
Problem: You can't see the face of the person you are talking to

Solutions:

- Make the room lighter by opening curtains or turning on the lights
- Make sure the person speaking is not sitting in front of a window - this makes it hard to see their face
- Sit/stand about 4 feet away from the person speaking

Notes:

Research has shown that understanding of speech improved by about 20% when you watch a person's lips and expressions - even when you haven't had lipreading training.

Problem: The room echoes/is reverberant

Solutions:

- It can be hard to hear in places that have bare walls and floors because unwanted sounds echo around. You can help this by furnishing the room with carpet, heavy curtains and soft chairs which absorb some of the unwanted sounds
- Avoid restaurants that have hard floors and bare walls for the same reasons

Problem: You are tired/stressed/distracted

Solutions:

- Set realistic goals for yourself

- Take short breaks so you don't get more tired
- If possible, try to reschedule important appointments until you are more rested/relaxed

Notes:

It is difficult to concentrate when you are tired, stressed, and/or distracted which makes it more difficult to hear, so don't be hard on yourself if you are having more problems than usual.

Find out whether your audiology clinic holds aural rehabilitation classes. These classes focus on teaching communication and listening skills. Some encourage you to bring along a spouse or other communication partner.

Other Resources

Hearing Loss Association of America

www.hearingloss.org

Better Hearing Institute

www.betterhearing.org

American Speech Hearing Language Association

www.asha.org/public/

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders

www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing

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Tips for Improving Your Listening Experience

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Many people with hearing loss assume that all their communication problems are because of their hearing loss and that nothing can be done about it. But this is not the case. You can improve matters by using “communication strategies.” These strategies can be used to make communication easier at the outset, or to fix a communication breakdown that has already occurred.

Examples of making communication easier at the outset

- Tell people up front you have a hearing loss and that you would like them to speak slowly and clearly.
- Ask people to get your attention before they begin speaking.
- Ask people to let you know if they are changing topic of conversation.
- When possible, have conversations, especially important ones in a quiet well-lit room.
- Stand or sit about 4 feet from the person you are talking to so you can easily see their face and lips.
- Ask yes/no questions or others that have limited reply options, for example, ask ‘Should we meet today or tomorrow?’ instead of asking ‘When should we meet?’



Examples of fixing a communication breakdown

- Tell people why you are having problems. Are they speaking too quickly or too quietly? Would it help if they faced you? Simply saying ‘huh?’ or ‘pardon?’ is not helpful.
- Ask people to rephrase or simplify what they said.
- Let people know what you think they said. That way they can fill in the missing bits, or, if necessary, correct you. Similarly, ask people to confirm what you heard. For example, “Am I correct that you said xxxx?”
- Do not pretend to hear when you did not! Pretending just increases misunderstandings and can result in embarrassment.
- Have people write down important information such as an address, phone number or appointment time.



Sometimes there are other reasons that it is difficult to hear

For example, the room might be noisy, the person might speak quickly or you might be tired. Here are some common problem situations and some ways you can help yourself.

Problem: It is very noisy

Solutions:

- Move to a quieter place
- Sit with the noise behind you and the person you are speaking to directly in front of you so you can look at their lips and expressions
- Turn off unnecessary noise, such as a radio, television, dishwasher, etc.

Notes:

Some restaurant reviews comment on noise levels. Use them when choosing a restaurant.

In future, plan to meet somewhere you know will be quiet, or at a time it will be less busy.

Problem: You are talking with someone who you find especially difficult to understand

Solutions:

- Speak more slowly
- Speak more clearly
- Speak more loudly or quietly - whichever would help you
- Look directly at you and not cover their face so you can see their lips and expressions.



Notes:

Shouting doesn't help because it distorts the speaker's voice. People like to get positive as well as negative feedback - so tell them when they are speaking at the right rate or loudness.