

Home Environment Setup Checklist

For Families of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children (0–3 Years)

By making intentional adjustments to improve visibility, accessibility, and interaction, you can help your child fully engage, learn and thrive every day. This checklist is designed to help families create a home environment that supports your deaf or hard of hearing child's communication and language development.

1. Visual Access & Lighting

Deaf and hard of hearing children benefit when they have clear sightlines, as this ensures full access to communication, whether through spoken or sign language.

- ☐ Rooms are well lit (especially play areas and feeding areas)
- ☐ Faces and hands are easy to see (avoid backlighting from windows)
- ☐ Caregivers need to position themselves within the baby's visual field during daily routines and while communicating
- ☐ Caregivers get down to the child's eye level when signing
- ☐ Positioning or seating allows face-to-face interaction (highchair, floor play, couch)
- ☐ Ensure that TV screens do not compete with family engagement time
- ☐ Mirrors are available during play and engagement to support the child in seeing themselves and their caregivers signing

2. Communication Access Throughout the Day

Considerations for daily communication access will vary based on your child's language environment at home and communication approaches used.

- ☐ Visual attention is gained before any attempts at communicating (such as getting down to the child's eye level, tapping, waving, flashing lights)
- ☐ Signs and spoken words are modeled and used consistently during daily routines (such as mealtime, bath, diapering, and play)
- ☐ Ensure that family members/caregivers use the same signs and words for consistency purposes
- ☐ The child's communication attempts are responded to and reinforced immediately
- ☐ Books are accessible and used interactively (for example: point to pictures/text, pause for child to look at you, and then sign/label the picture/text)
- ☐ Back-and-forth signed "conversations" are encouraged

3. Accessible Home Environment

Considerations for your child's home environment will vary based on their hearing level, use of amplification, and access to visual communication.

- ☐ Flashing or vibrating alert systems are available (doorbells, smoke alarms, phones ringing)
 - ☐ Enabling captioning/subtitles during viewing activities (such as videos, TV shows, FaceTime, etc.)
 - ☐ Caregivers check amplification devices daily (if used) to ensure they are working and properly fitted
 - ☐ Backup batteries or charging systems are easily accessible
 - ☐ Family members/responsible adults understand how to maintain devices
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4. Predictable Routines

Predictable routines help children understand and anticipate language.

- ☐ Daily routines happen in similar ways each day
 - ☐ The same signs are used consistently during routines
 - ☐ Visual cues (signing or flashing lights) signal transitions
 - ☐ Create visual schedules for daily routines within the home
 - ☐ Caregivers pause and wait for the child's attention and response, especially during transitioning from one activity to another
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5. Social & Emotional Connection

Accessible language and responsive communication foster both language development and strong relationships.

- ☐ Caregivers engage in face-to-face play daily
 - ☐ Facial expressions are used clearly and naturally
 - ☐ The child has opportunities to communicate clearly with other adults whenever possible, such as signing adults if sign language is used
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Remember:

A supportive home environment is not about expensive equipment. It is about:

- ✓ Visual access
- ✓ Consistent communication
- ✓ Safety
- ✓ Emotional connection