**10 Top Tips**

**Teaching Deaf Children**

**On teaching Groups**

**1. Be visible**

* Place yourself as near to the deaf child as respectfully possible.
* Put the deaf child near to, but not at the front so cues from peers can be seen.
* Give yourself the space to be gesturally expressive.

**2. The space**

* Switch off any whirring (impairs sound quality and upsets digital hearing), including air conditioners.
* If you are in a high ceilinged room explore options for fabric to dampen the acoustics.
* Keep instrumental groups closer together so the sound does not dissipate or become diluted.

**3. Diction**

* Avoid covering your face at all times.
* Keep your diction steady, short and relevant, and annunciate clearly to the end of each word.
* Shouting is a big no, as is whispering as both distort sound and visible clues.

**4. Use emotion!**

* Be emotionally expressive -emotion tells a bigger story than words ever will.
* In the context of your lesson topic if you are disappointed, happy, sad, express this meaningfully.
* If the deaf child's is unresponsive repeat with clarity and expression to the group, not just the child.

**5. Communicate**

* Collate relevant information on the child's deafness/characteristics, and ensure the class supports this.
* Encourage one of the class to be a mentor - that way everyone can work to the child's strengths.
* Body language is everything, so watch! A tiny nod or bite of the lip could be telling you something.

**On teaching an instrument**

**6. Model, model model!**

* Show your deaf pupil the way visibly, expressively and vocally, clearly and slowly, repeating if necessary.
* Describe by doing but remember to vocalise too.
* Relate what you do and say directly to your musical focus without clutter or embellishing.

**7. The instrument**

* Being tactile with your instruments together is your most valuable teaching tool.
* Focus on one task at a time (the bow? Finger exercises?) - show, and repeat that task.
* Show, play, then pause and enable; avoid humming or interrupting - time and space is everything.

**8. Sound and waves**

* Take your shoes off! The floor connects the body, sound and instrument in a musical free flow.
* Encourage your pupil to touch your instrument while you play. The vibrations are alive and makes sense.
* For deaf children learning is as much about listening as about playing.

**9. Bite sized chunks**

* Divide the lesson into weekly miniature modules, each with a clear instrumental/musical focus.
* Ask music related questions without waffling and encourage verbal and physical responses.
* Perform to each other! A little, often, is fabulous, fun and empowering.

**10. Read, Enquire, Learn**

* Read about deafness - like music, deafness harnesses a free spirit and typecasting is impossible.
* Be brave - ask the child's key adult about your pupil's deafness - they will be glad you are interested.
* Make mistakes, put your foot in it, and acknowledge with grace, humour and professionalism. You are the teacher. You pupil wants to learn. That's it.

**Emma Hutchinson**

Emma was diagnosed with serious biolateral hearing loss from early childhood. She achieved a scholarship to Chethams school of music and holds an MA in Early Years Music, a BA(hons) in theatre and dance, and LTCL in music. Music and dance has been a powerful friend in shaping Emma's ability to communicate, to discriminate sound and to interprete body language. As an early years music specialist, teacher, training and researcher Emma frequently presents practical workshops on how communication language can be achieved through music and instrumental play. She established Music House for Children in 1994, Music House Courses and is author of several early years music books and papers .

**Further reading**

[**Emma Hutchinson research papers**](https://independent.academia.edu/EmmaHutchinson)

[Elizabeth Foundation](https://elizabeth-foundation.org/services/online/)

[Listen and talk](https://letslistenandtalk.org/)

[NDCS Music](https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/professionals/activities/music/)

[Music and the Deaf](https://www.matd.org.uk/)

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