

10 Tips to Improve Hearing and Comprehension in Online Class Sessions and Meetings

- 1) Use a microphone and be sure that it is placed close enough to your mouth. Facial masks will result in a reduction of the intensity of your speech. So, it's important to compensate for facial masks by decreasing the distance between your mouth and the microphone that you are using to pick up your speech. Getting the microphone as close to the mouth as possible will increase the signal level and bypass environmental noise. Consider using:
 - a boom microphone on the ear with the microphone close to the mouth.
 - a microphone that plugs into the desktop computer.

If no external microphone is available, check to see where the built-in microphone on your computer is located. Try to maintain a distance of 12 inches from the computer microphone. Closer may distort the speech. Further away will make the sound softer.

- 2) Slow down the rate of speech *slightly* to allow for more auditory processing time of degraded signals. But do not slow down too much because it will distort the acoustic characteristics of your speech.
- 3) Reduce as much noise as possible in the room where the presenter/instructor is (e.g., a/c units, hallway traffic, loud computer fans, etc.).
- 4) Speak slightly louder than normal, but do not yell. Yelling will distort the acoustic signal making comprehension harder.
- 5) Make maximal use of bandwidth on both the presenter/instructor end and the student/peer end. Both parties should turn off all other streaming devices to allow for a clearer delivery of the signal. Contact IT for troubleshooting if students or peers report difficulty understanding. Provide students with contact to help support troubleshooting technology or simply learning how to use the platforms.
- 6) Repeat all comments and questions asked in the classroom if some students are in a classroom and others are synchronously online. This will allow students in both settings to benefit from what is asked or said in addition to just hearing the instructor's response. It also offers repetition of the message, providing listeners two times to hear the message.
- 7) Repeat information that is important for the remote listener to hear (e.g., assignment due dates, important facts, etc.).

- 8) Encourage and support self-advocacy regarding technology. ASK the participants (students/ peers) to let you know if they cannot see something or if they cannot understand something. Offer to troubleshoot issues during office hours. Have contact information for IT to refer students to for troubleshooting.
- 9) Check for comprehension during class sessions using polling or by asking questions in which the students are required to type in the chat box.
- 10) Provide visual supports from information delivered remotely. Some suggestions for this are:
 - a. Use bulleted outlines or PowerPoints during presentations.
 - b. Upload PDFs of outlines or powerpoints into Canvas.
 - c. Make sure all assignment information is provided in detail in Canvas in written form and that it is consistent across the various sections of Canvas. If you make a change to an assignment or due date, update it in Canvas as well. Make an announcement of the change in the LMS announcement section.
 - d. Use real-time captioning. Some platforms, such as Google Meet, have this, but the student has to turn them on. If the platform does not offer real time captions, use another source of real time captioning, such as Otter or Microsoft Word Dictation. <https://blog.otter.ai/how-to-transcribe-any-video-meetings-with-otter-ai/>
 - e. Link lectures to readings for classes.
 - f. For class sessions in which some students are in class and some students are learning synchronously online, establish peer support system where the student in class can clarify missed portions of class lecture with someone who was physically in class.

If you have concerns about your hearing or if you would like to have your hearing tested, please contact the Department of Communicative Disorders
Central Mississippi Speech-Language and Hearing Clinic
3825 Ridgewood Road Suite 6
601-979-8001
cmslhc@jsums.edu

Information provided by Dr. Jennifer Wiles, an audiologist and a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Communicative Disorders. If you have any questions or need further information, Dr. Wiles can be reached at: jennifer.e.wiles@jsums.edu.