



# Disability Fact Sheet

**A resource for Little Athletics NSW Centres**

(Information from Deaf Sports Australia—[www.deafsports.org.au](http://www.deafsports.org.au))

***ATHLETES***

**with Hearing Impairment**

## *What is a Hearing Impairment?*

“Deaf” is defined as a hearing loss of at least 55dB PTA in the better ear (3-tone frequency average at 500, 1000 and 2000 Hertz, ISO 1969 Standard).

## *General tips for officials and age managers*

- Ask the athlete what they can hear and adjust the activity to their needs.
- Speak clearly and normally – there is no need to raise your voice.
- When handing a piece of equipment, such as a discus, to a person with hearing impairment, face the athlete and in front so that they can see you or tap the athlete on the shoulder.

## *Tips for Participation in Little Athletics Events*

### **Use Demonstrations**

- Where possible, demonstrate techniques or corrections rather than rely on verbal explanations. Use other athletes where possible to conduct effective demonstrations.

### **Visual Aids**

- Display information visually wherever possible, such as whiteboards.

### **Check for Understanding**

- If a deaf person does not reply or seem to have difficulty in understanding, rephrase what you just said/demonstrated before moving on. A deaf person will usually confirm they understand by a nod of the head and conversely you should do the same.

### **Effective Positioning**

- In group situations encourage the deaf athlete/s to position themselves where they feel most comfortable such as in front of the age group manager and at the front of the group.

### **Identifying Signals**

- Make sure that the deaf athlete/s can identify essential signals (e.g. visual equivalents to the gun), a simple example could include a referee/starter putting an arm up, then down at the same time as the gun.

## *Tips for Participation in Little Athletics Events cont.*

### **Use Touch to Gain Attention**

- Stand to the side of the athlete when the athlete is on the start line. Tap the athlete on the shoulder to indicate the start of the race when the gun fires. Attract the deaf person's attention before speaking to them or else they may not realise you are talking to them. A tap on the shoulder or a wave is acceptable.

### **Use Lights to Start a Race**

Lights can be used to start a race. The light can be placed on the infield and when the gun is fired, the lights go on to indicate the start of the race. This system can be used to substitute for the traditional starters gun.

### **Face to Face Communication**

Communication with a deaf person will be enhanced if you ensure that you are standing where they can clearly see your face. Speak clearly without shouting, and with normal inflection and timing.

### **Don't be Afraid to Ask**

Ask the deaf person how they would like to communicate and don't just assume. There are a variety of ways to communicate and the person will tell you what works best for them. To get things started try communicating through basic gestures or use a pen and notepad.

### **Ask the Athlete to Teach you Sport Specific Signs**

There are a number of simple sport specific signs that a deaf athlete can teach you to assist with communication during competition or training.

### **Don't Make Athletes Stand Out**

Make all attempts to avoid making a deaf person look conspicuous (e.g. don't continually ask them in front of a group if they understand).

## *Myths and Facts*

### **Do all Deaf People see Themselves as Disabled?**

No, many deaf people see themselves as members of a linguistic and cultural minority and do not see themselves as disabled.

## *Myths and Facts cont.*

### **How do Deaf People Communicate?**

Many deaf people use Auslan (Australian Sign Language) and many are bilingual- they use Auslan and written/spoken English with varying levels of competence in their lives.

### **What is Auslan?**

Auslan (Australian Sign Language) is the language of the Deaf community of Australia. Auslan is a visual, gestural language that is made up of linguistic elements that are identified as handshape, orientation, location, movement and expression. Auslan grammar and structure is different to English.

### **All Deaf People can Lip Read**

Not everyone can read lips, the very best lip-readers can only pick up 30-40% of words.

### **Hearing Aids and Cochlear Implants Make Hearing “Normal”**

These devices do not correct hearing loss in the way glasses correct vision. They amplify sound to varying degrees, however, the wearer is still deaf or hard of hearing.

### **Why do the Deaf Community not Compete at the Paralympics**

Deaf athletes are physically able-bodies and can compete in sport without any restrictions apart from communication barriers that may occur when playing sport with people who can hear. There are no unique sports for deaf athletes. International sporting regulation are used for competitions – the only consideration is to make auditory cues visible.

