



DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

Deaf and hard of hearing are the preferred terms in Australia, although some people also describe themselves as hearing impaired. Hearing loss impacts a person's ability to hear speech and other sounds. There are different levels of loss ranging from mild to moderate, to severe to profound. People with mild to severe hearing loss usually still have some hearing present however they may have difficulty hearing certain frequencies, sounds may be muffled, may have difficulty when there is background noise or have difficulty hearing noise from certain directions. Deafness refers to the profound level of hearing loss where people have very minimal to no functional hearing.



HELPFUL FACTS

1

Types and Causes of Hearing Loss

Hearing loss can be due to issues in various parts of your hearing pathway from your outer or middle ear (conductive hearing loss) to your inner ear and/or the nerve pathway to your brain (sensorineural hearing loss), or mixed hearing loss (where there are both aspects).

Some people have a hearing impairment from birth, others develop hearing loss later which may be due to exposure to noise, ageing processes, health/medical conditions (e.g. infections) or direct ear or head injury.

2

Communication Support

For some people, devices such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, assistive listening aids (e.g. amplifiers or headphones) may help to improve their hearing. Some members of the Deaf community in Australia communicate using Auslan sign language. It is its own unique language with a different grammar and word order than spoken English. If someone uses Auslan, an interpreter may be required to help you communicate effectively with them.

3

Understanding Individual Hearing Needs

Deaf and/or Hard of Hearing individuals will differ in which sounds they may be able to pick up and which sounds are more difficult to hear, as no hearing loss will be the same. Those individuals that have access to use of cochlear implants or hearing aids may be able to adjust the frequency or background noise with technology that is compatible with and tailored to their own range.

SUPPORTING THE PERSON AT NETBALL

1

Get to know the person

- Utilise the 'All About Me' form to better understand the individual and the supports they need
- Ask the person about their preferences for communication and what helps them

2

When talking with the person

- Direct your conversation to the person rather than anyone with them (e.g. support person, interpreter)
- Make sure you have the person's attention, make sure they can see your face when speaking to them, especially if the person uses lip-reading
- Speak clearly, use your usual tone of voice but don't yell; don't speak louder than normal unless the person asks you to

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3

Check understanding

- Check the person's understanding of information given (e.g. coaching instruction) before continuing
- Repeat / rephrase information as needed

4

Consider the environment & making adaptations

- Think about where you are communicating – if background noise and a busy environment are making communication difficult suggest move somewhere quieter, or divide up into smaller groups of people (i.e. during coaching sessions)
- Use visuals and demonstration as needed (e.g. lights as well as siren for timing during games, visuals and demonstrations when teaching a skill)
- Consider venues with hearing loops and access to Auslan interpreters for events at your club
- Be aware that there may only be a certain range that they can pick up sound (i.e. unable to hear behind them or a short range in front, so ensure you are in close proximity to the person you are communicating with)

5

Use resources available

- Consider taking an introduction to Auslan course or learn some key Auslan signs that will help with coaching (see 'Auslan Sign Bank' in the information below)
- Support the person in using any of their communication aids
- Use an Auslan interpreter if required by the person

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Each person is an individual and will have different strengths, interests and support needs even when they have the same disability or condition.

Remember to:

- Utilise the 'All About Me' form and have a conversation with the person
- Create a culture where the person will feel comfortable asking for assistance if they need it
- Don't worry if you make a mistake, it's all a part of learning
- Small changes will make a big difference

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

Deaf Sports Australia



'Hearing and Cochlear Implant Wear in Sports' brochure →

Deaf Australia



Deaf Australia website →

Booking an Auslan interpreter



Deaf Connect website →

Auslan Sign Bank



Auslan Dictionary →

Information in this resource card has been adapted from:

- <https://www.littleathletics.com.au/inclusion/disability-health/deaf-and-hard-of-hearing/>
- <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/hearing-loss>
- <https://www.healthline.com/health/hard-of-hearing#hard-of-hearing-vs-deaf>
- <https://hearforyou.com.au/hearing-impaired-or-hard-of-hearing-can-we-use-these-terms-interchangeably/>