored or an expectation that it is someone else's responsibility to make sure he understands or get him the information he needs. This creates greater dependence and helplessness at an older age. Without hearing all of the language at home he can't keep up with vocabulary and language learning of other children his age. Weekends are important listening times! Taking a short break is okay (i.e., 30 minutes to read silently), but auditory brain stimulation should continue throughout the afternoon, evening or mornings before school. Minutes not hearing his best at home contribute to growing gaps in learning at school.
- **If you minimize the impact of hearing loss (*I think his hearing is really okay...*)** on his ability to listen and learn, he is learning that you do not like that part of him - the part that needs hearing aids to perform his best in school. And that you reject him for who he is, a child with a hearing loss. And sometimes that he is a bad person for having a hearing loss and to be a good person he needs to pretend that he can hear, even when he is struggling. And finally, he may be learning from you that it is better to be viewed as naughty or not able to learn well than it is for people to think he has a hearing loss.
- **If you ignore the need to address the hearing loss you are putting your child at risk for being a victim.** He does not know what he does not hear which sometimes results in him stating information that makes no sense in the context of what was said or heard by others around him. This makes him seem more different than he would if he could hear/communicate better and can contribute to bullying or greater feelings of not fitting in. Rather than believing the problem is because he has a hearing loss and misheard, your child may grow to believe that there is some reason why he deserves to be treated badly by others, like being stupid or weird. Families are in the best position to help their children be resilient to harassment or feelings of not fitting in by linking instances of miscommunication to mishearing, while reinforcing that the hearing loss makes it more challenging for him, but the issue is only that - not that he is a bad person, incapable, strange, etc.
- **Your child wants to please you.** Too many children purposely damage or lose their hearing aids because they believe their parents would rather not have them use the devices or will not really love them if they wear hearing devices. Some children knowingly choose to become 'the slow student in class rather than performing their best with their hearing aids because this is what they believe their parents would prefer them to be.
- **Without family support and acceptance of the child for all of his characteristics and strengths, few children succeed to reach their potential.** If your child has usable hearing, the level of educational and/or social success he will achieve is directly related to the number of hours he wears his hearing aids each day. If he doesn't have usable hearing and is a visual learner all of the above applies for children who live in families who learn only a minimal number of signs.

This information was developed by Karen L. Anderson, PhD and posted 11/1/12.

2012 (c) Supporting Success for Children with Hearing Loss. <https://successforkidswithhearingloss.com>

Advice from Parents of Children with Hearing Loss

Parenting a child with a hearing loss can be very similar, but also very different to parenting a hearing child. There can be challenges – big and small – and these challenges can be met with frustration.

“The first thing to remember is that your child is a child before they are a deaf child.” Judi, mum of Alex (7)

“The difference is mainly that there is more emphasis on the visual side of things. Otherwise bringing up a deaf child isn’t much different.” - Sarah, mum of Alby (11)

“Repetition, repetition, repetition! The more you repeat words and language the more your child will pick it up.” – Lucy, mum of Zach (2)

“Don’t put too much pressure on language and let them guide you with what they are most interested in. Our son is car crazy so he was quicker to learn the names of car parts and tool than anything else!” – Ellen, mum of Ben (3)

“Learning to swim is crucial for a deaf child. If they get into trouble in the water they might not be able to hear people or sounds around them.” – Ashleigh, mum of Lilly (7)

“Sometimes we have to spend more time with our child when in social situations as it can be overwhelming. I often have to encourage her to join in by getting down at her level and joining in myself!” – Mandy, mum of Isabel (2)

“There are so many books around that are so visually stimulating they will help immensely with language and sign skills. A lot of children’s books are repetitive and involve actions that your little one will pick up really quickly.” – Sarah, mum of Teddy (2)

“A lot of emotions can come with being a deaf child. Try to be understanding and sympathetic without letting them get away with murder!” – Laura, mum of Henry (15)

“Learning some basic sign language really helped us to relieve some communication frustrations with our toddler.” – Monika, mum of Loren (1)

“We put sticky labels on various objects around the house so that our daughter can see the word written as well as the actual object, to give her a helping hand with what sign or word it is associated with.” – Natalie, mum of Robyn (8)

“Try to encourage your little one to say or sign what they want rather than just pointing, to encourage them to communicate.” – Laura, mum of Harry (2)

“I have made a scrapbook for our 2 year old daughter with pictures of all our family and friends to show her who they all are to her and their names. I will then show her using the book who we will be seeing that day so she knows exactly what we will be doing.” – Frances, mum of Elsa (2)

“Try to be very patient and do not get frustrated when you need to repeat something to your child. They may need more time to process what you’re saying than a hearing child” – Orla, mum of Ellis (5)

“Bear in mind that hearing can be very tiring for a child with a hearing loss. Our little boy is so tired after a day at school and we trying to get him tucked up in bed early to get some well needed rest!” – Rebecca, mum of Alex (7)