

Customers who are deaf or have a hearing impairment

There are many different degrees and types of deafness and different ways for deaf people, or those who have a hearing impairment, to communicate. You won't immediately know that someone is deaf or has a hearing impairment. It may only become apparent when they speak or fail to hear you when you speak to them. Some deaf people use Sign Language and may have an interpreter with them but many will rely on lip reading and hearing aids.

Make sure your customer is looking at you before you begin to speak. If necessary, attract the customer's attention with a light touch on the shoulder. Always ask how you can best help; don't guess. Don't shout. If the customer can't hear what you say, write it down. You can use hand gestures to help convey what you mean but don't over-exaggerate them.

If they're using a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the customer, not to the interpreter. Induction loops and infrared induction systems can help with communication. They enable people with hearing impairments to tune-in their hearing aids directly to speakers and minimise background noise.



Top tips

- ✓ Look directly at the person you are speaking to.
- ✓ Speak clearly and at an even pace, but do not distort or exaggerate your lip movements.
- ✓ If you must turn away from the customer, stop talking.
- ✗ Do not speak with your back to a light source as this will put your lips in shadow and try to make sure you are in good lighting when talking.
- ✗ Do not use exaggerated gestures.
- ✗ Do not block your mouth when talking.