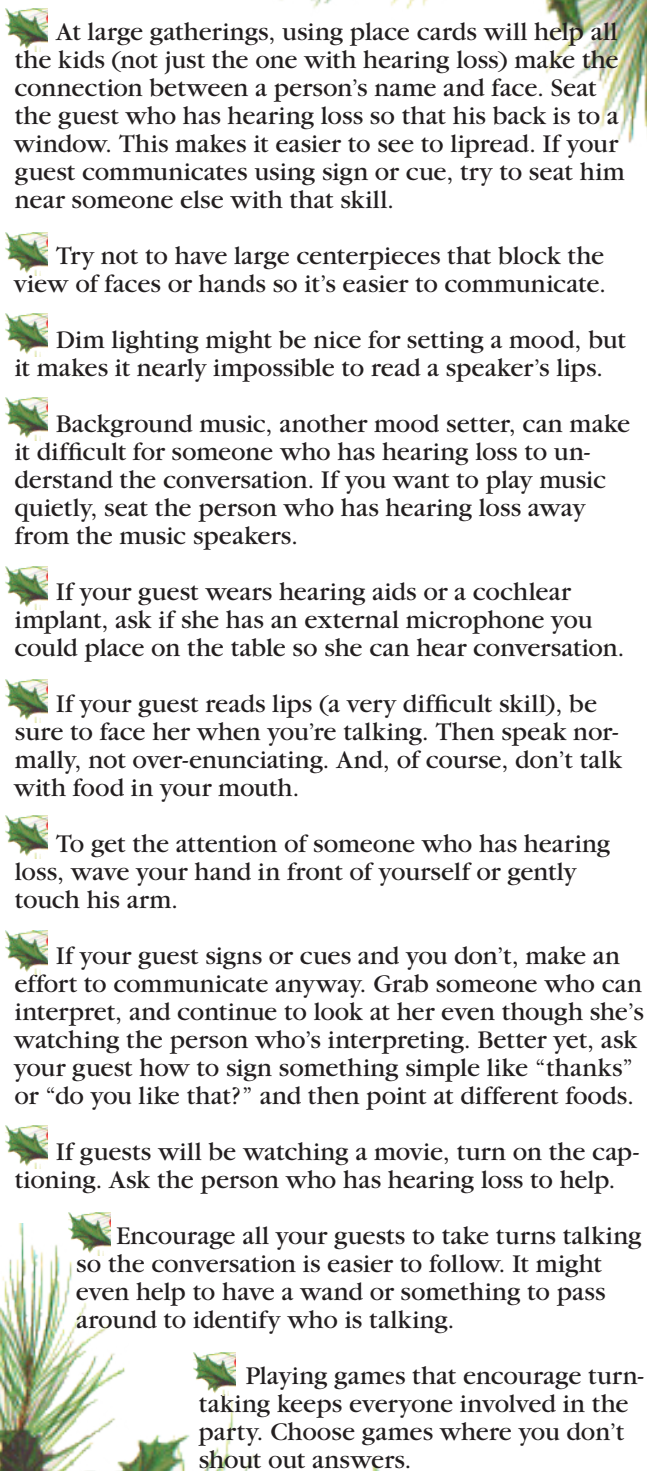


Tips for including a guest with hearing loss at your holiday gathering

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- At large gatherings, using place cards will help all the kids (not just the one with hearing loss) make the connection between a person's name and face. Seat the guest who has hearing loss so that his back is to a window. This makes it easier to see to lipread. If your guest communicates using sign or cue, try to seat him near someone else with that skill.
 - Try not to have large centerpieces that block the view of faces or hands so it's easier to communicate.
 - Dim lighting might be nice for setting a mood, but it makes it nearly impossible to read a speaker's lips.
 - Background music, another mood setter, can make it difficult for someone who has hearing loss to understand the conversation. If you want to play music quietly, seat the person who has hearing loss away from the music speakers.
 - If your guest wears hearing aids or a cochlear implant, ask if she has an external microphone you could place on the table so she can hear conversation.
 - If your guest reads lips (a very difficult skill), be sure to face her when you're talking. Then speak normally, not over-enunciating. And, of course, don't talk with food in your mouth.
 - To get the attention of someone who has hearing loss, wave your hand in front of yourself or gently touch his arm.
 - If your guest signs or cues and you don't, make an effort to communicate anyway. Grab someone who can interpret, and continue to look at her even though she's watching the person who's interpreting. Better yet, ask your guest how to sign something simple like "thanks" or "do you like that?" and then point at different foods.
 - If guests will be watching a movie, turn on the captioning. Ask the person who has hearing loss to help.
 - Encourage all your guests to take turns talking so the conversation is easier to follow. It might even help to have a wand or something to pass around to identify who is talking.
 - Playing games that encourage turn-taking keeps everyone involved in the party. Choose games where you don't shout out answers.