

# Teaching Students Who Are Hard of Hearing

## Demographics

More than 20,000 students who self-identified as hard of hearing or deaf enrolled in academic year 1992-1993 in postsecondary education institutions. As the civil rights laws of people with disabilities are implemented further, we can expect greater numbers of students with hearing loss to enroll in mainstream educational institutions. Because there still is a stigma associated with hearing loss, some students in educational settings may be reluctant to make their hearing loss known.

## Teaching Strategies Make a Difference

Administrative policies that encourage and provide for enrollment of students who are hard of hearing have to be in place. Equally vital for the success of students who are hard of hearing are instructors who are sensitive and responsive to their needs so that they can fully participate in the educational experience.

## Students Function Differently

Students who are hard of hearing have residual hearing. To understand speech they use speechreading, which alone only allows about 30% understanding. They therefore use other strategies, including technology, to participate fully. They may sit up close, use hearing aids, use assistive devices, or a combination of all three. Though a hearing aid may help in one-on-one situations, in larger groups with a larger distance from the speaker and poor acoustics, hard-of-hearing students also may need assistive listening devices such as infrared, FM, or audioloops. Interpreters, notetakers, or computer-assisted real-time transcription (CART) may also be needed to follow the lectures as fully as possible. There are also other strategies and services that

enable these students to have equal access to information in the classroom setting.

## Warning Signs of Hearing Loss

Students with hearing loss may be hesitant to self-identify and faculty members may be instrumental in picking up the signs and following up with students to encourage them to do something about their hearing loss. Warning signs of hearing loss are:

- Giving inappropriate responses
- Speaking in an unusually loud/soft voice
- Not hearing when someone speaks from behind
- Appearing to pay attention but not actively participating in class discussions
- Asking for repeats often
- Responding with smiles and nods but no further comments.

If you suspect that a student in your class has a hearing loss, meet privately with the student to discuss your concerns and see what follow-up actions need to be taken.

## TIPS FOR INSTRUCTORS

1. *Use Good Communication Techniques*
  - Repeat or rephrase questions/comments from the class before responding.
  - Face the class and speak naturally at a moderate pace.
  - Avoid the temptation to pick up the pace when time is short.
  - Do not speak while writing on the blackboard.
  - Lecture from the front of the room—not pacing around.
  - Point out who is speaking in group discussions.

- Do not drink or chew gum while lecturing.
- Do not stand or sit in front of a window where shadows will impede speechreading.
- Beards and mustaches make speechreading harder. Keep them trimmed.
- Discuss concerns about the student's ability to hear privately, not in front of the whole class.
- Encourage open communication from a student with hearing loss about your teaching style.
- Always use captioned films/videos or provide a written manuscript.
- Help find seating near the front if requested by the student.
- Arrange for a written instead of oral test.
- Be aware of and know how to use assistive listening devices.
- Be familiar with oral, sign, and cued-speech interpreters and how to work with them in class.
- Provide copies of your class notes if a notetaker is not available.
- Be familiar with computer-assisted real-time transcription (CART).
- Support the student in advocating for communication access.

## 2. *Provide Classroom Services*

- Provide handouts such as syllabus, lesson plans, and assignments.
- Write announcements and assignments on the blackboard.
- Write proper names, technical vocabulary, formulas, equations, and foreign terms on the blackboard.

For more information, contact:

**Northeast Technical Assistance Center**

**Rochester Institute of Technology**

National Technical Institute for the Deaf

52 Lomb Memorial Drive

Rochester, NY 14623-5604

716-475-6433 (V/TTY)

716-475-7660 (Fax)

Email: [netac@rit.edu](mailto:netac@rit.edu)

WWW: <http://www.rit.edu/~netac>



This *NETAC Teacher Tipsheet* was prepared by Brenda Battat, Deputy Executive Director, Self Help for Hard of Hearing People, Inc., Bethesda, Maryland.