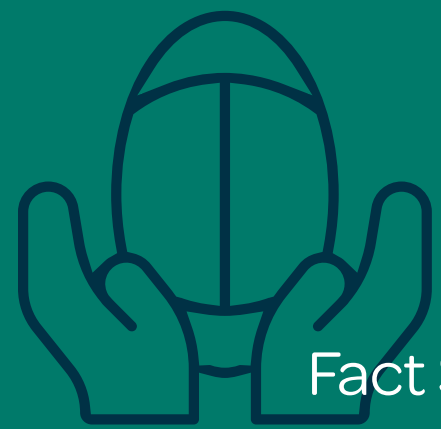




Deaf or Hard of Hearing



Fact Sheet

What is Deafness?



Deafness refers to a reduced ability to perceive sounds, impacting communication rather than just sound detection. Congenital deafness influences a child's cognitive, emotional, social, and educational development. Hearing loss affects both volume (loudness) and frequency (pitch).

Adults who lose their hearing (deafened) often rely on more than just hearing to communicate, with vision playing a key role. The degree of deafness is categorised as mild, moderate, severe, or profound:

- Mild hearing loss causes some challenges with conversations, especially in noisy environments.
- Moderate hearing loss makes it difficult to follow conversations without a hearing aid.
- Severe hearing loss means that even with hearing aids, people often depend on lip-reading and may also use sign language.
- Profound hearing loss indicates minimal benefit from hearing aids, requiring alternative forms of communication like sign language.

How to include people who are deaf or hard of hearing in your coaching sessions

1. Positioning for Communication:

Ask the player to stand at the front of the group when explaining drills, plans, or instructions. Alternatively, as the coach, ensure you move to a position where the player is in front of you. Communicate this expectation at the start of the session to avoid bringing the player forward each time. Ensure you stay within 3-6 feet and at the same level as the player when speaking to them.

2. Minimise Background Noise:

Hearing aids amplify all sounds equally, so be mindful of reducing background noise on the field. This ensures that your voice can be heard more clearly and without interference.

3. Clear Speech:

Speak clearly, avoiding exaggerated lip movements. If you speak quickly, try to maintain a steady and natural rhythm that allows for easier understanding.

4. Face the Light:

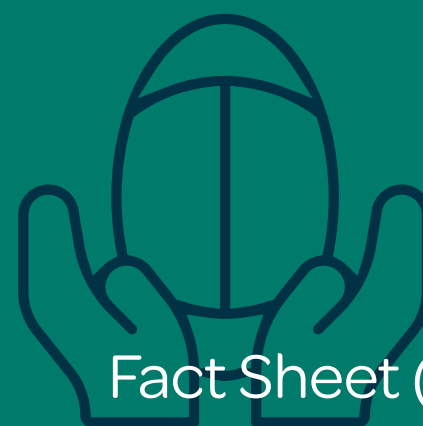
Ensure your face is well-lit and avoid standing in front of bright windows or strong light sources. This makes it easier for the player to read your lips.

5. Face the Player:

When communicating, always face the player and avoid covering your mouth with your hand, a whistle, or a clipboard.



Deaf or Hard of Hearing



Fact Sheet (cont'd.)

6. Get Their Attention:

Ensure the player is paying attention before giving instructions. Gently tap them on the shoulder or wave to signal you're about to speak. Avoid speaking to them when their attention is elsewhere.

7. Visual Cues:

Use one visual medium at a time. For example, avoid talking while writing on the whiteboard or demonstrating a drill. This allows the player to focus on one form of communication at a time.

8. Keywords and New Terms:

Write down new or complex terms, as they are difficult to lip-read. This is particularly helpful in rugby, where specific terminology or technical jargon may be used.

9. Demonstrate Techniques:

Where possible, use demonstrations instead of verbal explanations. Rugby has technical aspects like tackle, ruck, scrum with the sport, so showing rather than telling can improve understanding.

10. Rephrase if Necessary:

If the player doesn't understand immediately, rephrase your instructions rather than simply repeating them. The player will usually indicate they understand with a nod; reciprocate this to confirm communication.

11. Routine Changes:

Inform the player about any changes in the session's routine, such as field changes, training times, or drill adjustments. They may miss verbal announcements, so ensure they are kept in the loop.

12. Repeat Contributions:

If other players or coaches contribute to discussions or drills, repeat these contributions for the benefit of the deaf or hard of hearing.

13. Learn Rugby Specific Signs:

Encourage the player to teach you rugby-specific signs, which can help facilitate communication during matches and training sessions. This could include signals for scrum, pass, or lineout calls.

14. Visual Signals for Whistles:

Ensure the player can recognise essential visual signals in place of auditory cues, such as whistle blows. Use visual equivalents, like hand signals, to indicate key moments like scrums or penalties.

15. Involve the Team:

Discuss these strategies with teammates, parents, or other volunteers to create a supportive environment for the player. Educating the match officials about specific accommodations will also ensure smoother gameplay.

16. Inclusive Praise:

In rugby, clapping is often used to celebrate good play. For a mixed group, combine clapping with the double-handed wave, a common gesture used by the Deaf community to show appreciation. This ensures everyone feels included in moments of recognition.

By implementing these inclusive strategies, you can create a more supportive and effective coaching environment for players who are deaf or hard of hearing, allowing them to fully participate in rugby union training and matches.

Supported by

