active disability ireland

Factsheet

Deaf or Hard of Hearing



The information is provided for guidance only, allowing you to be more informed in your approach to being a more inclusive coach. No two people are the same, as such, please ensure your first step is to speak directly to the person understand their abilities and goals and never assume.

What is Deafness?

Deafness means that a person has a reduced ability to hear sounds. It is primarily a communication difficulty rather than simply a loss of sound perception.

Congenital deafness can affect many aspects of a child's development, including communication, cognitive, emotional, social and educational development.

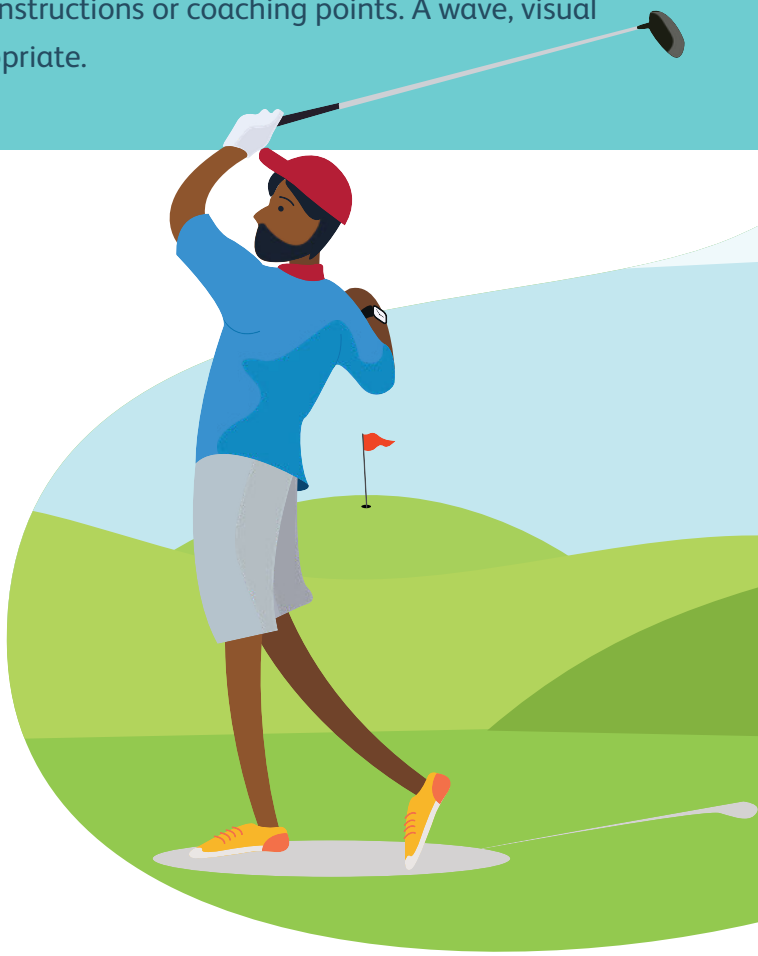
Hearing Loss can affect volume (loudness) and frequency (pitch). Adults who become deaf (deafened) often use a combination of hearing, visual information and communication strategies. Vision is also important.

The terms **mild, moderate, severe and profound** describe the degree of hearing loss.
People with **mild hearing loss** may experience some difficulties keeping up with conversations, especially in noisy surroundings.

- People with **moderate hearing loss** may have difficulty keeping up with conversations without hearing aids or other assistive listening devices.
- People with **severe hearing loss** may benefit from powerful hearing aids or cochlear implants, but often rely heavily on lip-reading and visual communication. Some also use sign language.
- People with **profound hearing loss** have very limited access to sound and may rely mainly on lip-reading, sign language and other visual forms of communication. Some may be able to hear very loud sounds.

How To Support People Who Are Deaf Or Hard Of Hearing In Your Coaching Sessions

- When giving instructions, ensure the person has a clear view of the speaker. Position yourself in front of the group and on the same level where possible. Encourage participants who are deaf or hard of hearing to stand where they can easily see you throughout the session.
- Minimise background noise where possible. Hearing aids and cochlear implants can amplify surrounding sounds as well as speech, making communication more difficult in noisy environments. Be aware that hearing devices are not permitted during Deaf sport competitions under International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (ICSD) rules, although they may be used during training.
- Speak clearly and naturally. Do not shout or exaggerate lip movements, as this can make lip-reading more difficult.
- Ensure your face is well lit and avoid standing in front of bright windows or strong light sources, as this can make lip-reading difficult.
- Face the person when speaking and avoid covering your mouth with your hands, papers, food or other objects. Chewing gum or eating while speaking can also make communication more difficult.
- Gain the person's attention before communicating instructions or coaching points. A wave, visual signal or light tap on the shoulder is generally appropriate.



- Present one form of visual information at a time. A deaf or hard-of-hearing person cannot watch a demonstration and lip-read or watch a speaker at the same time. Avoid talking while writing on a whiteboard or demonstrating a skill.
- Write down key words, important information and unfamiliar vocabulary where needed, as new words can be difficult to lip-read.
- Use demonstrations, visual cues and practical examples whenever possible rather than relying solely on verbal explanations.
- If a person who is deaf or hard of hearing does not respond or appears unsure, repeat or rephrase the information before moving on. Check understanding rather than assuming it has been understood.
- Inform the person of any changes to routines, venues, finishing times or activities, as they may miss information that is communicated verbally to the wider group.

- Repeat or summarise contributions, questions and comments made by other participants to ensure everyone can follow discussions and instructions.
- Encourage the person to share any sport-specific signs or communication methods they use. Learning and using agreed signs within the club or team can improve communication during training and competition.
- Ensure the person can identify and understand essential signals used in the sport. Where possible, use visual signals alongside auditory signals, such as hand signals, flags, lights or clear gestures. For example, a referee or starter can raise and lower an arm at the same time as blowing a whistle or firing a starting signal.
- Ensure all coaches, officials and teammates are aware of the communication methods and visual signals being used to support inclusion and participation.

Involve others

- Combine clapping with a double-handed wave to congratulate or praise. When we see something good, the natural reaction is to clap. The Deaf community will use a raised double-handed wave to show the same appreciation, so use both methods for a mixed group.

- Share communication and inclusion guidance with club members, parents/carers, volunteers and assistants when a deaf or hard-of-hearing person joins the club.



- Ensure volunteers, coaches, officials and teammates understand any communication needs and the simple adjustments that can support participation, safety and enjoyment.

- Encourage an inclusive club culture where effective communication practices are understood and used by everyone.

For further information and support:
Please visit **www.deafsportsireland.com** or **www.chime.ie**