

Making your home deaf-friendly

As parents, we are constantly advocating for our child who is deaf or hard of hearing. We want our children to have equal access at daycare, in the classroom, and in public spaces. But what about in our own homes? Here are some tips for making your home more deaf-friendly, including some if you are designing or renovating:

- **Reduce background noise:** This is especially important when having conversations with children who wear devices as it will reduce their listening effort and minimise misunderstandings.
- **Provide good and even lighting:** Consistent and balanced lighting throughout the home will enable your child to lip read more easily, and to see your facial expressions or Auslan signs more clearly. Close curtains or blinds to diffuse direct sunlight that can obscure features, expressions, and movements.
- **Incorporating visual and tactile alerts:** Once your child is a little older, you will want to ensure they can hear smoke alarms, doorbells and telephones, especially if they are home alone.
- **Round dinner table:** This also aids with lip reading and signing as your child can see everyone's face and hands at the table, and the direction of sound is more from the front.
- **Wall colours:** Solid wall colours are good. Avoid patterns and reflective colours, as these distract the eye from lips, facial expressions and signs.
- **Use captions:** It is never too early to make information more accessible.
- **Use carpets, rugs and other soft furnishings:** Hard, reflective surfaces can cause echoes and reverberations that can degrade hearing.
- **Lower ceilings:** These also improve the acoustics in the home.
- **Open floor plans:** Allow for a better line of sight, however, there can be a tradeoff with poorer acoustics. Openness is beneficial for those using Auslan, especially in the space that links the kitchen with the main living area, as this is where most household conversations occur.
- **Wider hallways:** Walking side by side while communicating is essential for someone who relies on lip reading or sign language.



Any of the above adjustments will have a beneficial impact on a deaf child's quality of life in the home.