

Strategies for improving speech intelligibility

Face the person with whom you are speaking.

Make sure your listener is watching your face and lips as you are speaking. This will help them understand what you are saying.

Avoid talking over background noise.

Make sure you are not competing against background noise when you are speaking.

Take a breath before speaking.

Always make sure you have enough breath for what you are going to say. Take a breath before you start speaking and after each phrase. This will help you to increase the volume of your voice and reduce the likelihood of running out of air when you are speaking.

Slow down.

Speak slowly and deliberately. Your ability to speak clearly now relies on your conscious effort and attention. It involves pausing between words and phrases in order to allow your listener time to concentrate and recognise each word or phrase you have spoken.

Pronounce all sounds clearly.

Pronounce all the sounds in each word clearly- especially the sounds in the middle and ends of words. You may need to exaggerate sounds because your speech muscles do not work as well as they did before.

Break longer words up into syllables.

Longer words will be easier to pronounce if they are broken up into syllables e.g. "im-prove-ment"

Use shorter sentences.

If others don't understand you, try to think of another shorter way to say the same thing.

Concentrate and listen to your speech carefully.

By listening carefully to your speech, recognising errors and correcting them, your speech will become clearer.

Repeat yourself if you are not understood.

Encourage others to tell you when they cannot understand your speech. Ask them to tell you which parts you need to repeat.

Use gestures while you are speaking

Using gestures and pointing while you speak may give the listener extra information to help them understand what you are saying.

Be aware of other factors which may affect your speech

Your speech may be worse when you are tired, upset, excited or have just woken up.

Read our 'Find other support 'communication'' info sheet to find other local and national support organisations.

