



10 Workplace solutions for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing

Individuals with hearing loss encounter various barriers depending on the communication methodology they use and the work setting they have chosen. Unanticipated barriers to communication and the understanding of hearing loss by employers and universities result in additional challenges. While it is difficult to provide a specific, clear solution to every barrier, some considerations are suggested here to stimulate your own strategies for addressing these problems.

1. Develop positive self advocacy skills. Understand your hearing loss, situations that are difficult for you, and how you can manage your hearing loss.
2. Let others with whom you work know that you have a hearing loss and what accommodations are most helpful for you.
3. Know your rights as an individual with a hearing loss. If you feel you are being denied reasonable accommodations or promotions, contact the appropriate agency within your country to help navigate the process.
4. Evaluate your communication skills. Can others understand what you are saying? Do you dominate conversations? There are many resources and classes available to help you improve your communication skills.
5. Examine your physical surroundings. Is there anything that can be done to reduce unnecessary noise?
6. Use appropriate assistive technology to assist with your job. There are amplified telephones, personal FM systems, and other devices that will help you perform better.
7. If you are going to be involved in a meeting, get to the meeting early to figure out the best seat for you to see the presentation and the main speaker or the interpreter. Use a personal FM system or arrange for an interpreter ahead of time. If the room environment is too loud (e.g., heaters, ventilation fans, high reverberation) or has many visual distracters, ask if the meeting can be moved to a quieter location.
8. Ask co-workers to have lunch with you in a quiet environment. It is important not to miss out on networking opportunities and casual information sharing.
9. Make sure you are in a job/occupation that you enjoy. If you do not enjoy what you are doing, is it because of communication difficulties? The type of organization or job in which you work is an important consideration when you are deaf or hard of hearing.