



Basic Etiquette: People with Speech Impairments

1. Take your time, relax, and listen.
 - With a little time and patience, you can comfortably converse with a person who has a communication disability.
 - Don't try to rush the conversation or second-guess what a person has to say.
 - Plan for a conversation with a person with impaired speech to take longer.
2. It's okay to say, I don't understand.
3. Solicit and provide feedback. If necessary, repeat your understanding of the message in order to clarify or confirm what the person said.
4. Do not ignore a person with a speech impairment because of your concern that you will not understand them.
5. Do not pretend you understand what is being said if you do not. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will clue you in and guide your understanding.
6. Do not interrupt a person with a speech impairment. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person.
7. If necessary, ask short questions that can be answered with a few words, a nod, or a shake of the head.
8. Face the individual and maintain eye contact. Give the conversation your full attention.
9. If the individual is accompanied by another individual, do not address questions, comments, or concerns to the companion.
10. Do not assume that a person with a speech impairment is incapable of understanding you.
11. Some people with speech impairments have difficulty with inflections. Do not make assumptions based on facial expressions or vocal inflections unless you know the individual very well.
12. Do not play with or try to use someone's communication device. Such aids are considered an extension of an individual's personal space and should be respected as such.
13. If you are having trouble communicating, ask if an individual can write the message or use a computer or TTY.

Resources

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)

10801 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
Voice/TTY: (800) 638-8255; (301) 897-5700
E-mail: actioncenter@asha.org
Web site: www.asha.org

Stuttering Foundation of America

3100 Walnut Grove Road #603
P.O. Box 11749
Memphis, TN 38111
Voice: (800) 992-9392; (901) 452-7343
Fax: (901) 452-3931
E-mail: stuttersfa@aol.com
Web site: www.stuttersfa.org

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