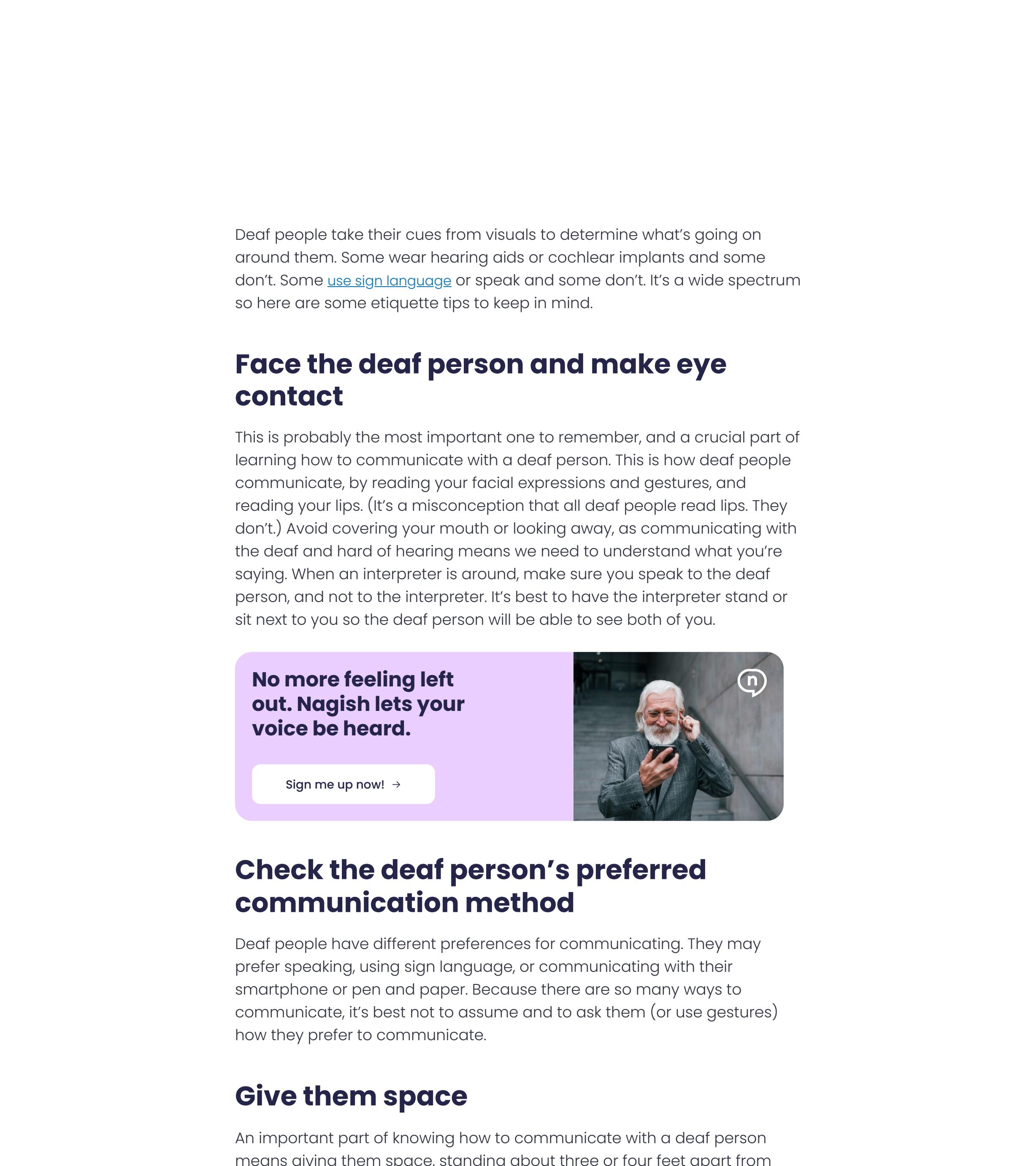


**Deaf Culture** • June 7, 2023 • 5 Min

Basic Tips on How to Communicate with Deaf People

In this article, we tackle the subject of basic approaches to effective communication with deaf and hard of hearing people. Click here to learn all about it!

 Author:
Juana Poareo

How to get deaf and hard of hearing people's attention

Tap the person lightly on the shoulder

Wave your hand

Flick the lights

Communication etiquette

Face the deaf person and make eye contact

Check the deaf person's preferred communication method

Give them space

Speak clearly and at a normal pace

Be aware of noise and lighting

Be patient and repeat yourself if necessary

Use technology

Conclusion

If you're not familiar with how to communicate with a deaf person, you might feel intimidated when you meet one of us for the first time. As a profoundly deaf (since birth) person myself, I appreciate the effort hearing people take to communicate with me. There are some important things to remember, however, before learning about methods of communication used by individuals with hearing loss.

How to get deaf and hard of hearing people's attention

It's normal to feel nervous when approaching a deaf or hard of hearing person. Here are a few ways to get their attention so you become comfortable with how to communicate with a deaf person.

Tap the person lightly on the shoulder

This may sound surprising to some hearing people, but it's totally fine to tap a deaf person on the shoulder to get their attention. Simply walk up to the person and do it. They may appear startled at first because we don't hear anyone approaching when we feel that shoulder tap. This is normal so don't feel bewildered.

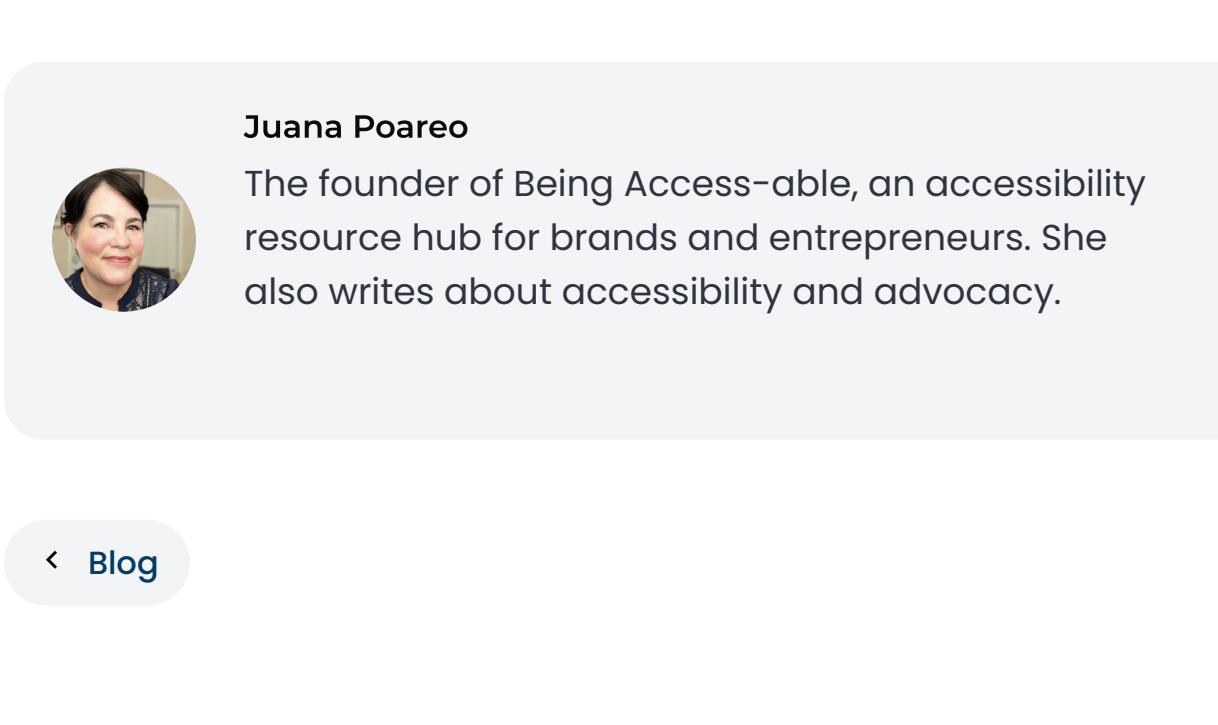
Wave your hand

If you're in the person's line of sight, you can wave to them. If that doesn't get their attention, you can flap your hand until they turn their head.

Flick the lights

This is an easy way to get a deaf person's attention, because it avoids startling. Simply turn the lights on and off, and the deaf person will turn their head to look for the source.

Communication etiquette



Deaf woman with longish brown hair signing to someone whose back is facing the camera. She is smiling.

Face the deaf person and make eye contact

This is probably the most important one to remember, and a crucial part of learning how to communicate with a deaf person. This is how deaf people communicate, by reading your facial expressions and gestures, and reading your lips. (It's a misconception that all deaf people read lips. They don't.) Avoid covering your mouth or looking away, as communicating with the deaf and hard of hearing means we need to understand what you're saying. When an interpreter is around, make sure you speak to the deaf person, and not to the interpreter. It's best to have the interpreter stand or sit next to you so the deaf person will be able to see both of you.

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Because you're new to communicating with deaf people, it will take more time than it would take with a hearing person. There is a lag in response time when a deaf person is "reading" what you're saying. Be mindful of this. If necessary, repeat yourself. Avoid interrupting.

Use technology

There are some decent easier in-person communication here that can make it easier for you to communicate with the deaf and hard of hearing.

Here are some ways to communicate with the deaf and hard of hearing.

• [Cardzilla](#) - Large easy to read notes

• [Speechi \(iOS\)](#) - Text to speech

• [Earfy \(iOS\)](#) - Live captioning

• [Subtitles Viewer \(iOS\)](#) - Live captioning

• [Live Transcribe \(Android\)](#) - Live captioning

• [Ava \(iOS\)](#) - Speech to text notepad

• [Speechi \(Android\)](#) - Speech to text notepad

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