

People with Hearing Impairments



The following information has been written by those with a great deal of experience in this area. The information is provided as **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 always to speak to the person - understand their **abilities** and goals, and never assume. Thank you!

People with hearing impairments may not necessarily have any other physical impairment. Those who are deaf or hard of hearing will have varying levels of hearing and may or may not choose to wear their hearing aid during your coaching session. Please remember that wearing a hearing aid neither corrects language nor restores perfect hearing.

Coaching people with a hearing impairment is essentially down to your communication skills as a coach. As with all new participants, speak to them before the start of their first session to establish a mutually acceptable method of communication. There are a variety of ways to communicate, and the person will tell you what works best for them. To get things started, try communicating through basic gestures or use a pen and notepad.

Including People with Hearing Impairments in Your Coaching Sessions

- Suggest the individual be at the front of the group when discussing plans or instructions, or, as the coach in the activity, move to a position where the participant is in front of you. Convey this message at the beginning of the session rather than bringing the participant to the front at the beginning of each demonstration.
- Try to reduce the noise level. Hearing aids are not selective in the sounds they amplify and, therefore, any background noises will be amplified as much as your voice.
- Speak clearly and don't exaggerate lip movements. If you are a fast speaker, you might find that slowing down your rate of speech a little could help.
- Avoid standing in front of a window or with the sun at your back as other light sources make lip-reading difficult.
- Try to face the participant 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 participant is paying attention before you begin to deliver instructions or coaching points. Attract the deaf participant's 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 participant cannot 'read' two things at the same time; for example, the board and your lips. Therefore, try to avoid talking while writing on the 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 rely on verbal explanations.

- If a deaf participant does not reply or seems to have difficulty understanding, rephrase what you just said/demonstrated before moving on. A deaf participant will usually confirm they understand by a nod of the head and you should do the same.
- Inform the participant 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 participant to teach you sport-specific signs; there is a number of these that a deaf participant can teach members of your sporting club to assist with communication during matches and training.
- Make sure the deaf participant can identify essential signals in your sport (eg 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 the Team

It will be useful to discuss the guidance described above with squad members, parents/carers and/or assistants prior to, or shortly after, the deaf participant joining the team. The coach can also educate umpires about what can be done to assist the participant.

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.

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For further information and support, contact:

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