



Tips for people with hearing loss when eating out

If the restaurant is new to you and you have a chance, visit ahead of time to scope out the situation. Restaurants with carpeting, curtains and acoustical or closed ceilings will be a lot quieter than establishments with tile or other hard floors and bare tables. Sound will get lost or echo with open “warehouse” ceilings.

Keep your group small; select a place, which doesn't have “live entertainment”.

If possible, make a reservation ahead of time, suggesting where you'd like to sit and why you are being specific your seating location.

Try to make your reservation for “off” hours. Avoid Friday and Saturday nights or noon to one o'clock during the week. If you cannot make reservations, have never been to the restaurant and cannot see it ahead of time, use the guidelines here to select your seating.

Tell the hostess and server that you are hard of hearing.

Booths are preferable to tables. The back of the booth will “trap” the sound you'll want to hear and somewhat limit unwanted sound from behind you. Ideally try for a booth, which backs up to a wall. If booths aren't available and you're seated at a table, seat yourself in a corner of the room or your back to a wall. *Avoid a table in the middle of the room*; this is among the worst places to sit.

Select a booth or table where the light from the windows won't be in your eyes. Speech reading with light glaring in your eyes is almost impossible.

When seated, position yourself near the person with who you wish to communicate. In some situations sitting across from the person you want to hear is best since you have a full-face view. Other situations, such as where there is a bigger group of people, you may want to sit next to the person who you can hear the best. If you become lost in the larger conversation you will have someone near you, you can understand. If you use an FM portable system and are eating with only one other person, ask them wear the transmitter rather than put it on the table where dishes and silverware may prove irritating.

Avoid sitting near appliances such as dessert displays, soda dispensing machines, air conditioners, water fountains, etc.. The noise from these will drown out people speaking to you or may even cause a hum, especially if you're using a personal listener with your telecoil.

If an amplifier to a P. A. system is near you, ask if it can be turned down. Many places say they will turn the sound down but don't really since the managers want the restaurant to seem "busy" and music often makes a facility look busier than it is.

Discourage more than one conversation at a time in your group.

If "specials" are available, ask to see a list you can read.

Remember there is a "formula" when going to many restaurants, which allows you to anticipate what will be said.

You will be seated (that's the time to choose or ask for a specific location), you will often be tasked for your beverage order and told your "server" (sometimes their name is used), "will be right with you". Your server will introduce themselves (take a look at their name tag) and if your beverage order was not taken by the hostess the server will ask after you're seated.

You'll be given a menu and if there isn't a written "specials" menu you'll be told what the specials are. At that point if you can't hear, ask the server to come closer since you "don't hear well" (your word selection).

If the dessert items are listed on the same menu it's a good idea if you're a dessert eater to see what's available. At the end of the meal you won't have to listen to the desserts.

Shortly after you start eating your server will ask "is everything ok" or "how's everything", "are you still working" or some such phrase, some servers come back again to ask. In the past servers would often ask if you want dessert, this isn't always done, but be prepared. If there is a dessert cart the server will tell you at that point

Remember: Keep your sense of humor. Give thanks to those who assist you and you're not the only person with a hearing loss to breathe a sigh of relief when all is said and done!