

SUPPORT FOR POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

The 4 “Knows” of Starting College with a Hearing Loss

For many high school graduates, starting college is both exciting and daunting. Course registration, accommodation, commute, buying textbooks etc. are concerns for all freshmen. For those with a hearing loss, accessibility is an extra concern. *How do I make sure I can hear every word the professor says in a lecture hall of 200 people? How can I make an oral presentation when I cannot hear myself? How can I participate in group discussions when all I hear is noise and chattering? Which extracurricular club should I join? How do I let others know of my limitations and needs?*

The following four “Knows” may assist you with some of these answers...

1. **Know your rights.** The law in British Columbia requires that all post secondary institutions provide reasonable accommodation to all students with disability. Each student's essential requirements should be assessed individually. A student cannot be denied admission to the university or college on the basis of his/her disability. The post secondary institution also needs to make its courses accessible to students with disabilities in accordance with the Human Rights Code (BC) and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom. Check out the UBC policy on academic accommodation for students with disabilities at <http://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/files/2010/08/policy73.pdf>.
2. **Know your needs.** Whether it be CART (computer-assisted real time captioning), an interpreter, or text messaging with instructors, familiarize yourself with the various instruction aids and communication modes that work well for you. Know how to describe your hearing loss and its implications. Be comfortable with saying “I can *hear* you better if I can see you talking”. Ask for important information such as test dates to be written on the board. Prior to each new course, identify yourself to the instructor and let the instructor know how to help, e.g. ask him/her to repeat students' questions and comments, or to provide an online summary of the key points that are to be covered in the upcoming class. Another example is to suggest that students distribute electronically their upcoming presentation materials beforehand. At the post-secondary level, you are your own advocate. The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association has a series of publications for hard-of-hearing post secondary students at <http://chha.ca/chha/publications-youth.php>.
3. **Know your technology.** If you are a graduate of the Outreach program, you are likely familiar with FM systems. Besides your own personal hearing instruments, an FM system is one of the best assistive listening devices in a lecture hall or a classroom. Before your first class, learn everything there is to know about your FM system. Try it at home and with friends in a noisy setting such as a restaurant or a café. You will need to teach your professors how to wear the microphone correctly and other important steps such as muting the microphone and being careful not to tangle the cable. As there may be a higher chance for interference due to more wireless signals and high power electronic equipment in a post secondary classroom, make sure your FM system has been programmed with multiple channels so that you can change your default channel as needed.

In addition to ensuring the audibility of the teacher's voice, you want to be prepared with technology that will enable you to hear videos and computers. An audio cable that attaches to your FM system or the TV/HiFi cable that attaches to your cochlear implant should accomplish this. Newer technology that uses Bluetooth may allow you to transmit the TV or computer signals directly to your hearing instruments. Check out Oticon's ConnectLine products at <http://www.oticon.ca/Consumers/Products/Connectivity.aspx> and Phonak's iCom/TVlink at <http://www.phonak.com/ca/b2c/en/products/accessories/communication.html>.

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Being able to hear and speak on the phone may also become more important. Experiment with the volume control on your phone, the telecoil setting on your hearing instrument, and different ways of holding the phone from your ear. For a list of mobile phones that are compatible with cochlear implants, go to <http://www.cochlearamericas.com/Products/2043.asp>.

If you wear Phonak hearing aids that are on the “CORE” or “SPICE” platform, their “Click’n Talk” attaches to some models of mobile phones to allow you to use the phone hands-free.

To find out if your hearing aid and mobile phone are compatible, go to:

http://www.phonak.com/ca/b2b/en/products/accessories/communication/click_ntalk/compatible_mobile_phones.html.

If you wear Oticon hearing aids, their “streamer” is equipped with Bluetooth that allows you to use those mobile phones with Bluetooth hands-free. For a list of mobile phones with Bluetooth:

<http://www.oticon.ca/Professionals/Our%20Products/Connectivity/ConnectLine/~link.aspx?id=6983FCE366CF432399424DB8A72DB47A&z=z>.

4. **Know your community.** Your local community is often a valuable resource in terms of information on technology and funding. In British Columbia, two organizations that offer funding for assistive listening devices for post secondary students are the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association and the Rotary Club (applications required). For more information on funding: <http://www.sd47.bc.ca/auditoryoutreach/Parents/Documents/Post%20Secondary%20Students.pdf>

Subscribe to the newsletters issued by your local hard-of-hearing associations. These often have updated information on technology and entertainment, such as which cinema has accommodations for the hearing-impaired and tips for travelling on an airplane.

The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association BC Chapter publishes a newsletter every three months. Their Spring 2011 issue is available online at http://chha-bc.org/Loop/The_Loop_Spring_2011.pdf. The Family Network for Deaf Children also has a newsletter. Check out their Fall 2010 issue: http://www.fndc.ca/files/pdf/newsletters/2010_fall_fndc_nl.pdf

In addition to academics, having an enriching and supportive social circle is important to most post secondary students. “Access 2 Entertainment” is a national program for people with disabilities who require the assistance of a companion to attend a movie, concert, or sporting event etc. With an Access 2 Entertainment card, a hard-of-hearing person pays the regular admission, but the companion receives free or discounted admission. To apply for the Access card, go to www.access2.ca.

Many theatres across the Lower Mainland are equipped with a loop system that works with the telecoil on many hearing instruments. Examples of such theatres in Vancouver are Queen Elizabeth, Stanley, Orpheum, Arts Club, and Fifth Avenue Cinema. Other movie theatres are equipped with Rear Window Captioning (RWC®), a technology that is patented by the Cineplex movie theatres. A clear plastic panel that attaches to the drink holder displays text that is reflected off the back of the theatre. You will need to obtain the panel from

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the cashier at the time of ticket purchase. Movies with RWC have the symbol RWC® beside them under the movie listings. To search for theatres and movies with RWC: <http://www.cineplex.com/Theatres/RWCDVS.aspx> .

Kudos to all high school graduates with hearing loss, for you have demonstrated the extraordinary diligence and perseverance needed to attain the Dogwood Diploma despite a challenging obstacle. Keep up the good work as you prepare for your next milestone in life; utilize the summer break to learn about technology, advocacy, and accessibility at your post secondary institution, and you will find yourself fully participating in the enriching educational and social experience that your university or college has to offer.

*The information on technology and associated links in this document are updated as of July 25, 2011.
This article was written by Carrie Siu, audiologist of Auditory Outreach, www.auditoryoutreach.ca*

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