

# How to understand conversation better if you have a hearing impairment

When someone speaks, clues are gained from what we hear and what we see. YOU may be able to create a situation so that as many clues as possible are available.

## The best conditions for listening:

- (i) A room with soft furnishings (such as carpets, curtains and cushions, these absorb sound and so reduce the echo effect).
- (ii) Try to reduce background noises (a tablecloth may lessen the noise of plates clattering for example).  
Ask others to face you, to speak clearly and a little louder (mumbling and shouting may make it more difficult for you to pick out the words of the speaker).

**Remember noisy places such as busy streets, large shops, hospitals and railway stations will be rather more difficult to communicate in because of the very loud background noise.**

The best way to understand conversation is to:

- (a) Make sure the room is well lit
- (b) Have your back to the light source, e.g. the window, so that the light falls on the speakers face
- (c) Position yourself 3-6 ft away as lipreading is difficult if the speaker is too near or too far away
- (d) Make sure your eyesight has been recently checked, as you don't want to strain your eyes
- (e) Try to watch the speakers' lips you may be surprised at the number of clues you pick up without realizing it.
- (f) Do not let yourself get too tired or tense as you will be able to lip-read better if you are relaxed
- (g) Do not be afraid to let people know that you have to rely a bit on lipreading, and give them an idea of how they can help you:-
  - By facing you and keeping their heads fairly still
  - By keeping their mouth visible and not hiding the lip movements behind their hands, a cigarette or a pipe

By not shouting but speaking clearly and not too fast  
(shouting alters the lip pattern and speaking too slowly  
may destroy the natural rhythm of speech)

By attracting your attention before speaking so that you  
can catch the beginning of what is being said - not just the  
ending

By not distracting your attention with unnecessary hand  
movements. By removing their glasses before they speak  
to you, as frequently a lot of the understanding of speech  
is through the eyes and dark glasses make it very difficult  
to observe an expression in a person's eyes

By making the subject of conversation as clear as  
possible

By repeating something you haven't grasped, and then  
perhaps by rephrasing what they want to say, as some  
words are more difficult to lip-read than others.