
Hearing Impairments Factsheet (for Schools)

What Teachers Should Know

Some people are born with hearing impairments, while others lose their hearing through injuries, infections, or even loud noises.

Hearing-impaired students may use hearing aids that fit inside or behind the ear. Cochlear implants are surgically implanted devices that bypass the damaged inner ear and send signals directly to the auditory nerve. New technologies are making it possible for more hearing-impaired students to attend school and participate in activities with their hearing peers.

Students with hearing impairments may:

- wear hearing aids, have cochlear implants, or use FM systems, which include a microphone/transmitter worn by the teacher and a receiver worn by the student
- need to use real-time captioning for any audio-visual videos used in the classroom
- need voice-recognition software on their computers, which can help with note-taking
- understand speech by watching the speaker's mouth movements, facial expressions, and gestures, within context. This skill is called speech-reading or lip-reading.
- use ASL (American Sign Language), Cued Speech, or other sign languages
- need an interpreter to facilitate communication
- require speech therapy due to delayed speech or language development
- need to sit closer to the front of the class to read lips or hear more clearly
- need quiet areas
- need instructions repeated

What Teachers Can Do

Encourage your hearing-impaired students to participate in all classroom and extracurricular activities.

Most hearing-impaired students can speech-read to some extent, but try to determine how well. To help your hearing-impaired students speech-read, make sure to face them when you talk, talk slowly and clearly, and don't yell. As long as they have their amplifiers on, you can speak in a normal tone. Try to minimize background noises.

Use lots of pictures, graphics, and text labels. Try not to turn your back and speak while writing on a board. Remember: Many hearing-impaired students are visual learners.

Consider arranging chairs in your classroom in a circle so your hearing-impaired students can interact with classmates.

Check with a special education teacher, speech-language pathologist, or school nurse to see if any assistive hearing devices or other technology might be helpful.

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