

Lipreading and lipspeaking



About this leaflet

This leaflet is for anyone who wants to find out more about lipreading and lipspeaking. It tells you what lipreading is, how it can help you if you are deaf or hard of hearing and how to learn to lipread. It also tells you what lipspeakers do, when to use a lipspeaker and how to book one. Also included are some tips for hearing people to make it easier for someone to lipread you.

Movements of the face give information to support the sounds you hear



What is lipreading?

Everyone lipreads to some extent, especially in noisy situations. When you speak to someone their facial movements give you information to help you understand the meaning of what they are saying. If you have a hearing loss, the balance between what you hear and what you see changes. As your hearing gets worse, you will rely more on lipreading. Hard of hearing people are the biggest group of lipreaders.

How will lipreading help me?

Most audiologists recommend that people of all ages with any degree of hearing loss learn how to lipread.

Learning to lipread helps to improve your communication with other people, especially in noisy situations. It gives you the confidence to ask for what you need from other people to help your communication with them. It is also a way of doing something positive and practical about your hearing loss.

Learning to lipread is one part of helping you to communicate effectively. You also need to try using communication tips such as making sure you face the person talking to you (for more tips see later, Tips to help you lipread) and using your hearing aid. Putting all these things together helps increase your chances of communicating successfully with others.

Is lipreading difficult?

Some people may find it more difficult than others to lipread. How quickly you learn to lipread will depend on your ability, your memory, degree of hearing loss and how keen you are to learn. How other people speak can also affect how well you lipread. Many people don't speak clearly and lipreading someone with an unfamiliar accent may be tricky. It may be difficult to lipread someone with a beard or a large moustache. However, many people do become skilled lipreaders and find lipreading very useful.

Learning to lipread

You can learn to lipread by going to lipreading classes. If you cannot get to a class or there isn't one near you, you can learn at home. We tell you more about this later.

Joining a lipreading class

Many people get a great deal from joining a lipreading class. It is a safe environment where you can learn to lipread and share experiences with people who have different degrees of hearing loss. This can boost your confidence. As well as picking up coping strategies, you can find out about:

- Communication tactics to help yourself (see *Tips to help you lipread*).
- Hearing aids, for example, how to get the best out of them.
- Equipment to help you cope with your hearing loss, for example, telephones with an amplifier, alarm clocks for deaf people, how to get subtitles on your television.
- How to manage your tinnitus.
- How organisations and other people such as hearing therapists can help you.

Can anyone go to a lipreading class?

Anyone, young or old, can go to a lipreading class and you don't need any qualifications. It does not matter if you have mild or severe hearing loss. If you are hearing and your partner has a hearing loss, you can also go to a class. It will help you to understand what it means to have a hearing loss and how you can help your partner.

Finding a lipreading class

Your local authority Adult Education Service usually runs lipreading classes. Ask your local library or education department for details, or contact RNID's Information Line. Alternatively, you can write to the Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults (ATLA) enclosing a stamped addressed envelope (see *Further information* later in this leaflet).

You can usually join a class at any time. You may have to pay for the classes though people with a hearing loss are usually only charged an administration fee. Classes are held once a week and normally last two hours.

Learning to lipread in a class

Lipreading classes are informal, fun and friendly and taught by a qualified teacher of lipreading to adults. It's not like going back to school – the teacher will encourage you to have a laugh and to relax.

Remember, you cannot learn how to lipread everything, however, lipreading classes give you the tools and awareness to develop your skills.

Lipreading requires a lot of skill and concentration and it will help if you relax. Many words look similar on the lips, for example those starting with 'b', 'p' and 'm', and 'sh', 'ch' and 'j'. Some sounds, such as 'k' and 'g', are pronounced at the back of the throat and have no visible shape on the lips. Some phrases look the same. For example, it is easy to mistake 'I keep barley sugars in my car' for 'I keep Martians in my car'!

Your teacher will demonstrate the different shapes that sounds make on the lips so that you can identify them. They will explain how to fill in the gaps of speech that you can't hear, and how to use clues from the context of the conversation. They will also demonstrate look-a-like words and phrases.

To encourage learning, you will do exercises, play games and take part in quizzes. The teacher will also tell you interesting stories. You will get opportunities to practise lipreading with other people in the class and to take part in discussions in a non-threatening, supportive environment.

Remember, it is not possible to lipread every word – some words are invisible and not meant to be lipread! It is therefore better to try and get a general idea of what has been said rather than trying to lipread every word.

Learning to lipread at home

If you cannot get to a lipreading class or there isn't one near you, you can learn to lipread at home using books or videos.



The RNID Information Line can give you further information

- Try our book, *Watch this face – a practical guide to lipreading*. It uses lots of practical exercises to help you lipread a range of words and phrases. You can buy it from www.rnidshop.com or contact the RNID Information Line (see the back of this leaflet for contact details).
- Or contact Forest Books for a range of products about lipreading (see *Further information* for contact details).

Every time you speak to someone you are practising your lipreading skills. Learn from your mistakes and experiences.

Tips to help you lipread

The following tips will help you to lipread better:

- Tell the speaker that you lipread before you start the conversation.
- Try and find the quietest place possible for your conversation.
- Ask the speaker to stand or sit facing the light.
- Try to sit or stand on the same level and between three and six feet from the speaker.
- Find out the subject of the conversation as soon as possible.
- Don't feel embarrassed about asking for things to be repeated or asking for something to be said in a different way.
- Remember to blink regularly, especially if you wear contact lenses.
- Watch the speaker's whole face, not only the lips.
- Facial expressions and gestures will tell you a lot about what is being said.
- Keep a pen and paper handy in case you need an explanation of anything.
- Stop the speaker as soon as you miss something. You may not be able to catch up again.
- Give the speaker a copy of this leaflet.

If someone is lipreading you, face the light or your face will be in shadow



Making lipreading easier

You can also make it easier for someone else to lipread you in the following ways:

- Find a suitable environment with good lighting, away from noise and distractions.
- Sit or stand at the same level and three to six feet away from the lipreader.
- Face the light, or your face will be in shadow.
- Make sure the lipreader is looking at you before you speak.
- Introduce the topic of conversation.
- Speak clearly at a moderate pace without raising your voice or over-emphasising your speech.
- Use natural facial expressions, gestures and body language.
- Keep your face visible. Do not put your hands near it or wear sunglasses, and do not turn away while you are talking.
- Be prepared to repeat or rephrase something if the lipreader finds it difficult to follow you.
- Check that the lipreader can follow you.
- Be patient and take time to communicate.

What is a lipspeaker?

Lipspeakers work with deaf and hard of hearing people who prefer to communicate through lipreading and speech. You must be a confident lipreader with good English skills to use a lipspeaker.

Lipspeakers use facial expression, natural gesture and fingerspelling – if asked – to help communication



Lipspeakers are trained professionals who repeat what a hearing person or speaker is saying, without using their voice, so that you can lipread them easily. They produce clearly the shape of words, the flow, rhythm and phrasing of natural speech, and repeat the stress used by the speaker. Lipspeakers also use facial expression, natural gesture and fingerspelling – if asked to – to help you understand what has been said.

Many people speak up to 200 words a minute, so lipspeakers may have to cut down fast speech without losing the meaning of what is being said. If two people talk at the same time, neither message can be passed on.

Hearing people can also use lipspeakers to help them communicate with deaf or hard of hearing people as lipspeakers can repeat what lipreaders are saying, if requested.

When to use a lipspeaker

You can use a lipspeaker in many different situations, such as Further and Higher Education, job interviews, conferences and meetings, training courses, hospital and GP (family doctor) appointments, legal work and religious services.

Getting the most from a lipspeaker

A little preparation helps everyone get the best from a lipspeaker. You should give them background information, in advance if possible, so that they can prepare themselves about the subject matter and any specialist words or phrases that may be used.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you should try and meet your lipspeaker before the assignment begins to discuss your communication needs and get used to their lipshapes. You should discuss the use of fingerspelling, how to interrupt them if you need to, seating arrangements, the best distance between you both, and lighting. You should also confirm rest breaks and mealtimes.

Finding a lipspeaker to suit your needs

It is important to book a suitably qualified lipspeaker. There are two levels of lipspeaking – Level 2 and Level 3.

Level 2 lipspeakers are trained to manage speaking speeds of under 120 words a minute. They are qualified to accept assignments at meetings that are organised specifically for, or to include, deaf and hard of hearing people.

Level 3 lipspeakers are qualified to manage speaking speeds of more than 120 words a minute. They make it easier to lipread fast speeds by leaving out unnecessary words and phrases but do not lose the accuracy of what is being said.

When booking a lipspeaker ask for advice about whether to book a Level 2 or Level 3 lipspeaker.

Confidentiality

All qualified registered lipspeakers are bound by a professional Code of Practice, which means they must keep all information on assignments strictly confidential.

Booking a lipspeaker

There are more than 100 lipspeakers around the country. You will need to book as far in advance as possible – preferably two to three weeks. Lipspeakers need a break every 30 minutes, so for meetings that are more than two hours long you should book two lipspeakers. You can contact a lipspeaker directly or book one through an agency:

- Contact the RNID Information Line for details of your nearest RNID Communication Services office. They can book a lipspeaker for you.
- The Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP) can give you details of agencies and registered lipspeakers.
- The Association of Lipspeakers (ALS) publishes a Directory of Lipspeakers.

See *Further information* for contact details.

Paying for a lipspeaker

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you usually won't have to pay for a lipspeaker. Contact the RNID Information Line to find out more about:

- The Government's Access to Work scheme.
- Your rights under the Disability Discrimination Act (1995).
- Help you can get if you are a student.
- Disability Living Allowance if you need help to communicate with others.

Training as a lipspeaker

If you are interested in training to become a lipspeaker, contact the ALS or the Lipspeaking Standards Officer at CACDP (see *Further information* for contact details).



Access to Work may help to pay for a lipspeaker

Further information

Association of Lipspeakers (ALS)

5 Furlong Close, Upper Tean, Stoke-on-Trent ST10 4LB
 Telephone 01538 722482 Textphone 01538 722442
 Fax 01538 722442.
information@lipspeaking.co.uk
www.lipspeaking.co.uk

Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults (ATLA)

PO Box 506, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST2 9RE
 Fax 0870 706 2916
ATLA@lipreading.org.uk
www.lipreading.org.uk

Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP)

Durham University Science Park,
 Block 4, Stockton Road, Durham DH1 3UZ
 Telephone 0191 383 1155 Textphone 0191 383 7915
 Fax 0191 383 7914
durham@cacdp.org.uk
www.cacdp.org.uk

Forest Books

Forest Bookshop Warehouse, Unit 2, New Building,
 Ellwood Road, Milkwall, Coleford GL16 7LE
 Telephone 01594 833858 Textphone 01594 833507
 Videophone 01594 810637 Fax 01594 833446
forest@forestbooks.com
www.forestbooks.com

RNID's vision is of a world where deafness and hearing loss are not barriers to opportunity and fulfilment.

RNID is the largest charity representing the 9 million deaf and hard of hearing people in the UK. As a membership charity, we aim to achieve a radically better quality of life for deaf and hard of hearing people. We do this by campaigning and lobbying vigorously, by raising awareness of deafness and hearing loss, by providing services and through social, medical and technical research.

This leaflet is part of RNID's communication range.

Published in September 2003.

Some photographs in this leaflet were posed by models.

Want to know more?

This leaflet is available in audio tape, braille and large print.

We can also send you more information on many of the subjects covered in this leaflet. Just tick the boxes below, tell us what you particularly need to know about, or see our website at www.rnid.org.uk

Please send me:

Lipreading and lipspeaking

- Audio tape Braille Large print
- The RNID Publications Catalogue.
- Information about RNID Typetalk and BT TextDirect.
- Details of RNID communication services in my area.
- A copy of the RNID Sound Advantage *Solutions* catalogue, giving details of equipment for deaf and hard of hearing people.
- RNID's fundraising leaflet. We rely on donations from individuals, companies, trusts and fundraising events. Our leaflet shows how *you* can help.
- Details on supporting our future work with a legacy.
- Information on how to take part in RNID campaigns.
- Other information – please tell us what you would like to know.

Please fill in your name and address overleaf.

Become a member

The information and advice that you have received in this leaflet does not stop here. Joining the other 32,000 RNID members is an excellent way of receiving up-to-date information on deafness, hearing loss and tinnitus as well as our influential campaigns. All members benefit from:

- *One in Seven*, our lively, colour, bi-monthly magazine.
- **10% off** RNID priced publications.
- **A £5 voucher** towards equipment from RNID Sound Advantage.
- Access to *RNID Select* – special offers on a range of well-known brands.
- Being part of the **campaign** to improve the lives of deaf and hard of hearing people.

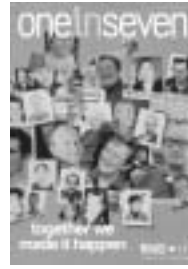
How to join

Membership is open to all and costs as little as £12.50 a year. To join:

- Visit www.rnid.org.uk/join or
- Call 020 7296 8049 (tel/textphone) or
- Complete the coupon overleaf.

You can save £2 off the standard price of membership by paying by Direct Debit. Contact the Membership Helpline on tel/textphone 020 7296 8049 for information.

Join today!



Yes, I want to stay informed

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss) _____ First name _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ E-mail _____

Telephone _____ Textphone _____

Please accept my payment: (*tick relevant boxes*)

£19.50 Standard rate

£12.50 If you are retired, unwaged or a full-time student

I would like to make a donation of £ _____

I enclose a cheque/PO made payable to RNID
(*delete as appropriate*)

I prefer to pay by
MasterCard/Visa/CharityCard/Switch/Delta
(*delete as appropriate*)

Card number

Switch issue no

Signature _____ Expiry date ____/____

Please treat all my membership payments and/or donations from 6 April 2000 until further notice as Gift Aid. (This will increase the value of your membership fee to RNID by almost a third, with no extra cost to you.)

NB To qualify for Gift Aid, I understand that I must have paid an amount of Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax equal to the tax RNID claims on my donations and/or membership payments.

Please return this form to
RNID, FREEPOST LON13186, London EC1B 1AL

Occasionally RNID will send you information on our work, please tick this box if you would prefer not to receive this.
Occasionally we will allow other organisations to contact you, please tick this box if you would prefer not to be contacted.

Please fill in your details

(Please write clearly, using block capitals)

Title (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss) _____ First name _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____ E-mail _____

Telephone _____ Textphone _____

Your contact details will be held on our database so that occasionally we can send you information on our work. Please tick this box if you do not wish your details to be kept on our database. We will use any information you give below to help us tailor our services to your needs. You do not have to give this information, but if you do, please tick this box to confirm we may keep it on our database.

Tick all boxes that apply

Is the information:

For you

For a friend or family member

A professional enquiry

How would you describe yourself?

Profoundly/severely deaf

Hard of hearing

Hearing

Hearing aid user

I have tinnitus

I have balance problems

Are you?

At school

A student

Working age

Retired

If we could provide it, would you like to receive information in a different format? Please use number 1, 2 or 3 to show your preferred choice:

Videotape in British Sign Language (BSL) with subtitles

E-mail/website

Face-to-face

If we could provide it, would you like information in another language?

Yes, please tell us which one _____

Please return to: RNID Information Line,
19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL
or order from our website at www.rnid.org.uk



RNID Information Line

Contact us for a range of information on deafness and hearing loss.
RNID Information Line, 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL
Telephone 0808 808 0123 Textphone 0808 808 9000
Fax 020 7296 8199 informationline@rnid.org.uk www.rnid.org.uk

RNID Tinnitus Helpline

Contact us for information and advice about tinnitus.
RNID Tinnitus Helpline, 19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL
Telephone 0808 808 6666 Textphone 0808 808 0007
Fax 020 7296 8199 tinnitushelpline@rnid.org.uk www.rnid.org.uk

RNID Sound Advantage

We sell a range of equipment for deaf and hard of hearing people.
RNID Sound Advantage, Unit 1, Haddonbrook Business Centre,
Fallodan Road, Orton Southgate, Peterborough PE2 6YX
Telephone 01733 232607 Textphone 01733 238020
Fax 01733 361161 solutions@rnid.org.uk www.rnidshop.com



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Photography Alex Segre, Crispin Hughes, Elaine Duigenan

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