

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

This factsheet has been developed in consultation with key agencies with experience and knowledge in the specific areas. 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 to the person – understand their **abilities** and goals and never assume.



What is deafness?

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

Congenital deafness affects all aspects of a child's development: cognitive, emotional, social and educational.

Hearing Loss affects volume (loudness) and frequency (pitch).

Adults who become Deaf (deafened) do not rely on hearing alone to communicate. Vision is also important.

The terms **mild**, **moderate**, **severe** and **profound** describe the extent of deafness.

People who have **mild hearing loss** have some difficulties keeping up with conversations, especially in noisy surroundings.

People who have **moderate hearing loss** have difficulty keeping up with conversations when not using a hearing aid.

People who have **severe hearing loss** will benefit from powerful hearing aids, but often they rely heavily on lip-reading even when they are using hearing aids. Some also use sign language.

People who have **profound hearing loss** are very hard of hearing and rely mostly on lip-reading, and/or sign language. They may hear loud sounds.

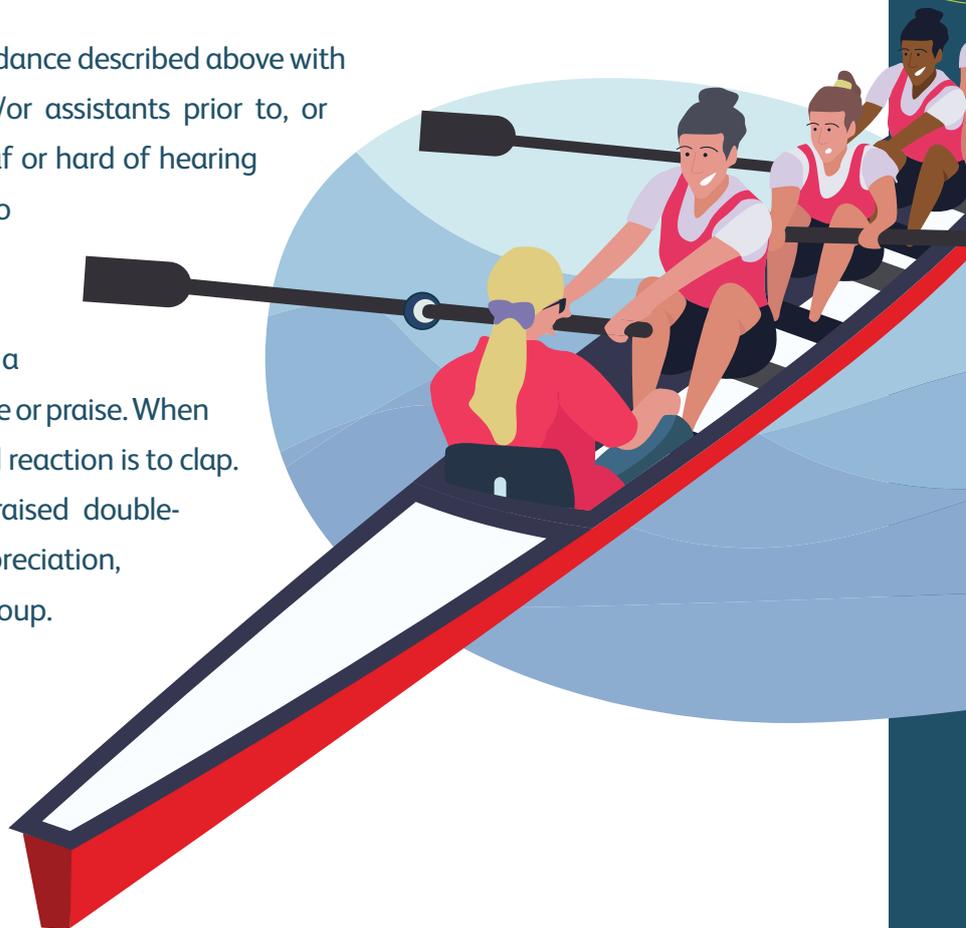
How to include people who are deaf or hard of hearing in your coaching sessions

- Suggest that the person be at the front of the group when communicating plans or instructions, or, as the coach in the activity, move to a position where he/she is in front of you. Convey this message at the beginning of the session rather than bringing the person to the front at the beginning of each demonstration. Make sure you are in front of, or fairly close to (approx. 3-6 ft), and on the same level as the person who is deaf or hard of hearing
- Check that background noise is kept to a minimum. Hearing aids are not selective in the sounds they amplify and, therefore, any background noises will be amplified as much as your voice. An exception to this is during sports competition. In Deaf Sports you will have to remove hearing aids/cochlear implant in competition – it is part of the rules under the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (ICSD). In a training session they are allowed to wear their aids
- Speak clearly and do not exaggerate lip movements. If you are a fast speaker, you might find that maintaining a normal rhythm of speech could help
- Position yourself with your face to the light and avoid placing yourself in front of a bright window. Light sources make lip-reading difficult
- Try to face the person when speaking and do not cover your mouth with your hand, paper or a pen; do not chew gum or eat. Be aware that a beard or moustache may make lip-reading difficult
- Ensure the person is paying attention before you begin to communicate instructions or coaching points. Attract their attention before speaking to them or else they may not realise you are talking to them. A tap on the shoulder or a wave is acceptable
- Present one format of visual information at a time. The person cannot 'read' two things at the same time; for example, the white board and your lips. Therefore, try to avoid talking while writing on the white board or demonstrating
- Write down keywords and new vocabulary if needed. This helps because new words are almost impossible to lip-read
- Where possible, demonstrate techniques or corrections rather than relying on verbal explanations
- If a person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing does not reply or seems to have difficulty understanding, rephrase what you just said/ demonstrated before moving on. A person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing will usually confirm they understand by a nod of the head and you should do the same
- Inform the person of any changes in daily routine. They may be the only one in the session unprepared for such things as room changes, finishing times or changes in activity

- Repeat other people's contributions to the session
- Ask the person to teach you sport-specific signs; there is a number of these that a person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing can teach members of your sporting club to assist with communication during matches and training
- Make sure the person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing can identify essential signals in your sport (e.g. visual equivalents to whistles or a starting pistol). A simple example could include a referee/starter putting an arm up, then down at the same time as the whistle/starting pistol

Involve others

It would be useful to discuss the guidance described above with club members, parents/carers and/or assistants prior to, or shortly after, the person who is deaf or hard of hearing joins the club. The coach can also educate officials/umpires about what can be done to assist the person. 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.



For further information and support, please visit:

www.deafsportsireland.com or www.deafhear.ie

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