8 TIPS FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WHEN WEARING A FACE COVERING

BE AWARE
Is the person you’re communicating with having trouble understanding you?
Ask and adapt if needed.

BE PATIENT
Face coverings block visual cues and muffle sounds that help us understand speech, which can make interactions frustrating.

BE MINDFUL
Consider how physical distancing might affect your communication. As distance increases, sound levels decrease, and visual cues are more difficult to see.

BE LOUD AND CLEAR
Speak up, but don’t shout. Focus on speaking clearly. Consider wearing a clear face covering, if possible. If you’re having trouble understanding, ask the person you’re talking with to speak louder. If you lip-read, ask those you interact with regularly to wear a clear face covering.

TURN DOWN THE BACKGROUND VOLUME
Background noise can make conversation especially hard. When possible, move to a quieter spot or turn down the sound.

COMMUNICATE ANOTHER WAY
Use a smartphone talk-to-text application or writing tools (paper/pen, whiteboard) to communicate.*

CONFIRM THAT YOUR STATEMENT IS CLEAR
Ask if your message has been understood.

BRING A FRIEND OR BE A FRIEND
If it’s essential that you comprehend important spoken details—during a discussion with a health care provider, for example—consider bringing a friend or family member with you. Or, offer to come along to listen and take notes when a friend has an important appointment or meeting.

*Learn more from The Hearing Loss Association of America’s Face Masks and Hearing Loss: Practical Tips and Strategies.