

# Supporting Students with Special Needs: Sensory Impairment

Sensory impairment occurs when one of your senses which includes sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste and spatial awareness, is not functioning well.

If you wear glasses you have a sight visual impairment.

If you find it hard to hear or have a hearing aid then you have a hearing impairment.

An individual does not have to have full loss of a sense to be considered sensory impaired.



## Deaf or Hearing Impaired Students

11 Strategies When Lecturing



### 1. Encourage students to take the front seat

Encourage students with hearing loss to seat themselves toward the front of classroom for an unobstructed line of vision. This is important if the student is using an interpreter, lip-reading, relying on visual clues or using a hearing aid which has a limited range. Be aware that some students may not be comfortable with this suggestion or have alternate strategies. Respect their choices.



### 2. Use assistive listening devices

Use assistive listening devices such as induction loops if these are available in the lecture theatre or classroom.

### 3. Do not speak when facing the blackboard

### 4. Be cautious not to block your lips

Be aware that moustaches, beards, hands, books or microphones in front of your face can add to the difficulties of lip-readers. (Many Deaf and hearing-impaired students lip read).



### 5. Adjust Lighting in teaching environment

Students who lip-read cannot function in darkened rooms. You may need to adjust the lighting in your teaching environment.



### 6. Make information available as handouts

It is difficult for a student watching an interpreter to also take notes from the lecture. A signing interpreter is unable to translate concurrently both the lecturer's words and any information given on a whiteboard. It is important therefore that all information should also be available as handouts.



### 7. Provide written materials

Provide written materials to supplement all lectures, tutorials and laboratory sessions. Announcements made regarding class times, activities, field work, industry visits etc, should be given in writing as well as verbally.



### 8. Provide captions for videos

Any videos or films used should, where possible, be captioned. When this is not possible, you will need to consider alternative ways for students with hearing impairment to access the information.



### 9. Have student sit directly opposite lecturer

In tutorials, or discussion groups, assist students who lip-read by having the student sit directly opposite the lecturer and ensure, if possible, that they can see all the other participants so that they lipread better. Control the discussion so that only one person is speaking at a time.



### 10. Allow alternate arrangement

Students with hearing loss, especially those with associated speech issues, may prefer to have another student present their tutorial papers. They may be shy about their speech.



### 11. Provide reading lists before course starts

Language abilities are often affected by hearing loss, depending on the age of onset. Students who acquired their hearing loss early in life may have literacy issues. In some cases, providing reading lists well before the start of a course for students with hearing loss can be beneficial.

## Blind or Visually Impaired Students

4 Strategies When Lecturing



### 1. Address students with their names

Always use a visually impaired or blind person's name when addressing them. They will then know that the lecturer is talking to them and not to another student.

### 2. Identify yourself during greeting

When walking past a visually impaired or blind person, instead of saying "Hi Jeff." Say "Hi Jeff, This is Dr Koh from your Early Childhood class."



### 3. Verbalise when writing

When writing on the whiteboard or typing for the overhead screen, always verbalise what you are writing so that student can have access to that information.

### 4. Use prepositions and descriptive words

Do not say, "The pencil is there." Instead say, "The pencil is under your table, next to your right foot."



### 5. Favour the stronger side of the student's vision.

Always favour the stronger side of the student's vision. For example, if the student can only see with his left eye, he should sit at the right side of the classroom away from the sunlight. Seating facing a light source (sun, windows) should ideally be at their back.