HOW NOT TO SAY “I BEG YOUR PARDON?”

Having to repeat statements can be frustrating for both communication partners. It can help to be creative when trying to “fill in the gaps” of what we have only partially heard. How can repeats be used to make communication easier and more pleasant? Here are a few guidelines:

1. Make sure your position in a room favours listening

   Face the speaker and try to have a good light on the speaker’s face. Cut down background noise if you can. You may need to move away from the noise, or turn off the TV.

2. Let the speaker know you have a hearing loss and describe your loss accurately

   If you have a slight loss, try “I have a few problems hearing speech in background noise, I have a slight hearing loss”. Try to avoid saying only, “I am deaf”.

3. Be specific with requests for help

   Most people do not know how to help you. You need to be specific when asking people to change their normal speaking pattern. For example, ask speakers to speak clearly, concisely and maintain the natural rhythm of speech. They do not need to shout or exaggerate facial movements, but may need to speak a little slower. Rephrasing can sometimes help.

4. Let people know exactly what you have missed

   “I’ve missed the first word”
   “I didn’t catch the name”
   “I heard you say “going on a cruise”. Was that correct?”

5. Use your sense of humour when appropriate

   Tell people about your hearing errors. Get them to laugh with you.

6. Try different conversational tactics

   Be prepared to introduce a few topics and to initiate conversation. When meeting someone for the first time or if background noise levels are high, it can be useful to start a conversation with a closed question. This encourages “yes” or “no” or a short answer e.g. “Did you see the article about….in today’s paper?”

   If the answer is “yes” they can continue with an open question encouraging a longer answer, e.g. “What did you think of the article?”

   In a large group begin conversing with a person who you can understand clearly. This will boost your confidence from the start.

7. Be interested in what is happening around you

   Let your eyes work for you and pick up clues. Perhaps say something like this: “Were you talking about bushwalking? You looked as if you were describing a walk.”

8. Ask people to write down key information

   Keep a pad and pencil or small ‘write and wipe’ pad with you. Fingerspelling may be a useful supplement at home. Just understanding a single letter of a word can often ‘cue’ you in.

9. Be flexible and open minded

   If you interpret a word and later find it is wrong, don’t stress about it and try thinking of other possibilities or check and confirm with the person.

10. Wait
Sometimes waiting until a sentence is finished will enable you to pick up the subject from cues and clues. Look for ideas rather than feeling you must pick up every single word.

11. Be prepared to let some part of a conversation go

No one hears everything.

Approaching communication in a relaxed, assertive manner will enable people to feel more comfortable about using tactics to suit the occasion.

Vicdeaf regularly updates our fact sheets. To ensure that your information is current, or for further information about Vicdeaf and the services offered, please visit our website or contact us:

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Set yourself up for successful communication by remembering your PAALS………

**Position** yourself! Use close proximity to speaker, light behind/above you & away from noise.

**Assertive communication**! Informing people of your hearing loss will make them more aware of your needs.

**Aids!** Become confident in managing your hearing aid(s) (using the volume control, changing batteries, etc.) and you’ll get the most out of your aids.

**Look** to listen! Look for speech, facial & body cues. Look for signs & cues about context in the environment.

**Smile** & relax! See the humour in the situation. If communication breaks down, take a breath, smile and stay SOCIAL:

**Say** what you’ve missed

**Outline** the difficulty (rate, volume, pitch of speech, noise)

**Confirm** what you think you’ve heard

**Interest** (look for visual cues)

**Ask** for 4 – Topic, Keyword, Repetition, Gesture

**Let** some of the conversation go – no one hears everything