

# Deaf Terminology Glossary

**Ableism:** is discrimination (in belief or practice) based on a person's abilities, whether developmental, learning, physical, psychiatric or sensory. Ableism is a form of discrimination that devalues and disregards people with disabilities.

**Access/Accessibility:** is the creation of an environment where people, regardless of their abilities, can communicate clearly and participate actively.

**Accommodations:** are adjustments or modifications that remove any barriers to full communication and participation.

**American Sign Language (ASL):** is a visual language with its own grammar and syntax, distinct from English, used by Deaf people primarily in North America. Meaning is conveyed through signs that are comprised of specific movements and shapes of the hand and arms, eyes, face, head and body posture. In Canada, there are two main sign languages: ASL and la langue des signes québécoise (LSQ).

**Assistive listening devices (ALDs):** ALDs can be portable or permanently installed. They include signaling or vibration system. They are designed to connect to the receivers or any audio sound source and send the signal directly to receivers. The receivers allow individuals to alert by flashing or vibrating pager to their comfort level and can be used with a variety of transmitters accessories for those Deaf, late deafened, and Deaf Blind. They are recommended for their safety in their homes.

**Audism:** is a form of ableism. Audism is discrimination against a person who is Deaf or hard of hearing. It holds the belief that a hearing person or a deaf person who behaves in a manner more similar to a hearing person (in appearance, communication and language use, and/or function) is more intelligent, qualified, well-developed, and successful than another individual who may be culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened or hard of hearing and may prefer to use ASL/LSQ sign language or has an accent in the production of spoken language due to hearing loss, or uses a communication accommodation unfamiliar and dissimilar to hearing people.

**Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART):** is the professional word-for-word transcription of speech to text in real time and provides people who are culturally Deaf, oral deaf, deafened and hard of hearing full access to the spoken word.

**Computerized note takers:** facilitate communication by typing out the main points of discussions or presentations. A laptop computer is set up near the person who will be accessing the notes so they can read the conversation as it scrolls on the screen. Unlike Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), this support is not a word-for-word, simultaneous transcription of the discussion.

**Culturally Deaf:** refers to individuals who identify with and participate in the language, culture, and community of Deaf people, based on a signed language. Deaf culture does not perceive hearing loss and deafness from a pathological point of view, but rather from a socio-cultural linguistic point of view, indicated by a capital ‘D’ as in “Deaf culture.” Culturally Deaf people may also use speech, residual hearing, hearing aids, speechreading and gesturing to communicate with people who do not sign.

**Deaf:** is generally used to describe individuals with a severe to profound hearing loss, with little or no residual hearing. Some deaf people use a spoken language and speechreading, combined with their residual hearing and hearing aids, communication devices, and/or cochlear implants to communicate. Others use a signed language, such as American Sign Language (ASL) or la langue des signes québécoise (LSQ).

**Deaf culture:** is the culture of Deaf people based on a signed language and values, traditions and behaviour norms specific to the Deaf community. Deaf culture offers a strong sense of belonging and takes a socio-cultural point of view of deafness, rather than a pathological perspective.

**Deafened:** describes individuals who grow up hearing or hard of hearing and, either suddenly or gradually, experience a profound hearing loss. Deafened adults usually use speech with visual cues such as Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) or computerized notetaking, speechreading or a signed language.

**Deaf-Blind:** Refers to people who have significant, but not necessarily total, loss of both vision and hearing (dual sensory loss). Deaf-Blind people may be culturally Deaf, oral deaf, late deafened, or hard of hearing and his/her mode of communication varies accordingly.

### **Deaf and dumb or Deaf Mute**

A largely outdated term, 'deaf and dumb' or 'deaf mute' now seldom used to describe a Deaf person because it is highly derogatory.

### **Hearing Impaired**

Deaf people disagree with the term ‘hearing impaired’ because it is implying an impairment rather than recognizing what the Deaf community is: a vibrant minority group bound together through a common language and rich culture. However, this term is still used in the educational system when referring to individuals who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. Oftentimes, hearing people prefer to use the term ‘hearing impaired’ on the misguided notion that ‘Deaf’ is an inappropriate label.

**Hard of hearing:** is generally used to describe individuals whose hearing loss ranges from mild to severe, and occasionally profound. Hard of hearing people use speech and residual hearing to communicate, supplemented by communication strategies that may include speechreading, hearing aids, a signed language and communication devices. The term “person with hearing loss” is also used by this constituency.

**Hearing:** describes a person who does not have a hearing loss.

**Hearing aids:** are devices worn behind the ear, in the ear or in the ear canal and composed of a microphone, amplifier, receiver, battery, earmold (or the casing), hook and the tubing. Hearing aids amplify sound – all sound. Although they amplify spoken language, they do not improve the clarity of how speech is heard by someone with a hearing loss. Even when sound and speech are amplified, it is not always possible to discern distinct words. Unlike glasses that can restore 20/20 vision, hearing aids do not restore hearing; they amplify sound. An imperfect solution to a complicated problem, hearing aids are effective in managing hearing loss for many people.

**Hyperacusis:** is a problem that affects about 5 per cent of the population and 50 per cent of patients with troublesome tinnitus. It is defined as a reduced tolerance to everyday environmental sounds. The decreased tolerance to sound is usually noticed with sudden high-pitched noises like alarms, bus brakes, silverware and dishes, children's crying and clapping.

**La langue des signes québécoise (LSQ):** (Quebec Sign Language) is a visual language with its own grammar and syntax, distinct from French, used by Deaf people primarily in Quebec and other French Canadian communities. Meaning is conveyed through signs that are comprised of specific movements and shapes of the hand and arms, eyes, face, head and body posture. In Canada, there are two main sign languages: LSQ and American Sign Language (ASL).

**Meniere's Disease:** a disorder of the inner ear that can cause vertigo, nausea, tinnitus (ringing in the ear), and fluctuating hearing loss. Any of these symptoms, if severe enough, can cause a temporary or prolonged disruption of normal home, social, and work activity.

**Oral deaf:** is generally used to describe individuals with a severe to profound hearing loss, with little or no residual hearing. Most use speech to communicate, using their residual hearing and hearing aids, communication devices or cochlear implants, and lipreading or speechreading. Some oral deaf people use a signed language such as American Sign Language (ASL) or la langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) to communicate.

**Tactile Sign:** refers to the use of manual signs communicated into the palm(s) of a Deaf-blind person's hand(s) or when the Deaf-blind person places their hand(s) lightly on top of the hand(s) of the person they are signing/conversing with.

**Tinnitus:** Tinnitus is a problem that affects about 10 to 15 per cent of the population. It is often described as a ringing, buzzing or pulsating sound in the ear but is defined as a phantom auditory sound (i.e. perceived sound in the absence of an external noise). Many people who suffer from tinnitus also experience tension in their head, neck and jaw, tiredness, irritability, poor concentration, anxiety and depression that can be severe. About 5 per cent of the population reports severely intrusive tinnitus affecting day-to-day activities.

**Video Relay Service:** A service which enables the Deaf who uses sign language to communicate via videoconferencing with a certified ASL/LSQ interpreter through the Internet. The interpreter then voices/relays the signed conversation over the phone – in real time – to the hearing caller (standard telephone users). By using sign language over the full motion video, this allows the sign language user to use their natural language to convey facial expression and cues to ensure that nothing gets lost in the translation.