

# ABOUT DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING LEARNERS



Learning can be more challenging for deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children and students. They need appropriate adjustments and accommodations to make sure they have equitable access to curriculum or preschool programming, the learning environment, engagement with their learning community, communication and socialisation.

Each deaf and hard of hearing learner is a unique individual and adjustments to their educational program and learning environment should be tailored to their needs. When you understand the impact of hearing loss on the individual learner, you'll be better able to adjust to their needs.



**Government  
of South Australia**

Department for Education

## How hearing loss affects learning

- Language development may be affected.
- Social development may be delayed.
- There might be poor executive function including working memory, flexible thinking and self-control.

## How hearing loss affects social development and emotional wellbeing

Learners may:

- miss social cues
- feel isolated
- seem impulsive
- lack general knowledge because of missing incidental and overheard learning.

## Aboriginal learners and hearing loss

Aboriginal children have a high prevalence of ear infections or Otitis Media, which can result in conductive hearing loss or fluctuating hearing.

## Assistive devices

Depending on the learners needs, there are different devices to help with hearing:

- hearing aids
- cochlear implants
- remote listening devices
- soundfield systems.

## Strengths of deaf and hard of hearing learners

Learners with hearing loss have various strengths such as:

- visual learning and noticing nonverbal cues
- holding and using images in their mind to help learning
- kinaesthetic learning and enjoying hands-on learning
- adaptability
- finding different ways to explain themselves.

# DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING ADJUSTMENTS



You cannot assume that when a learner uses a device (such as a hearing aid or soundfield system) they can access the learning in the same way as their peers. Learners use a combination of listening to the speaker, watching the speaker, reading text and other cues to understand what's being taught. The learner still needs the windows and doors shut when it's loud outside, a clear view of you, your face and your body language, and to see you connecting learning to concrete teaching and learning resources.

## EXAMPLES OF ADJUSTMENTS



### Environment setup

- Put the seating in a U shape so everyone can see each other.
- Make the lighting clear and don't stand in silhouette.
- Put the learner on the side of the room where they can turn their better hearing ear towards you.
- During group activities, put the learner near you but let them see the other learners so that they can pick up social cues.



### Improve the sound

- Reduce classroom and background noise.
- Consider the distance between you and the learner when you're speaking.
- Observe and improve sound to noise ratios.
- Add soft furnishings like pillows or wall hangings.
- Use unlaminated posters — these won't cause the sound to bounce.
- Use a classroom noise level monitor.



### Teaching adjustments

- Start any lesson by focusing the learner's attention on you.
- Position yourself so that you can be seen.
- Speak at natural pace and volume.