**EA Sensory Service** Education Authority Logo

# ****Top Tips for Deaf Awareness****

**Attention:**It is important to get the child’s attention before starting to talk to them.

**Background noise:**Try to reduce background noise to a minimum.

**Clear Speech:** Get closer and speak clearly, avoid speaking from a distance.

**Don't shout:**Shouting leads to distortion.

**Encouragement:**Listening with a hearing loss is hard work and tiring.  Try to give a child extra clues and repeat instructions to help them to access the spoken word.

**Face to face:**Make sure that your face can be clearly seen. Facial expressions and lip patterns provide important additional information.

**Give more time to respond:**A child with a hearing loss will be working hard to process what they have heard, particularly if they are listening in noise.

It is important to overcome three challenges in the listening environment:

1. **Distance:**The further the speaker is away from the child, the quieter the speech signal will be.  Try and get closer and down to the child’s level. In nursery and school, think carefully about where a child with a hearing loss is seated. The NDCS has produced [a video](https://vimeo.com/4885451)  which provides advice on positioning.
2. **Noise:**Try to reduce background noise to a minimum and turn off any unnecessary sound sources.  Close windows and doors when possible to reduce external noise. A video produced by the NDCS suggests [ways of reducing background noise in a classroom](https://vimeo.com/4885731). At home, be aware of the different sources of background noise.  Don't have the television on in the background when you are talking and playing with your child and try to put equipment like a washing machine on, when it will cause least disturbance.
3. **Reverberation or echo**: In a room with hard surfaces, sound will reflect from the walls, floor and ceiling.  The sound is not absorbed, as it would be in carpets and soft furnishings and the resulting echo reduces speech quality for the listener. In echoey rooms background noise will be significantly increased (Canning & James 2012).

**In nurseries and schools you can take simple steps to improve the listening environment.**

* Reduce the overspill of sound from other areas by closing doors and windows when necessary and where possible.
* In the early years, play with hard toys such as bricks, cars, wooden inset puzzles etc. on a carpet rather than hard floor.
* Table coverings will reduce the sound of objects banging on the table surface.
* Place sponge in the bottom of pen pots.
* Put pieces of carpet in tubs used for storing things like bricks and cars, to reduce the sound made when packing away.
* Displays on the walls will help to reduce echo.
* Turn off unnecessary sound sources (e.g. a noisy data projector, background music).
* Think carefully about where you would place an air conditioning fan.

 Source: [MESH Guides](http://www.meshguides.org/)

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