

# Tips for communicating with hearing instrument users

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Practical advice for family,  
friends and colleagues

**PHONAK**

hearing systems

“When you lose your eyesight,  
you lose contact with things.

When you lose your hearing,  
you lose contact with people.”

(Helen Keller)

## Phonak

Phonak is one of the world's leading manufacturers of hearing systems. Based in Stäfa, Switzerland, the company develops, produces and distributes Phonak high-tech hearing systems dedicated to helping people with impaired hearing participate in everyday life.

The company is committed to improving speech understanding in all environments, especially noisy ones, putting an end to the frequent complaint, "I can hear but I don't understand what's being said!"

Phonak is a driving force in the development of innovative technologies. Find out more about the Phonak product range from your hearing-care professional or visit

<http://www.phonak-us.com>

## Hearing impairment also affects those with good hearing

Hearing impairment affects approximately 10% of the population. Although people of all ages can be affected by a hearing loss, those over 60 years of age are especially at risk. 30% of those over 60 years of age have a significant hearing loss, making it one of the most common chronic disorders. Hearing loss is invisible, it doesn't hurt and the onset is typically gradual. Yet, it has a profound affect on the people around us.

How should you communicate with people who have impaired hearing? It is important to answer this question since hearing loss also impacts those wishing to communicate with affected individuals. People often avoid contact with those with impaired hearing since they do not know how to react. That is not only unfortunate but also unnecessary.

This booklet is designed to

- ease communication with those with impaired hearing
- show the consequences of hearing loss
- help you to support novice hearing instrument users to benefit fully from this modern technology

# Practical advice for communicating with hearing instrument users



## 1. **Speak clearly and naturally**

It is not necessary to shout. Loud speech may overload the hearing instrument causing voice distortion and even discomfort to the wearer. Maintain a normal tone of voice, speak clearly and slowly.

## 2. **Move closer**

Reducing the distance between the speaker and listener is helpful and encourages improved speech understanding. This is particularly important if there is background noise.

## 3. **Face the listener**

Position yourself so that the listener can see your face and lips. Lip reading is instinctive to all of us, but it is particularly important for those with impaired hearing to supplement the sound of the speech.

#### **4. Attract the listener's attention**

This can be done by either using the person's name, entering their field of vision or tapping them lightly on the shoulder.

#### **5. Take the surroundings into account**

Avoid trying to have conversations from one room to another or in rooms with distracting noises, e.g. washing machine, vacuum cleaner, loud music etc.

#### **6. Be aware of performance constraints**

Never put the hearing impaired listener and their instruments under too much pressure. They both have their limits.

#### **7. Understand that using hearing instruments can be tiring**

When conversing with a novice hearing instrument user be sensitive to signs of fatigue. Don't force or prolong conversations if the listener is tired.

## 8. Be patient

Respect the speed of progress and encourage the person with impaired hearing when obvious progress is made. Be a good listener and help the person to achieve the goal of participating in life again.

# Restored communication ...

... means a  
significantly improved  
quality of life!

Research shows that on average a person identifying hearing loss waits 7-9 years before consulting a physician. Increasing hearing loss can be a slow process meaning that the sooner the help of hearing instruments is sought, the more chance the individual has of minimizing its effects.



In many societies, using a hearing instrument has become as normal as wearing glasses. Personalities from politics, business and film wear hearing instruments. A hearing instrument may not be as fashionable as designer glasses but it is a masterpiece of technology that helps to overcome communication barriers.

For every instrument user, the role of family, friends and colleagues is crucial, especially in the initial period of adjustment. The novice hearing instrument user needs your support and encouragement.

## **Phonak is Swiss technology**

The correct choice of hearing instrument is influenced by anatomical features of the ear, individual hearing loss and technology. Medical practitioners and hearingcare professionals can advise you on the various solutions available. The following explanations may be useful to you.

### **In-the-Ear Instruments (ITE)**

These sit inside the ear (outer ear and auditory canal) and are best suited to mild or moderate hearing loss.

### **Behind-the-Ear Instruments (BTE)**

These are worn behind the ear and are suited to all degrees of hearing loss.

The benefits of a hearing instrument cannot be judged on the basis of its appearance. It is the technology it incorporates that matters.

## **Microphone technology**

Even with a mild hearing loss, the ability to understand speech against background noise is reduced. This can be solved by the use of a special microphone system. AudioZoom multi-microphone technology by Phonak is clinically proven to reduce background noise to make understanding speech easier.

## **Multi-program hearing systems and remote control devices**

Different hearing instrument program settings suit different environments (e.g. conversations in noisy surroundings, music, telephone, parties ...). Effective multi-program solutions are available from Phonak to ensure the best possible hearing situation.

This benefit is further enhanced by remote control devices which make adjusting the hearing instruments as easy as pushing a button. One of the latest innovations from Phonak is a remote control system integrated into a watch.



The following Phonak information brochures in the series **"Hear better – participate in life"** are available from your hearingcare professional.

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Hearing and hearing loss

2

Using hearing instruments successfully

3

Caring for your hearing instruments

4

Two ears are better than one

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