

## Masks and Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students

Listed below are the most effective clear masks that we have found in terms of facial access for students, sound quality and fog factor.

		
<p>*Bendshape Clear Mask  <a href="https://bendshapemask.com">https://bendshapemask.com</a></p>	<p>*The Communicator Surgical Facemasks with Clear Window  <a href="https://safenclear.com/product/the-communicator-surgical-mask-with-a-clear-window/">https://safenclear.com/product/the-communicator-surgical-mask-with-a-clear-window/</a></p>	<p>*Transparent Mouth/Face Masks  <a href="https://www.aidthesilent.com/shop/clear-masks/">https://www.aidthesilent.com/shop/clear-masks/</a></p>

### How to communicate when wearing a mask (Healthy Living)

Face masks lower the volume of a person's voice, and they muffle speech clarity. Follow these tips to improve communication:

- Reduce background noise and gain the person's attention
- Ask if the person can hear you
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Do not shout
- Make sure the student is using their hearing amplification ( hearing aids, cochlear implants)
- If you're not understood, try to rephrase what you said with different words
- Take turns while speaking
- Do not talk while walking or looking away
- Clear or transparent masks can help with lipreading and conveying emotions
- Consider using assistive listening devices such as a soundfield system or FM system



### **Mask Wearing Tips: (Healthy Hearing)**

- Fabric ties may work better as they are adjustable and don't tug as much as elastic ear loops
- Use a fabric or bendable plastic mask extender with buttons or other notches to attach the mask straps. Mask holders or extenders can relieve your ears from the double (or triple!) duty of holding up your face mask, hearing aids, and eyeglasses
- Use simple tools like plastic s-hooks for straps
- Some masks clasp at the neck instead of the ears (similar to gaiters but shorter)
- Always remove your mask carefully so you don't accidentally yank your hearing aids out

### **Background Information:**

Masks are one of the most highly recommended strategies for the prevention of COVID. However, for students and adults with different hearing levels, this has been extremely difficult in terms of speech comprehension, not to mention no visibility for speech reading/facial expressions. A study was done at the Moog Center with various face coverings and found the following results:

#### **Results:**

- A shield and remote microphone (DM system) yield the lowest speech perception rate when compared to just the use of the remote microphone.
- The use of a cloth mask with a remote microphone yields a bit lower score over the cloth mask with a window.
- The use of the remote microphone yields a significant increase in performance when paired with a cloth mask or shield (auditory speech only) and very instrumental in keeping the error rate down
- The use of a clear mask was found to be better than the use of a cloth mask. The teacher of the deaf/hh may conduct a functional listening assessment to determine the best mask/pairing with a remote microphone
- Children with underdeveloped lexicons are likely to struggle more than adults when listening to a speaker wearing a face covering.