

### **(c) Message Variables**

**Problem:** You are unfamiliar with the topic of conversation, or the content is unexpected.

**Solutions:**

- ✓ Ask a friend to summarize the conversation for you and to let you know when the topic changes.
- ✓ Phrase your questions so as to limit the reply options. For example, ask a yes/no question.
- ✓ If possible, prepare for the conversation meeting ahead of time by thinking of content and vocabulary that could be used.

### **(d) Listener Variables (aside from hearing loss)**

**Problem:** Attention level, fatigue, stress, distractions, etc.

**Solutions:**

- ✓ Set realistic goals for yourself.
- ✓ Ask to have short breaks in meetings to prevent fatigue.

Many audiology clinics throughout the United States offer classes that can teach you more about some of the issues discussed here, and help improve your listening and speech reading skills. Such training programs have been shown to significantly improve communication and quality of life.



**Other resources:**

**Hearing Loss Association of America:**  
[www.hearingloss.org](http://www.hearingloss.org)

**Better Hearing Institute:**  
[www.betterhearing.org](http://www.betterhearing.org)

**American Speech-Language-Hearing Association:** [www.asha.org/public/](http://www.asha.org/public/)

**National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders:**  
[www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing](http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing)



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# **Tips for Improving your Listening Experience**

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Many people with hearing impairment believe that the communication problems they have are a result of their hearing loss. This is not the case. There are many other factors that also can cause a breakdown in communication, such as the particular talker, the listening environment, the content of the message and other listener variables. There are ways, known as “communication strategies” that can be used to avoid or fix such breakdowns. Some of these strategies can be used to make communication easier at the outset (Facilitative Strategies), while others can be used to fix a communication breakdown that has already occurred (Repair Strategies).

### Examples of Facilitative Strategies:

- Tell people you have a hearing loss.
- Ask the talker to get your attention before they begin speaking and to alert you to a change in conversation topic.
- When possible, find a quiet, well-lit room for communication.
- If possible, stand or sit between 3 and 6 feet from the talker. This is the optimal distance for seeing clearly the talker’s face and lips.



### Examples of Repair Strategies:

- Provide talkers with feedback about the problems you are having. For example, you can ask them to speak more slowly, to raise their voice, or to face you. Simply saying “huh?” or “pardon?” is not very helpful.
- Ask talkers to rephrase or to simplify what they said.

### Repair Strategies (cont.):

- Ask talkers to repeat only the parts of the sentence that you did not hear so that they can emphasize that content.
- Do not pretend to hear when you did not! Pretending increases misunderstandings and can result in embarrassment.
- Ask talkers to confirm what you heard. For example, “Am I correct that you said xxxx?”
- Ask talkers to write down important information such as addresses, phone numbers and appointment times.

### (a) Talker Variables

**Problem:** The speaker is difficult to understand.

#### Solutions:

- ✓ Ask talkers to speak more slowly and to raise or lower their voice as appropriate.
- ✓ Ask talkers to look directly at you and not to cover their face so that you can clearly see their lips and expressions.

**Notes:** Shouting will not help someone with a hearing loss because it distorts the voice, making understanding more difficult. Talkers like to hear positive as well as negative feedback — so tell them when they are speaking at the right rate or loudness.

### (b) Environmental Variables

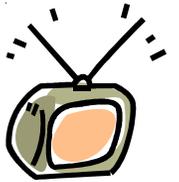
**Problem:** Background noise.

#### Solutions:

- ✓ Suggest moving to a quieter location, deliberately select a quiet meeting place, or go out to eat at a less busy time so that the restaurant will be less noisy.

### (b) Environmental Variables (cont.)

- ✓ Try to sit with the noise behind you and have the talker sit directly in front of you so you can use information from their lips and expressions.
- ✓ Turn off or move away from noise sources such as radios, televisions, dishwashers, etc.



**Notes:** There are now many restaurant reviews that provide information on noise levels. Make use of these when choosing a restaurant.

**Problem:** Room lighting.

#### Solutions:

- ✓ Make sure the room is well lit and that the talker is not sitting in front of a window (this makes it difficult to see their face).



**Notes:** Research has shown that using lip reading and facial expressions can increase understanding of speech up to 20% even in individuals with no formal lipreading training.

**Problem:** Room acoustics.

#### Solutions:

- ✓ Choose floor and window coverings that absorb sounds, such as heavy carpets and heavy cloth for your home. These reduce echoes in the room and make hearing easier.
- ✓ Avoid restaurants that have hard floors and bare walls for the same reasons.