



*Independent Hearing Care Services*

## **Hearability information sheet**

### **LIPREADING – AN AID TO COMMUNICATION**

#### **What is lipreading?**

Lipreading is reading the *visual* information of the spoken word. This includes how the lips, tongue, and jaw move, as well as other facial expressions. When someone is speaking their facial movements, gestures and body language give us clues to help us follow what they are saying. Many hard-of-hearing people find lipreading helps them to understand more of a conversation.

#### **Will learning lipreading help me?**

Yes, learning lipreading skills can dramatically improve how much you understand, especially when used with a hearing aid. Lipreading can fill in the gaps in noisy social situations with friends and family. It can give you much more confidence at work, in education, or in making use of public services. Lipreading skills can also increase your independence and feelings of self-esteem.

#### **How easy is lipreading to learn?**

Most of us have been lipreading for years without knowing it - in noisy pubs, clubs, and places of work or wherever there is background noise. So, in most cases the lipreading teacher will be helping you to develop a skill that you already have. Lipreading needs continuous concentration and can be very tiring, so regular practice is important. This will help you to maintain your level of lipreading skill.

#### **Are there any limitations to lipreading?**

Yes, there are some things that make lipreading much more difficult: poor lighting, poor speech, fast speech and hidden speech. To lipread you need to be able to see the speaker's lips clearly, so good lighting is very important. Some people do not speak clearly, or speak with an accent, or speak very quickly and this can cause difficulties. Other people may turn their face away, hide their mouth or have an untrimmed beard or moustache. Some words may be fairly visible, others may be very hard to see, and some words look similar (like: *post, boast, most*). All these things make lipreading more difficult and so it is important that the lipreader knows the subject of the conversation. This will make it easier to follow what is being said and gives the individual words a context.

#### **Ten Tips that will help you to lipread:**

- 1. Position:** Ask the speaker to face the light and sit or stand at the same eye level as you, so that you can see their face clearly.
- 2. Relax:** Lipreading takes concentration and you will find this easier if you are relaxed, so find a quiet place away from distractions.
- 3. Subject Matter:** Make sure you know the subject of the conversation. You can then use your own knowledge about the subject to support your lipreading and listening.
- 4. Repeat and Re-word:** It is easier to lipread a whole sentence than a single word, so don't be afraid to ask for a sentence to be repeated or re-worded.
- 5. Speech Movements:** Watch how the lips, tongue, jaw and facial muscles move as the person speaks. These will help you to recognise sounds that you no longer hear clearly.
- 6. Recall Speech Sounds:** If you are severely deafened, it may help if you try to recall the sound of voices as you watch the speaker's face. Recalling the memory of sounds helps many people understand conversation more easily.
- 7. Facial Expressions:** Looking at these can tell you a lot about the subject matter, mood and feelings of the speaker.

8. **Gestures and Body language:** Watching the speaker's movements can give you extra information about the conversation. It can help explain what the speaker is telling you as well as their mood, for example whether they are feeling happy, relaxed, worried or in a hurry.
9. **Looking, listening and thinking:** For most hard-of-hearing people lipreading is a combination of all three of these at the same time. For deafened people, visible information and knowing the subject matter is even more important.
10. **Fatigue:** Don't be surprised if you feel tired. Lipreading needs intense concentration, and you may need to give yourself frequent breaks and rest your eyes. If you can relax it will help.

#### **What can you learn in your lipreading class?**

*If you have a hearing loss you can learn -*

- to lipread people who speak clearly
- how to make the most of your hearing aid
- how to cope when it is difficult to hear
- how you can receive and use 'listening' and 'alerting' equipment that might help you at home
- all about special telephones and how to get them
- how the ear works and some of the causes of hearing loss
- to understand tinnitus and how it might be controlled
- how and where you can access local support services
- how to 'fingerspell' individual words

*If you do not have a hearing loss you can learn -*

- how to make your speech and conversation more accessible to a lipreader.

#### **Is there anything else that you might gain from attending a lipreading class?**

Yes, lipreading classes can give people with a hearing loss the opportunity to meet new people. They can provide a meeting place where people can exchange ideas and information, and gain support from people who share similar experiences. Learning to lipread can increase your independence as well as your confidence.

#### **Will it matter if I make a mistake in a lipreading class?**

People with a hearing loss can often feel embarrassed when they misunderstand a conversation in a social setting or at work. However, in the lipreading class everyone makes mistakes - and some of them are very funny! We learn to share the mistakes and to understand how the mistakes were made in the first place.

#### **If I cannot lipread someone, should I persevere?**

Yes, initially. If you are having problems lipreading someone, don't worry. They are probably not aware that they may not speak clearly. Most people will be happy to speak more slowly and clearly if you ask them to. If you still have problems it might help to ask a friend or relative to help relay the key information or ask the speaker to write things down. The important thing is not to be discouraged, it's not your fault.

#### **Where is my nearest lipreading class?**

Information about local daytime or evening lipreading classes may be available from your local education centre or library. Or you can contact the Association of Teachers of Lipreading to Adults (ATLA).

*The Information Officer of ATLA, PO Box 506, Stoke on Trent, ST2 9RE. (a SAE would be appreciated) or visit their website at: [www.lipreading.org.uk](http://www.lipreading.org.uk)*

For more information from the Association of Lipspeakers you can contact:

ALS Information Office, Tel: 01538 722 482

Text/Fax: 01583 722 442

Email: [information@lipspeaking.org.uk](mailto:information@lipspeaking.org.uk)

Or visit their website at: [www.lipspeaking.co.uk](http://www.lipspeaking.co.uk)

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