

# How can you become Deaf Aware?



Every little one has individual needs, including deaf children. Children with deafness may have different levels of hearing loss, different technology to support this, and different preferences in communication styles and methods.

Take a look at our tips below on communicating with deaf children, regardless of where they are on the deafness spectrum.

The term 'deaf' is used here to represent the entire spectrum of deafness.

## Pay attention to your little one's communication preferences

It's important to know which communication method your little one prefers. You can find further information on the [National Deaf Children's Society](#) website. Exposure to their **chosen method** will be essential in their development, and it's important for parents to be able to make an informed choice.

Your little one's listening needs may change as they develop, which may impact on their most effective method of communication. Deaf children may also use technology to support their access to sounds, and it's vital that they consistently use this as needed.

## Get their attention

- If you're close by, gently tap your child's arm or knock on a table.
- Wave in their direction or raise your hand/arm in their line of sight.
- Approaching from behind may startle them, so try to approach from the side or front.

## Face your little one when you're talking

- Get face to face on your little one's level and show them you're paying attention.
- Make sure the room is well lit and stand with your face towards the light.
- Try to avoid moving around too much.
- Encourage face to face interactions by holding a toy or object close to your face.
- Play games like peekaboo to build anticipation. Vary your voice, facial expressions, and gestures to encourage your little one to pay attention.

- Use visual cues where possible; signing, gestures, pointing, objects, pictures, etc. You could point to what you're talking about and use the sign or a gesture to support what you've said, e.g. sign drinking and point to the cup when asking if they want a drink.

Try using a visual cue three times today!

## Speak clearly and naturally

- Ensure all background noise is kept to a minimum.
- Ensure your mouth is always visible, and show emotion and expression in your face.
- Don't cover your mouth with your hands as this can distort the sound.
- Make the topic of conversation clear.
- Take turns to speak, one at a time.
- Give your little one time to process information. Try to make your conversations meaningful, interesting, and fun!
- Remember, children can learn multiple spoken languages alongside sign language.

## Find further information

[National Deaf Children's Society \(NDCS\)](#)

[Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists \(RCSLT\)](#)

[Deaf Awareness: Face me when you talk \(video\)](#)