

Tips for Interacting Effectively with People with a Speech Impairment

- Listen attentively when you are talking to a person who has a speech impairment. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting. Exercise patience rather than interrupting or attempting to speak for a person with speech difficulties.
- If you are having difficulty understanding what the person is saying, listen for key words or phrases or ask questions that require short answers or a nod or shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, ask the person to repeat what you do not understand and allow the person to respond.
- Do not raise your voice when speaking to a person with speech impairment. Most people with speech impairment can hear and understand clearly.
- Some people who have significant cerebral palsy or other muscular or neurological disabilities may communicate by writing, typing, or using a communication board or other electronic device.
- When talking with people who have difficulty speaking listen carefully and wait for them to finish. Do not pretend to understand, ask again.