

Deaf Culture Terminology & Understanding

deaf

The use of the lowercase *d* indicates *what* you are, referring to the physical condition of deafness. It is the inability to hear for whatever reason with varying levels of *deafness*.

Deaf

The use of the uppercase *D* indicates *who* you are. *Deafness* is an identity, a community, a culture, a mode of being. You can be *deaf* and not *Deaf*, or alternatively, considered *Deaf* but not *deaf*. A group of people with varying hearing acuity, whose primary mode of communication is a visual language and have a shared heritage and culture.

Hard-of-Hearing (HoH)

Any person with a hearing loss that is neither deaf nor hearing. HoH can apply to anyone of any age or any background.

Deafies or Hearies:

A label for d/Deaf people or Hearing people that has been adopted and widely used.

Hearing Impaired

The term *hearing impaired* is more likely to be used by people with a less than severe hearing loss and people who have acquired deafness in adulthood rather than by those who have grown up deaf. By contrast, those who identify with the Deaf culture movement typically reject the label *impaired* and other labels that imply that deafness is a pathological condition, viewing it instead as a focus of pride.

Child of a Deaf Adult (CODA)

Any person who has one or more parents who are deaf.

Signer

Any person with the ability to communicate using one or more variations of sign language.

Oral

Any deaf person who has the ability to lip-read/speech-read and can often communicate through voicing.

Deaf ≠ Broken.

Deaf people have the same abilities and disabilities as hearing people *except* the ability to hear. This doesn't mean they are unable to function. Deaf people are able to laugh, cry, think, enjoy movies, and answer the phone just like everyone else. Just because they don't/can't hear, doesn't mean they need to be fixed.

Not all deaf people voice.

The ability and desire to communicate verbally differs on an individual basis. It all depends how the individual was raised and whether or not they were ever encouraged/discouraged to use their voice. It may also depend on whether they had any residual hearing that allowed them to annunciate words correctly.

Not all deaf/HoH people sign.

The ability and desire to sign is also different from person to person. It all depends how the individual was raised and whether or not they were ever encouraged/discouraged to sign.

Hearing aids won't necessarily solve everything.

Don't assume that someone with a hearing aid will automatically hear and understand every word that comes out of your mouth. Background noise and speaking too loudly can cause distortion. This can ultimately cause more problems. Additionally, not all hearing aids are created equal.