



A guide for meeting with
a hearing-impaired athlete

1. Introduction


We've made this guide for meeting with a hearing-impaired athlete for coaches and other people who instruct hearing-impaired athletes. This guide aims to spell out how you should consider the hearing impairment during exercise so that the hearing-impaired athlete feels they've been treated as an equal. In this compact guide there are tips for meeting with sign language using and hard of hearing athletes, clarification of the concepts and a list where to get more information. In this guide the term *hearing-impaired* covers Deaf, hard of hearing and those who use all kinds of hearing aids, with all their own languages. We'd like to remind you that hearing-impaired people are a very diverse group. This guide will give you approximate guidelines – the best way to find out is to ask directly from the hearing-impaired person how they would like to be approached.

2. Tips for meeting with hearing-impaired athletes

There are many kinds of hearing-impaired people. The first step for meeting them is to find out which language they are using. The language used will affect the way to approach them, and every language has its own special features that should be taken into consideration. If the athlete uses sign language, visuality will have an important role in communication. If the athlete uses spoken language, you should make sure they have a good hearing environment. Because of those special features in those languages, we've separated the tips into two parts: under the titles of *Sign language users* and *Hard of hearing people who use spoken language*. We hope that you as a coach will be able to pick up the necessary tips for your own situation.


Sign language users

- Approach the hearing-impaired athlete without prejudice!
- Cooperate with the hearing-impaired athlete and the sign language interpreter. This way the athlete will feel that you are able to function in an interpreting situation.
- Help the interpreter to prepare for the interpretation by telling them about the content of the training, process and the rules.
- Direct your speech straight to the hearing-impaired person, even though they'll watch the interpreter to receive the message.
- Don't be confused even though the interpreter will interpret everything the hearing-impaired person says in first-person language.
- Looking directly at the hearing-impaired person is important, because sign language is visual, and it enables lipreading for them.
- Give enough time for the hearing-impaired person to comprehend everything visually.

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- Strengthen your spoken message with facial impressions and gestures.
 - You can be bold using gestures (come/go/swap) and it would be good to make an agreement about the common signs.
 - Use pictures, figures and charts to support the spoken language.
 - In the beginning, review the whole training, so it's easier for the hearing-impaired person to comprehend what to train/play.
 - Often the hearing-impaired athlete wants to see the others do things first, and only then will they follow suit.
 - While giving instructions, you should not explain and do things at the same time. You should explain first, and only then show how to do things.

Hard of hearing people who use spoken language

- Speak to the hearing-impaired person right in front of them so your face and your lip movement will be seen clearly.
- During the training/game there will be a lot of background noise which can make communication harder. Speak near the hearing-impaired athlete.
- When you speak in a clear voice, the hearing-impaired athlete can better understand your speech. Do not mumble, talk too fast or in a quiet voice.
- Don't speak/shout from the other side of the arena, because the sound will echo, and it will be hard to understand.
- Those who use aids for hearing might lack directional hearing completely. That's why yells like "pass over here!" might get completely missed. You can use gestures instead/in addition of shouting.

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- Give a moment to listen to the end. Give time for questions as well.
 - Don't lose your temper, even if you have to repeat something several times.
 - It's recommendable to walk through the whole training before the training starts.
 - During the training it's possible to use aids for hearing, such as an FM processor. Ask the hearing-impaired athlete if there would be any aids that could help.
 - During the training, the hearing-impaired athlete's hearing aids and speech processors might get wet and shut down, or their batteries might get depleted. When the aids are getting dried or their batteries changed, the athlete won't hear anything at all during that, and they will need to rely on lip reading, speech-supporting signs, gestures and/or sign language.

Take these into account with children and youth

- The child has a right to be understood and to understand others.
- Ask the child's guardians or the child themselves if there is anything special that would be good for you to know about.
- Keep the instructions simple and divide them into smaller parts. You can use visual aids and show things by your own example.
- Don't lose your temper if the hearing-impaired child does something differently than has been instructed – they might have misheard or misunderstood the instructions.
- Keep an eye on the child and make sure that they've understood everything correctly.
- If the child asks constantly "what", don't give up. Retell everything until the child has understood.

- Listen to the child- if you can't make out what they're speaking, try asking more and deduce what it might be about. It's common that hearing-impaired children, who use spoken language, hear and learn many words incorrectly. Especially the consonants m, n, k, p, t and s get easily mixed up with each other.
- Remember that the hearing-impaired child is first and foremost a child – a person with their own strengths!

“Activities should be strongly based on showing things and situations concretely”

**A LARGER GROUP
CAN SOMETIMES DIVIDED INTO
SMALLER GROUPS SO THAT
THE COMMUNICATION BECOMES
EASIER.**

3. Using an interpreter

- The hearing-impaired athlete has a right to use a sign language interpreter, and only they can decide whether to use an interpreter or not.
- When using an interpreter, there is no need to change your speech or slow it down. You can coach normally.
- It doesn't cost the team anything to use an interpreter, so you don't need to worry about expenses.
- The hearing-impaired athlete will take care of ordering an interpreter and other necessary arrangements.
- As a coach you can cooperate with an interpreter by briefing them about the contents of the upcoming training.
- Keep in mind that some hearing-impaired athletes might use a speech-to-text interpreter. In that case the interpreter will write the spoken language into a text and the hearing-impaired person will read the text from a screen. The hearing-impaired athlete might not use an interpreter during training, but they might want to use a speech-to-text interpreter for example for team meetings and team events.



What to do if the hearing-impaired person comes to the training without an interpreter?

- Make sure that the hearing-impaired person understands what you are saying.
- Write on paper or with your mobile phone.
- Use some signs as an aid to your speech, hand gestures that are used in the sport in question or learn sign language.

4. The cohesion of the team

Cohesion means...

- the readiness of the team to welcome the hearing-impaired athlete as a part of the team
- commitment as a team to achieve the goals that have been agreed upon
- caring for each other and enjoying being together
- listening to the other athletes and respecting them
- trust between the athletes and between the athletes and the coach
- sharing responsibility in the team
- involving every athlete in the team activities
- the hearing-impaired athlete's experience of feeling involved and belonging in a community
- the hearing-impaired person feels that their own actions are meaningful for the team



The position of the hearing-impaired person in a team

Respect the privacy of the hearing-impaired athlete – do not tell everyone that there is a hearing-impaired athlete in the team. The athlete might feel uncomfortable, and they might easily become singled out. Let the hearing-impaired athlete talk about their hearing themselves, about the hearing aids they might be using and the language they use. Or if they don't talk about those things by their own will, you can ask about those things from them one-on-one.

The team can ask the athlete to teach certain signs that the other athletes can utilize during games, and they might be beneficial for all the players in the team in communicating while far away from each other.



“The team must be willing to involve the hearing-impaired person in the training, and for the games as well, if their playing skills are sufficient”

5. Clarification of the concepts

We understand that the concepts associated with hearing-impaired people can be easily confused and sometimes they are used incorrectly in the general discussion and writing. Here you can check the correct terminology.

Hearing impairment:

Hard of hearing - A person whose hearing is weakened. A hard of hearing person can communicate with speech, sign language or both. A person who is hard of hearing might also use speech-supporting signs while speaking or signed speech. Often hard of hearing people use some hearing aid/s. When communicating with a hard of hearing person, it's important to have a good listening environment and to speak with a clear voice.

Hearing impairment - hearing impairments can be mild, moderate, severe or very severe. Hearing impairment can be congenital, progressive, or hearing has been damaged at a later stage. Hearing can be impaired equally in both ears, or the

hearing-impaired person might be able to hear very low sounds and unable to hear high sounds or vice versa. Hearing impairment can also be one-sided, which means that the other ear has a hearing impairment, and the other ear hears normally.

Hearing-impaired - A person who has a hearing impairment. Hearing impaired people are a diverse group. Some use aids and some don't use them at all. Hearing-impaired people might communicate with speech, sign language or both.

Deaf - One of the degrees of hearing impairment. A deaf person is a person who has lost their hearing in birth or during early childhood. A deaf person communicates mainly in sign language, which is their first language. A deaf-mute is an incorrect term for deafness, and it should not be used at all because of its discriminatory nature.

Late-deafened - A person who has lost their hearing after learning to speak. A late-deafened person might have a cochlear implant with which hearing is possible.

Sign language user- Sign language user is used for a person who identifies with the sign language community. The sign language users form a linguistic and cultural community.

Aids

BAHA processor - A BAHA processor is used when the hearing impairment is in the middle ear, and with it, the sound is conducted to the inner ear through the bone. The BAHA processor can be fastened into a headband (common with children) or fastened permanently into a screw behind the ear.

FM processor - A FM processor is an aid that can be used together with a hearing aid and/or cochlear implant. A FM processor has a transmitter and a receiver. The receiver is often integrated with the athlete's hearing aid or cochlear implant. The instructor has the transmitter. Just take the transmitter and speak into its microphone with a normal level of voice. Your voice will be transmitted directly to the hearing aid without background noise. A small inconvenience, a big help!

Speech-to-text interpreter - Speech-to-text interpreting is a method which is meant to ease communication. The speech-to-text interpreter writes the speech into a laptop, and the customer reads it on the screen. The interpretation is in only

one direction – the late-deafened/hard of hearing customer will participate by speaking themselves.

Hearing aid - There can be one or two hearing aids. The aids are usually behind the earflap. The aids amplify all the sounds in the environment: the speech and the noise.

Cochlear implant - A cochlear implant is used in hearing rehabilitation when there is a very severe hearing impairment. Those who use the implant practically cannot hear anything without them. There are external parts in the implant (speech processor and inductor magnet) and internal parts (implant). A cochlear implant user might have a hearing aid in the other ear.

Sign language interpreter - Functions as an impartial conveyor of language and culture in interpreting situations. They work with the hearing-impaired people, coaches and other athletes. This enables an equal participation for the hearing-impaired person in the sports club activities. (The Finnish Constitutional Law 1999/731). An interpreter acts only as a language interpreter, not as an aide. The hearing-impaired person will arrange the interpreter themselves, so the coach doesn't need to worry about that.

6. Want to ask more?

Contact us, the Finnish Sports Federation of the Deaf (SKUL). We at SKUL will be happy to help you, and if we cannot answer your questions, we will point you in the correct direction. We also offer consultation for sports clubs.

SKUL is the oldest parasport association in Finland, and its mission is to guarantee equal chances in sports for all hearing-impaired athletes. SKUL's activities cover competitions and coaching at national and international level, supporting the sports clubs, and organization of sports and fitness in cooperation with municipalities, cities and other associations.

www.skul.org



7. More information

Kuuloliitto ry (Hearing Association), www.kuuloliitto.fi

Kuulovammaisten Lasten Vanhempien Liitto ry
(Finnish Association of Parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Children, the KLVVL), www.klvvl.fi

Kuurojen Liitto ry (The Finnish Association of the Deaf),
www.kuurojenliitto.fi



LapCI ry (The Finnish Association of Cochlear Implant Recipient Children, the LapCI),

<https://lapci.fi>

<https://lapci.fi/sisakorvaistute/vinkit>

Kuuloavain.fi on Kuulovammaisten Lasten Vanhempien Liitto ry:n ja LapCI ry:n yhteistyöhanke 2012-2015 (Kuuloavain, 'Hearing key', is the KLVV's and LapCI's co-project from 2012-2015)

www.kuuloavain.fi/info/vapaa-aika-ja-harrastukset

www.kuuloavain.fi/info/vapaa-aika-ja-harrastukset/sisakorvaistutetta-kayttava-lapsi-saa-harrastaa

Elisa Leinonen AMK opinnäytetyö 2018 (Elisa Leinonen's polytechnic thesis 2018)

Kuuron osallistaminen urheilujoukkueeseen - valmentajan näkökulma (Involving a deaf person in a team – a perspective of a coach)

<https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/155952>

Viittomakielen verkkosanakirjat (Sign language online dictionaries)

<https://suvi.viittomat.net>

<https://finsl.signwiki.org>



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