Learning Guide

Visual strategies for Deaf and hearing impaired people

Name:

Workplace:

23377 Use visual strategies for communicating with Deaf and hearing impaired people

Level 3 | 3 credits

Careerforce
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Introduction

It is important to know how to use visual communication strategies when communicating with Deaf and hearing impaired people.

How to use your learning guide

This guide supports your learning and prepares you for the unit standard assessment. The activities and scenarios should be used as a general guide for learning.

This guide relates to the following unit standard:
• 23377 Use visual strategies for communicating with Deaf and hearing impaired people (level 3, 3 credits)

This guide is yours to keep. Make it your own by writing notes that help you remember things, or where you need to find more information.

Follow the tips in the notes column.

You may use highlight pens to show important information and ideas, and think about how this information applies to your work.

You might find it helpful to talk to colleagues or your supervisor.

Finish this learning guide before you start on the assessment.

What you will learn

This topic will help you with:
• understanding how communication is affected by difficulties with hearing.
• using positive communication environments for people who have difficulty with hearing.
• visual support strategies that may be used by or with people who have difficulty with hearing.
Visual strategies

People who are deaf or have hearing impairments may have difficulty with strategies that rely on hearing, so they often choose to use strategies that are visual – strategies that can be seen.

A visual strategy is something that presents information visually to help the person communicate.

Write

What visual communication strategies can you think of/do you currently use? Fill in the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual communication strategy</th>
<th>Purpose of the strategy</th>
<th>How the strategy works to support communication</th>
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How we hear

The manner in which we hear sound is shown in the following diagram. Any condition, congenital defect or injury/trauma which interrupts any of the transmission processes shown in these diagrams will result in a degree of hearing impairment or loss.

Anything that stops or hinders a person from hearing the full range of sounds that most people can hear in the same setting is a hearing impairment.

The process of hearing involves the outer, middle and inner ear and can be seen as six steps.

1. Sound travels down the ear canal to the ear drum.
2. The ear drum vibrates.
3. The vibrations travel through the middle ear to the inner ear.
4. Sound reaches the inner ear (cochlea) and travels along the hair cells, turning sound into electrical signals.
5. The electrical signals travel up the auditory nerve to the brain.
6. The brain interprets the electrical signals and lets us ‘hear’ the sound.
Hearing impairment

People with hearing impairment have difficulty hearing the range of sounds that can be heard by most people. Hearing impairment can vary from mild or moderate, to severe or profound. Sometimes hearing impairment is also called ‘hearing loss’ or ‘deafness’.

People who have mild hearing impairment may have little difficulty talking to people face to face. But they may have trouble hearing in noisy places or from a distance. Some high-pitched sounds or voices can be harder to hear. For example, people with mild hearing impairment may not always hear the phone ring, or a smoke alarm go off.

People who have a significant hearing loss (severe or profound hearing loss), especially those who were born deaf, have much more trouble hearing or don’t hear at all. They depend more on their vision than hearing for communicating with other people. It can be very hard for people with severe or profound hearing loss to learn to speak or to develop clear speech, because they have never heard the spoken word properly.

There are different types of hearing impairment which fall within three broad categories:

- conductive hearing loss.
- sensorineural hearing loss.
- tinnitus.

Conductive hearing loss

People with conductive hearing loss have problems that prevent sound being ‘conducted’ (travelling) to the cochlea. Conductive hearing loss leads to a reduced awareness of levels of loudness, similar to listening to someone speaking very softly or from a distance.

Sensorineural hearing loss

People with sensorineural hearing loss have problems with the inner ear, resulting in hearing impairment that ranges from mild to total loss of hearing. Sensorineural hearing loss reduces loudness and clarity, and distorts sound.

Tinnitus

Tinnitus is a noise (buzzing, hissing, ringing, whistling or other sound) that people hear in their ‘ear’ or in their ‘head’. Tinnitus can be very annoying for people who experience it frequently. It is estimated that 10% of people experience tinnitus for more than five minutes a day.
‘Deaf’ or ‘deaf’?

A person who is deaf does not necessarily identify with the Deaf community.

Deaf with a capital ‘D’

Deaf (with a capital ‘D’) describes people who have a hearing impairment and who identify themselves as part of the Deaf community. They are likely to use a formal sign language as their first language. Deaf people form a distinct community with their own culture. The Deaf see themselves as an alternative cultural group within the overall national culture of New Zealand.

Many people who are born with significant hearing impairment use sign language as their first language and have connections with the Deaf community. They may also learn English as their second language. Because this type of deafness isn’t expected to get better Deaf people view their difficulties as being communication difficulties rather than medical difficulties. Within the Deaf community they can communicate easily, and having a hearing impairment is not seen as a problem.

dead with a lower case d

The word ‘deaf’ simply refers to a person who has some hearing loss, but who doesn’t have an association with the Deaf community. The word ‘deaf’ is sometimes used instead of ‘hearing impairment’ or ‘hearing loss’.

Further information can be found on websites.
Deaf Association of New Zealand  www.deaf.co.nz
National Foundation for the Deaf Inc  www.nfd.org.nz
The impact of difficulty with hearing

Most people who have a hearing impairment do not see this hearing impairment as a problem. Their language is a visual gestural language and not a written language – for most of them, English is their second language.

The most significant difficulty for people who have hearing impairment is often in communicating. This difficulty has a flow-on effect, and influences other parts of their lives, such as work, recreation, socialising and participating in community events, health and wellbeing and safety.

People who are deaf or who have a hearing impairment may not always have effective communication partners (who can provide acknowledgement). A communication partner is anyone a person communicates with. This may include the person’s family/whānau, neighbour, health care professional such as the General Practitioner (GP), bus or taxi driver.

Visual communication strategies are helpful in improving communication with deaf and hearing impaired people.
Think about someone you support who has hearing difficulties. Do you know the type of hearing impairment/loss that the person you support has? For example, mild conductive loss in the left ear only, or profound sensorineural loss in both ears. If you know the type of hearing impairment/loss, write it down here. If not, it could be helpful to find out.

Does the person you support have any involvement with the Deaf community? Explain the person’s level of involvement (if any).

Describe what (if anything) the person has told you about their hearing difficulties or perhaps describe what you have observed.

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have difficulty with hearing? Think about this now and record the thoughts that you have.

How would you want to be treated if you yourself had a difficulty with hearing? Why?
Effective communication

Communication is complex. It is a two-way process of giving and receiving messages. Effective communication requires:

- A function – **something** to communicate about (a purpose or reason for communicating).
- A strategy – **a way** to communicate.
- Acknowledgement – **somebody** to communicate with who knows how to support a person’s communication and who can adapt their own communication to meet the person’s communication needs.

When any of these three factors (function, strategy and acknowledgement) is missing, limited or ineffective, a person will have difficulty with communicating.

The person may not have a successful way to communicate. When it is their turn to be the ‘listener’ or ‘receiver’ in a conversation, they may struggle to provide effective acknowledgement in return. If a person also has difficulty with learning, that person’s communication may be more affected as a result.

People who have difficulty hearing or have never heard the spoken language will find it harder to learn how to speak themselves. It may also be hard for them to participate in day-to-day interactions.

There may be additional communication difficulties for a person with a physical and/or intellectual disability. Here are some types of communication difficulties that are common for people who have both intellectual disabilities and hearing impairments.

- **Speech** (clarity of speech sounds) – a person may have unclear speech or find it hard to produce particular sounds. This can make it hard for other people to understand the person when they are talking.
- **Voice** (the actual sound produced by the vocal chords) – difficulties with ‘voice’ include having an unusual tone (such as having a nasal sounding voice), or pitch or speaking too loudly.
- **Language** (complexity of grammar, and vocabulary) – difficulties with language can include having a limited vocabulary, or limited grammar, or using vocabulary or grammar in odd ways. This can make it difficult for a person to get their messages across clearly. It may result in the person being misunderstood.
- **Social use of language** (knowing what to say, when, and to whom) – difficulties with social use of language can include having trouble with initiating or maintaining interactions, not being able to keep up with the conversation, missing parts of conversations, losing the ‘thread’ of conversations, and saying things that don’t fit with the topic being discussed.
Positive communication environments

It is important that an environment is set up well so that it encourages the best possible communication. If you are communicating with someone who has difficulty hearing, there are many things you can do to make sure that you are a good communication partner, and that you have organised the environment to be as suitable as possible.

- Face the person directly if the interaction is one on one.
- For group interactions think carefully about seating/positioning – round tables are useful because everyone who is seated can be seen all of the time. Try to arrange a room so that everyone can be seen.
- Get the person’s attention before you speak.
- Try to use a room that has a carpet rather than a tile or wooden floor.
- Do not use a room with lots of people present, or with a television or radio going.
- Make sure the person can easily see the faces of people who are speaking (good lighting is really important). A dark or poorly lit room can make it difficult for a person to see (which affects the person’s ability to understand).
- Minimise background noise (for example, turn off radios/TVs and shut doors into other rooms).
- Minimise visual distractions in the background so that the person you support can focus on the interaction eg draw curtains, or move pot plants from the table you are sitting around.
- Speak clearly – do not put your hand over your mouth as you talk.
- If the person cannot understand you, say it again a different way.
- Use facial expressions and gestures to add to your meaning.

Some organisations have policies or procedures about supporting people’s communication or meeting individual needs. It is important that you know what these policies are and that you follow them at all times in your workplace. Find out what policies or procedures your organisation has.

Before offering support, it is important to find out what the person can do or wants to do by themselves, and not make any assumptions about the person’s abilities.
There are also some things that people who have difficulty hearing can do to help themselves.

- Arrange themselves and the room so that they can see/hear as well as possible. For example, shut doors to cut down background noise, turn off radios or the TV and make sure the person (people) being talked to can be seen.
- Tell other people about their hearing loss and tell these other people what they need to do to help. For example, you could say: “Sometimes I find it hard to hear in a noisy room. It helps if you sit close to me and talk really clearly.”
- Let people know when something hasn’t been heard by telling them exactly which part of a conversation was missed, and asking them to say it again. For example, you could say: “I didn’t hear the last bit”; or “I heard you say....was that right?”
- Ask people to write down or show things that aren’t understood clearly.

Some people with intellectual disabilities might have difficulty doing the things suggested without support from others. It is important that you discuss this situation with the person you support (and/or the person’s family/whānau/caregivers as required). Find out what the person you support would like you to do, or not do.

Here are some scenarios.

**Jenny** is a person who has an intellectual disability and a hearing impairment. She likes you to remind her to tell people about her hearing needs herself. She doesn’t want you to tell people on her behalf. She takes responsibility for making sure she can see who she is talking to. If she gets really stuck and can’t understand something she will ask you to help her.

**Peter** is also a person with an intellectual disability and a hearing impairment. He likes to try and explain his needs on his own. Sometimes he will ask for your help if he gets stuck or isn’t sure of what to say. Peter is shy and finds it hard to ask people to repeat themselves – sometimes he needs you to remind him to ask.

**Wiremu** is also a person with an intellectual disability and a hearing impairment. He has more significant needs than Jenny and Peter. Wiremu does not use any spoken language and relies on you to explain his hearing and communication needs to others. He also needs you to explain things to him in simple terms using two or three spoken words at a time. Wiremu relies on you to arrange seating and tables in the room so that he is in the best position to participate.
Read the scenario below and answer the following questions.

*Josh is a young adult who has an intellectual disability and a mild hearing impairment. He is having trouble hearing and communicating during staff meetings at his part-time job. You talk to him about it and find out more about the meetings. There are usually 10-15 people at the meetings and they sit on sofas in the corner of the staff room. Sometimes the dishwasher is on because the meeting is held just after lunch. On hot days the windows are open, and noise from the road outside can be heard. The room is quite dark. Tea and biscuits are on the tables and most people eat and drink during the meetings.*

Identify three things about the meeting environment that make it hard for Josh to communicate, and suggest changes that would be helpful.

1.

2.

3.

Think about a person you support. What things do you need to be aware of to make the communication environment positive?
Supporting a person’s communication

Some people who have communication impairments use typical communication strategies (such as talking) in limited ways. This includes people who are deaf or have hearing impairments.

These people may be more successful using additional or alternative strategies.

There are many types of communication strategies. Not every strategy will suit every person. Most people will benefit from support that is individually planned. This support usually involves assessing the person’s communication skills and needs; working with that person to set goals; developing a plan to meet those goals; putting the plan in place; and then checking progress.

Communication assessment

The first step in supporting someone’s communication is to ensure that thorough assessment information is available. This is important because this information forms the basis of the rest of the communication support process (from choosing a goal, to selecting a strategy to meet the person’s needs, to knowing who has to be trained to support the person).

This information ensures that decisions are made based on facts rather than opinions.

It allows comparisons to be made over time to see if progress is being made.

Assessment is usually carried out by a speech-language therapist or a specialist in the area of communication. Other professionals may also be involved.
The New Zealand Audiology Society promotes excellence in hearing care and their website includes an online hearing test www.audiology.org.nz

Children who are deaf or have a hearing impairment may have access to a teacher of the deaf or a hearing advisor, who are employed by the Ministry of Education.

Adults who are deaf or have hearing impairments may be able to access a hearing therapist through the Ministry of Health.

During a communication assessment, information is gathered about all of the things that influence a person’s ability to communicate successfully.

• What the person wants and needs in order to communicate in their environment.
• What the person is able to communicate about now.
• How the person communicates now.
• How well the person can be understood by others (in all the different ways that they communicate).
• The person’s understanding – how well the person makes sense of what others are communicating, and how well they understand what’s going on in the environment (routines, expectations, rules).
• How the person interacts with others socially.
• The person’s vision, hearing, fine motor skills – these things influence the types of support strategies that a person can use effectively.
• The activities that the person is involved in – some strategies may work better in some environments than others. For example, a communication board may work well at home, but would get ruined in the swimming pool!
• How others contribute to the success of the person’s communication.
• A speech-language therapist or other communication support specialist may provide support or guidance following assessment. They may help with setting communication goals, developing a plan (choosing strategies to meet the chosen goals), implementing the plan, and reviewing progress.

More information can be found in the Careerforce learning guide for Unit Standard 27467 Apply supported communication strategies in a health or wellbeing situation.
Accessing a speech-language therapist

There are different ways to access a speech-language therapist, depending on the age of the person, and the reason for the communication impairment.

- Children and young people who are deaf or have hearing impairments usually receive their communication support through the Ministry of Education or Special Education Services.
- Children who attend a special school may receive their communication support directly through their school – the school may employ its own speech-language therapists.
- People (children, young people and adults) who also have health conditions that affect their communication will usually receive their communication support through their local District Health Board.
- People whose hearing and communication impairment is the result of an accident will usually receive their communication support through a private provider funded by ACC.
- For some adults with disabilities a Needs Assessment Service Co-ordination (NASC) agency may fund a speech-language therapy assessment or intervention if it is not available through other means.
- Some people with a communication impairment may choose to pay a private provider for its service.
- Children who are deaf usually have communication support through Advisors on Deaf Children (ADDC), or Itinerant Teachers of the Deaf, both of whom are employed by the Ministry of Education.

Each of these services has strict eligibility criteria and different processes for making referrals. Some people may not be eligible to access communication support services.

Write

Check with your manager how to access a speech-language therapist or other communication support professional, in your workplace.

If the person you support already has the support of a speech and language therapist or other communication support professional, it may be worthwhile recording that person’s name and contact details here.
Visual communication strategies

Here are some visual communication strategies to support people who are deaf or have hearing impairments.

Lip reading

New Zealand Sign Language (including finger spelling)

Key word signing

Gestures

Visual comprehension strategies
Each of these strategies is described on the following pages. Remember that no single strategy is useful to all people. The choice of strategy or strategies should be made individually.
### Lip reading

There are many visual communication strategies available, and care needs to be taken in selecting the best one(s) for the person you support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Lip reading means looking at the movements of a person’s mouth to work out what that person is saying (if they cannot be heard). This is a receptive communication strategy.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function/purpose</strong></td>
<td>Being able to ‘read’ a person’s lips can help a person who has trouble hearing to understand what someone else is saying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills required</strong></td>
<td>Lip reading is immensely difficult. It involves a lot of guess work.                                                                                           For example, just try to ‘see’ (to lip read) the difference between the sounds ‘t’, ‘d’, ‘l’, and ‘n’ – they look the same when we say them (our tongue goes to the roof of our mouth just behind our top teeth), even though they sound different. This means that the words ‘tea’, ‘Dee’, ‘Lee’ and ‘knee’ all look the same. To be good at lip reading a person needs to have good cognitive (learning and thinking) skills – lip reading requires lots of concentration and problem-solving skills (to work out what each word could be if there are several possibilities). This can make lip reading a difficult strategy for many people with intellectual disabilities. Good vision is also important, so that people’s faces can be clearly seen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support tips</strong></td>
<td>Face the light, so the person can see your face. Stay within 1-2 metres distance of the person. Sit or stand at eye level to make yourself easier to see. If the person hasn’t understood you, repeat what you said, but then say it again a different way. Remember that lip reading may not be possible in situations where a person has to concentrate on something else, such as sewing or walking, or driving a car. It may also be difficult if the person speaking has facial hair, or is smoking or eating – this can make it hard to work out the lip patterns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Do it**

Ask a friend to ‘mouth’ the words ‘mad’, ‘ban’, ‘mat’ and ‘pat’ (i.e. say them without making any noise). See if you can tell the difference.
## New Zealand Sign Language

New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) is the natural language of the Deaf community in New Zealand, and is the third official language of New Zealand.

| Description | NZSL is its own language. NZSL conveys ideas by signs, facial expressions, body language and lip patterns, and has its own grammar, rules and sentence structures which are different from those of English or Māori. It is also includes an NZSL version of ‘finger spelling’, where a sign is used for each letter in the English alphabet. This allows people to spell out words that they do not know the sign for, or that there isn’t a sign for. More than 100 hand shapes are used in NZSL. The order of signs in sentences is not normally the same order as words in an English sentence. Sometimes one sign is equivalent to several English words (eg signs for concepts such as “Leave me alone”, or “In the near future”). Some concepts which have one word in English require more signs in NZSL (eg antiseptic = no + germs, ripe = ready+ eat). Sign grammar usually starts by locating the topic in time and space followed by a comment. For example, a person would sign “meeting tonight not sure John go” (“I’m not sure whether John’s going to tonight’s meeting”). People who use NZSL do not usually speak when they are signing to each other. There several points of etiquette (manner, expected rules) that should be adhered to when using NZSL. These points are outlined later. |
| Function/purpose | NZSL is used for two key reasons:  
1 To get messages across if a person has difficulty talking.  
2 To receive messages if a person has difficulty hearing.

NZSL is used mostly by people who are deaf or who have a hearing impairment, but also by hearing people who want to interact with those who are deaf or have a hearing impairment. |
Skills required
To use NZSL effectively a person needs to be able to:

- have good cognitive skills – an ability to learn the grammatical structure and large vocabulary of the language.
- ability to move their hands in a complex series of movements.
- recognise the signs when they are used by others during interactions.

Support tips
As a support person you should:

- be familiar with all signs used by the person you support.
- know at least as many signs as the person you support.
- use signing regularly when interacting with the person you support.
- practise your signing often to keep up to date.
- encourage the person you support to sign when necessary.
- know the etiquette of NZSL and follow it.
- help people to set up environments so that they are best for signing.
- know how to support someone to access and work with a formal interpreter. Information on this is included in the section following.
- have access to an NZSL dictionary so that you can check signs when required.

Learning NZSL
The NZSL Tutors’ Association has a range of community classes available throughout New Zealand. DVDs for families and friends of people who use NZSL can be purchased from Kelston Deaf Education Centre.

There are also on-line NZSL dictionaries where you can look up particular signs (though they won’t teach you the grammar of the language).

Traditional paper dictionaries are also available. A useful reference is:

Practise using the following frequently used signs in NZSL.

**Great**

Both hands are held up, some way apart at shoulder level, palms forward/in, blades forward/out, with the thumbs and forefingers forming ‘o’ shapes, the other fingers apart and curved. The hands are moved forward/down a little way, halting with a slight bounce.

**See you later**

Both flat hands are held out, the left lower than the right, palms in/down, blades down/out, with the thumb and fingers extended and apart. The hands are moved up/in, closing into fists, the right blade contacting the left thumb joint, and both are moved up together a little way.

**Hello**

The flat right hand is raised, palm forward, blade right, fingers spread. The hand is moved from the wrist, from side to side.
Thanks

The right hand is raised so that the fingertips touch the chin, palm facing the signer, blade left, fingers curved, and is moved forward/down.

Finished

The left hand is held out, palm down, blade forward/down, fingers flexed. The right hand is held up at shoulder level, palm back/left, blade forward/left, fingers flexed, and is moved down/left from the elbow, just past the blade of the left hand and then bounces up a little.

Excuse me

The right fist is held out at shoulder level, palm up/left, blade down/left, with the first two fingers curved, and the thumb pad pressed to the middle finger pad. The thumb pad rubs across the pads of the first two fingers, twice.
Etiquette for using NZSL

The following tips have been adapted from etiquette on various websites. A good place to start is www.deafwebsites.com

- Don’t be afraid to use your facial expressions, point and gesture. This will make it easy for the deaf person to follow you. Pen and paper are OK as well.
- Maintain eye contact; don’t turn away when watching someone sign.
- If you don’t understand what a person signed to you, get the person to sign it again. It’s OK to check, clarify, or tell the person to slow down.
- If you can’t see a person clearly then ask them to move – maybe the light is wrong or there is a window with visual noise outside?
- Give the signers lots of space! For clear communication the ‘signing space’ is the area where the person’s hands are moving. If you stand too close to people who are signing, this restricts their signing space.
- Walk between people signing to each other if you can’t walk around them. (The secret is not to interrupt the eye contact between the people talking.) Just give a little head bow and sign “excuse me” and move through.
- Are you in a crowd of deaf people and you can’t get through? Don’t waste your time tapping people on the shoulder asking them to move just move through, pressing on their backs or shoulders as you move through.
- If you are talking to someone and another person blocks your view of the conversation, it is quite OK to ask that person to move.
- Be careful when signing and walking, or doing other activities (such as cutting with a knife). The signer and the listener should look out for each other and scan the room to make sure that it is safe.
- If you want to talk to someone but that person can’t see you, try the following: waving your hand, or tapping the person on the shoulder or arm. If the person is far away from you, you could try flicking the lights or stamping your feet.
- Try to sign in environments that are good for signing, ie places that have:
  - open or open-plan spaces, preferably with rounded corners. This means that there is room to sign without bumping things, and it is easy to see people coming.
  - bright and clear lighting with few visual distractions.
  - round tables for meetings or conversations.
  - wooden floors are the preferred floors for deaf people: you can feel the vibrations on them!
Working with NZSL interpreters

NZSL interpreters provide a communication link between deaf and hearing people by interpreting between spoken language and NZSL. Some interpreters can also assist communication with deaf people who do not sign, but require spoken messages to be relayed with clear lip-patterns. People may want or need to use an interpreter in a range of settings such as in the courts, educations settings, conferences, family events and when meeting with public agencies.

Guidelines for working with an interpreter

- Speak directly to the person you need to talk to, not the interpreter.
- Seating may need to be re-arranged to give the deaf person a clear view of the interpreter and others. For example, sitting in front of a window, or a busy backdrop should be avoided as it creates a visual ‘noise’ for those using NZSL.
- Etiquette means an interpreter will only accept assignments in which they can reasonably expect to interpret competently. Interpreters will, to the best of their ability, interpret the meaning of the message in the manner in which it was intended without adding or omitting anything.
- The interpreter’s role is to be a neutral party. The interpreter will not offer advice or opinions on the situation. Please do not ask the interpreter to be involved in any way other than by interpreting.
- Interpreters will treat any information gained as confidential. Interpreters will respect the confidentiality of clients and will not reveal any identifying information without permission/consent of the person/people involved. It is recognised that the presence of an interpreter at an assignment that is in the public arena need not be treated as confidential (eg theatre, TV, sporting events).
- The interpreter is only able to ‘pace’ interpretation in accordance with the speed of the Deaf or hearing impaired person. Pacing of presented materials can be challenging to interpreters when passages are read out loud; the speaker speaks very quickly; or many technical terms are used.
- If a message is unclear, interpreters may on occasion ask for repetition, rephrasing or an explanation to enable the message to be interpreted accurately.
- Because interpreting requires intense concentration and physical effort, the interpreter may request short breaks in an assignment that lasts an hour or more, or two interpreters may be needed to work as a team.

More info

www.slianz.org.nz

Sign Language Interpreters Association of New Zealand
Read the statements below. Decide whether each statement is true or false. Circle the correct answer. The information to help you answer these questions is included in this learning guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 7000 people in New Zealand use NZSL.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZSL is an official language of New Zealand.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZSL has the same grammar as spoken English.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign language is international.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is OK to flick the lights or stamp your feet to get someone’s attention if you want to sign to them.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round tables provide a good position for groups of people signing to each other.</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>False</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The organisation that you work for may have its own policies and procedures for working with an interpreter. Find out what these policies and procedures are and record the key points in the space below.
# Key word signing

Key word signing is mainly used by and with people who have intellectual disabilities (who may or may not have a hearing impairment).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>There are many types of key word signing. Only the main words/concepts of a message are signed, rather than using complex language systems (such as NZSL) which could be too difficult for some people who have disabilities. The message is usually spoken at the same time as it is signed (where possible), especially if it is being used to aid a person’s understanding. There are several specific key word systems, including Makaton, the most common system used in New Zealand. In New Zealand most of the signs used with Makaton come from NZSL. The Makaton system includes signs as well as picture symbols (which can be used as well as, or instead of, signs).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Function/purpose</td>
<td>Key word signing is used expressively, but is also often used as a receptive communication tool to help people with intellectual disabilities (who may or may not have a hearing difficulty) to understand what is being said to them. It is a less complex version of signing that can be adapted to suit the language level of each individual. The use depends on the individual person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills required</td>
<td>To use ‘key word signing’ effectively a person needs to be able to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• recognise/interpret a range of signs (the range may be very small or very large, from one or two signs through to hundreds of signs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• have some ability to move their hands. Signs can be adapted for people who have physical disabilities, and there are some sign systems that can be done with one hand (rather than two hands), or with other body parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• recognise the signs if they are signed by other people.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Support tips

As a support person you should:

• be familiar with all signs used by the person you support.
• know at least as many signs as the person you support.
• use signing regularly when interacting with the person you support.
• practise your signing often to keep up to date.
• encourage the person you support to sign when necessary.
• act as an ‘interpreter’ when necessary.

Learning Makaton

To find out more about learning Makaton, contact Makaton New Zealand. They will be able to tell you where and when workshops are being held in your local area. www.makaton.org.nz

Many adults with intellectual disabilities learnt to use key word signing when they lived in institutions. Unless their support people can also sign, they are likely to have stopped using signing. You may be surprised at the difference you could make to someone’s life just by starting to sign with them again.
Gestures

Gestures are used frequently by people in the typical population many, many times each day and are an expected part of normal communication. Thus gesture is the kind of strategy that can be used to communicate with members of the community quite successfully.

| Description | Gesture means using hand and body movements to ‘act out’ a word or situation; for example, moving hands as if they are on the steering wheel of a car to indicate ‘driving’. Gestures are cheap and portable! Some people with intellectual disabilities have their own unique systems of gestures and ‘signs’.

| Function/purpose | Gestures can be used as an expressive or receptive communication strategy. They are usually used alongside spoken language, to make the meaning of words clearer. They could be used without speaking. For example, if the person you support cannot hear what you are saying and cannot understand formal sign language, that person might still benefit from you using gestures to ‘show’ what is meant. Conversely, if the same person has tried to get a message across but hasn’t been understood, they might use gestures to get the messages across.

| Skills required | For gestures to aid a person’s comprehension the person needs to be able to:

- make sense of the gestures and know what they mean (this could be a large or small range of gestures, depending on the person’s ability).
- have good vision.

To use gestures effectively as a way of expressing themselves the person needs to be able to:

- recognise when they have or have not been understood.
- know when to use gestures.
- have some ability to move their hands/ body/face to make gestures that are understood by others.
Support tips

- Find out what gestures the person you support can understand and use.
- Use the gestures that the person understands as part of your everyday interactions with that person.
- Talk at the same time as you use gestures (unless there is a specific reason not to).
- Encourage the person you support to use gestures if you cannot make sense of what the person is trying to tell you.
- Be patient.
- Ask the person to show you a different way if you cannot understand their meaning.
- Check that you have understood correctly.
**Visual comprehension**

A visual comprehension strategy is something that presents information visually to help a person’s understanding.

| Description | Visual comprehension strategies are often used to make activities more predictable by showing things such as:
| | • the routine for the day or week or changes to a routine.
| | • what is happening next?
| | • steps in a task.
| | • rules or expectations of behaviour.
| | • staff rosters or duty rosters.
| | • tasks that need to be completed.
| | Real objects, parts of objects, photos, symbols, line drawings and written words are all ‘visual’. A visual strategy uses whatever visual form is understood by the person.

| Function/purpose | Visual strategies are usually used for people who find it easier to understand what they see in pictures (or writing) rather than what is said or signed to them. These strategies can be particularly useful for people who have intellectual disabilities.

| Skills required | To use a visual comprehension strategy effectively a person needs to:
| | • be able to interpret, or make sense of, the visual images that are presented – if the person doesn’t know what these images are, they will not be able to respond to them. Not everyone is able to make sense of visual images easily.
| | • see the visual images – they need to be the right size and colour for the person’s visual ability.
| | • understand that there is a sequence involved (if applicable).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support tips</th>
<th>To support a person to use a visual comprehension strategy you should:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• make sure the person understands what is expected and what the symbols/pictures mean. You may need to teach these first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• know what you need to do to make the strategy as successful as possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• use the strategy consistently – a strategy will probably only help a person to understand a ‘change’ if it has been used on an everyday basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• know how to prompt the person you support – use the same prompts each time the strategy is used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• encourage use of the strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• make sure that the strategy is available for use at all appropriate times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• update the strategy as necessary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to develop individualised strategies. It is usually best to get support from a professional to do this. It is easy to develop strategies that don’t work or don’t suit the individual, and a professional can help you to get it right. Seek advice or guidance from someone with skills in the area of communication, such as speech-language therapists or their assistants, psychologists, occupational therapists, or behaviour support specialists.

There are some excellent books and websites about visual comprehension strategies, including:

- **Visual Strategies for Improving Communication** by Linda Hodgdon. This book focuses specifically on children with ASD. It can be adapted for use with adults.
- www.todolearn.com is a specialist website that has free pictures to download and use for creating visual strategies.
- www.nas.org.uk is the UK Autistic Society’s website and has some great information as well.
## Book about Me

A ‘book about me’ (sometimes called a communication passport) is a tool that is used to explain information about a person to others.

| Description | It is usually used when a person isn’t able to provide the information themselves, particularly if the person’s communication is largely unintentional. It can be a good way to show the person in a positive light, and highlight strengths that might otherwise go unnoticed. It also helps communication partners to get to know the person and know how to communicate with the person in the most effective way. Every ‘book about me’ can be presented in a different way. However, any book could include the following:
|   | • important information.
|   | • how my hearing difficulty impacts on me.
|   | • key support tips to meet my hearing and communication needs.
|   | • communication and comprehension.
|   | • about me and about my family.
|   | • about school or work, or where I live.
|   | • things I like to do at school or work.
|   | • things I like to do outside of school or work.
|   | • friendships and relationships.
|   | • likes and dislikes.

| Function/purpose | A ‘book about me’ differs from a communication book, in that the person with the communication impairment isn’t expected to respond or interact with others who are using the book. It is intended for the purpose of information-sharing.

<p>| Skills required | Not applicable – this is a strategy primarily for the use of communication partners. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support tips</th>
<th>To make the most use of a ‘book about me’ a support person should:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• be familiar with the information in the book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• help to keep the book up to date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• encourage new communication partners to read the book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• make sure that the book is available to communication partners at all times.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Communication books or boards**

Communication books and boards are portable and vary for each individual. Some will be used to convey one or two messages only. Others contain many thousands of items.

| Description | The person using the book or board will select items to convey the required message. The person might do this by pointing with a finger, using a head pointer, or another alternative to pointing, looking at the item with their eyes, or by having the support person scan through the items and then indicating to the person when they have touched the correct item. Communication books and boards are usually small enough to be taken with a person wherever that person goes. Communication books and boards can be presented in many different ways.

- A portable whiteboard – items can be drawn, written or stuck on to the board as necessary.
- A book with as many pages as is appropriate for an individual – often the pages are colour coded into different categories to make it easier to find each item. Pages can be thick or thin, plastic coated or plain paper, depending on the person’s unique needs.
- A board of any size. This could include a large wooden board screwed on to a wall, with real objects glued on to it (such as objects to indicate choices – a cup to mean “drink please”, a towel to mean “swimming please”, a book to mean “story time please”).

| Function/purpose | Communication books or boards are used to help people get their messages across. They are an expressive communication tool. The type and complexity of the message(s) can be altered to suit each individual person. They can be useful for people who have limited verbal communication, whether they have a hearing difficulty or not. They can be very useful to people with intellectual disabilities who have limited literacy skills, because with pictures and photographs it is not necessary for the user to be able to read or write. |
## Skills required

To use a communication book or board a person needs to be able to:

- understand the messages that they are choosing to communicate about. It is important that the book/board uses a visual mode that the person can make sense of (written words, pictures, symbols, photos or real objects).

- have a way of selecting the message (either by pointing, nodding, pushing a button, looking with their eyes at the desired buttons, or indicating when someone else has chosen the correct item on the person’s behalf).

- be able to see or feel each item on the book or board, in order to choose the messages they want.

- remember what messages the book or board can be used for. This is especially important for sophisticated books that may have many pages.

## Support tips

As a support person you should:

- be familiar with the layout of the communication book or board so that you can assist with turning pages or finding symbols as required.

- encourage use of the book or board and make sure that it is available at all times.

- be able to explain to other people what the book or board is for and how it works – so that they are more likely to interact with the person you support.

- respond to all uses of the book or board.
**Writing/reading**

Writing/reading is a low-technology solution that costs very little and can be very effective, provided that both people involved in an interaction have adequate literacy skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Writing/reading can be:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• an expressive communication tool, to help a person get their messages across.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a receptive communication strategy to help a person understand messages that they cannot hear or make sense of in other ways.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Writing could be the main strategy that a person uses for most of their communication. It could also be a strategy that a person uses when they are not being understood in other ways.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function/purpose</th>
<th>There are different methods of using written material depending on the intended purpose:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• using a calculator to show the cost of items in numbers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• using pre-printed cards with requests for people to follow, or explaining how to communicate with the person (such as: “I find it hard to hear and speak. Please could you help me find the following items: a loaf of wholemeal sandwich slice bread, two tomatoes, a small tin of plain tuna in brine.”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• having a small portable whiteboard and marker that can be used at any time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• writing in the air with a finger – many people can make sense of this, though it may be harder for people with intellectual disabilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• using paper – with bold pens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• email and texting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• using computerised devices that show a typed message on a screen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skills required

- good literacy skills.
- adequate vision.
- the ability to improvise and quickly write messages.

Support tips

- be familiar with the literacy skills of the person you support, so that you can help out when required, but encourage as much independence as possible.
- encourage the person you support to use writing when necessary.
- encourage the person you support to carry the necessary tools with them at all times (whether it is paper or a whiteboard, or an electronic device).
- carry paper and pen with you at all times in case it is necessary.
- be prepared to explain to others how they can support use of the strategy.

Using the computer is a high technology way of keeping up to date by emailing friends.
### Alerting devices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Alerting devices ensure that people who have difficulty hearing do not miss important information provided by devices such as smoke alarms, door bells, alarm clocks or baby monitors.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function/purpose</strong></td>
<td>There is a large range of alerting devices that have been developed for people who are deaf or have hearing impairments. They communicate important messages to people through the use of lights, vibrations or coded/written messages (instead of, or as well as, noise), that are sent to a pager worn by the person. Here are some examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This baby monitor vibrates when a baby makes a noise, alerting parents/caregivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This alarm clock has a ‘shaker’ that is placed under a person’s pillow. It will wake the person when the alarm goes off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This device displays a flashing light when the telephone rings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills required</td>
<td>To make use of alerting devices, the person using them needs to be able to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• understand what the messages from the device mean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• have access to the alerting device when necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support tips</td>
<td>• be aware of which alerting devices are used by the person you support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• know how to work each device.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• know who to contact if a device isn’t working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• provide support to ensure that batteries are replaced before they run out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• encourage the person you support to be as independent as possible in use of a device.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Special devices and services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>There are specialised services available for people who are deaf or hearing impaired who want to communicate with hearing people. NZ Relay services provide a variety of relay services using a Relay Assistant (RA) who acts as a bridge between people, relaying calls.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function/purpose for Deaf and/or hearing impaired</strong></td>
<td>A Deaf or hearing impaired person can type their message on the internet or by using a teletypewriter (TTY). The RA reads and voices the message to the person being called. That person listens, voices their reply to the RA who types the reply to the Deaf or hearing impaired person. A hearing impaired person can use a voice carry over (VCO) service. The person speaks to the listener, who voices their reply, which is typed by the RA for the hearing impaired person to read.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function/purpose for speech impaired</strong></td>
<td>Hearing carry over (HCO) is a service where the speech impaired person types their message, the RA reads it out to the listener, who then speaks back to the speech impaired person. A speech to speech (STS) service is when the RA re-voices the message from the speech impaired person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Function/purpose using Skype</strong></td>
<td>Skype can be used. Video assisted STS connects to a video assistant for a speech impaired person. A Deaf person can see a video interpreter over Skype who uses sign language to communicate the message.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the greater use of mobile phones and smartphone technology this has aided communication for Deaf and hearing impaired people.

To find out more about the New Zealand Relay Service, go to the website www.nzrelay.co.nz.
You have just learnt about a wide range of visual communication strategies. On the following pages you will read several scenarios describing the needs of a range of people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment. For each scenario think about what you have learnt and decide which type of strategy might work best for each person. Be prepared to explain why you made each choice.

**Scenario One**

Jane is a person who has a mild intellectual disability and a profound hearing impairment. Both of her parents are deaf and Jane considers herself deaf as well. Jane is relatively independent and has a part-time job doing cleaning for people who are hearing, though she rarely has contact with them. She lives in a flat on her own, and has assistance from a support worker for five hours a week to help her with grocery shopping and tasks that rely on having good hearing.

Think of one or two visual communication strategies that could suit Jane. Explain why you made each choice. Write your answers here:

1
**Scenario Two**

Pete is a person who has a moderate intellectual disability and a mild hearing impairment. Pete can write his own name and a few other familiar words. Pete is a good verbal communicator and uses talking as his main way of expressing himself. He has more difficulty with hearing/understanding what others are saying to him, especially in busy or noisy places.

Think of one or two visual communication strategies that could suit Pete. Explain why you made each choice. Write your answers here:

1

2

**Scenario Three**

Rua is a person who has a significant intellectual disability, physical disability and has frequent ear infections. When he has ear infections it is more difficult for him to hear than usual, but he has no permanent hearing loss. Rua has support with most aspects of daily living such as taking a shower, eating and dressing. Rua can understand simple spoken directions when his hearing is good.

Think of one or two visual communication strategies that could suit Rua. Explain why you made each choice. Write your answers here:

1

2