



Understanding the terms used to talk about people with hearing loss can help you communicate with greater confidence and avoid misunderstandings.

**WHAT ARE
THE DIFFERENT
WORDS USED
TO DESCRIBE
PEOPLE WITH
HEARING
LOSS?**

**BLUE
PRINT**

Deaf
Children
Australia.

Different words are used to describe people with hearing loss. This can be confusing for people who have little to no experience interacting with deaf and hard of hearing children and young people.

Learning these terms can help reduce the likelihood of awkward moments and misunderstandings. Sharing this information with your child's club, coach, or instructor might help them feel more comfortable communicating with your child and family.

Common terms used to describe deaf people

Many words are used to describe deafness. Common terms used to describe deaf people are:

Culturally Deaf: This term, where the word 'Deaf' is capitalised, describes people who choose to identify as Deaf and mix socially within the Deaf community. The Deaf community has its own language (Auslan), culture (deaf way of doing things) and heritage.

deaf: Where the word begins with a small 'd', this is a medical term to describe someone who cannot hear. This has become a standard term to describe all types of deaf people. It is often used to cover all types of hearing loss – Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing and hearing impaired.

Hard of hearing: This term is usually used to refer to people who do not use Auslan as their main communication mode. It refers to people with some hearing, who may or may not use hearing aids. It can also be used as a general term to describe all people with a hearing loss. In Australia, it often means people whose hearing changes later in life.

Hearing impaired: Like hard of hearing, this means someone who has some hearing and may benefit from hearing aids.

Partially hearing: This is similar to 'hard of hearing', that is, a person who has some hearing and may benefit from hearing aids.

Not sure how to refer to somebody you meet who has a hearing loss? Ask them! Most deaf and hard of hearing people are happy to let you know their preference.

What are adventitious deaf or late-deafened people?

These terms refer to people who once had normal hearing but who lost part or all of their hearing. They are also called 'postlingually deaf' because they lost hearing after they developed speech and language.

Reasons for this might include:

accidents

illness

drugs

noise

old age

What are congenitally deaf people?

This refers to people who were born deaf or who lost their hearing before they developed speech and language. They are also called prelingually deaf. Reasons people lose their hearing before they develop speech and language include:

- an illness in the mother while the deaf child is in the womb
- drugs – either used by the mother or given after birth
- genetics

Often the reason is unknown.

Is hearing loss in a child the same as hearing loss in an adult?

An adult acquires a hearing loss after they develop speech and language. They have communication skills they can continue to use after the hearing loss occurs. However, they are aware of what they are missing out on and may grieve the loss of normal hearing.

A child with a hearing loss, on the other hand, may need support and assistance to acquire communication skills either through a spoken or sign language. They may, as adults, enter the Deaf community and share its values and culture. They will not be aware of what it's like to have normal hearing.



For further information about
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Deaf Children Australia uses the term 'deaf'
to refer to all degrees and types of hearing loss.
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