

People who are deaf or hard of hearing are a diverse group. Each person must be understood individually. There are variations in how a person becomes deaf: level of hearing, age of onset, education background, communication methods, and cultural identity.

How people identify themselves is personal and may reflect identification with the deaf communities, the degree to which they can hear, or the relative age of onset. It is important, then, to remember that each individual who is deaf or hard of hearing is unique. The term, “deaf”, may not mean a total loss of hearing, and “hard of hearing” may be profound. You will need to know from each individual what their specific needs may be.

People who are deaf or hard of hearing use many methods to communicate. Many people use speech and lip-reading, some use sign language, while others write or use a combination of these.



Ooltewah SDA Church
6233 Ooltewah Georgetown Rd
Ooltewah, TN 37363

www.ooltewahchurch.org
Phone: (423) 238-4619



Engaging with A Person Who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing

**Deaf or
Hard of Hearing:**

What Does It Mean?





Here are guidelines to promote effective communication with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- Ask the individual what method of communication works best for them.
- Communicate, when possible, in a quiet environment with few distractions and little or no background noise.
- Make sure the area where you are speaking is well lit. Avoid standing with the window or a light source behind you. Look directly into the individual's face.

- Always get the person's attention before you speak by raising your hand or touching the person lightly on the shoulder.
- Try to pronounce your words clearly. Avoid exaggerated lip movements or "yelling".
- Make sure your mouth and face are visible. Do not eat, chew gum, or cover your mouth in any way.
- Use facial expressions and gestures to help clarify your message.
- Rephrase your message if the person does not understand you.
- Verify that the individual has understood what you have communicated. The best lip readers will understand 40% of what is said.
- Do not assume a person can hear and understand your voice if he/she is wearing a hearing aid.
- When in a group situation, only one person should speak at a time.
- Ask the person with a hearing loss what you can do to help improve the communication process. Be patient and allow the time needed to effectively communicate.

When a sign language interpreter is used:

- You should look at and speak directly to the individual who is deaf, not the interpreter.
- Speak at a normal rate and volume.
- The interpreter will translate all that is said when interpreting; do not say anything you do not want translated.

In the worship service:

- Videos should be captioned when possible.
- An interpreter skilled in American Sign Language (ASL) should be used when necessary.

Hearing Assistive Technology

(HAT): Typical hearing aids amplify almost all sounds and cannot separate the sound you want to hear from the background noise. HAT overcomes challenging acoustics by transmitting sound signals to a person's hearing device. Hearing loop systems are the most common solutions among churches. HAT options can be found via [The Hearing Loss Association of American](#).