

# Cued Speech use with deafened people



Complete spoken language  
through vision

## Information Sheet 8

### Helping deafened people to maintain communication

Cued Speech is a supportive language tool which clarifies all lipshapes of spoken language by the use of eight handshapes in four positions near the mouth.

It is estimated that we lipread as little as 30% - the rest must be guessed. However, research shows that with the handshapes and positions of Cued Speech (the cues) supplementing the lipshapes lipreading levels rise to 96% (G Nicholls 1979).

There are three elements to Cued Speech:

- the natural mouth movements of speech
- the handshapes which clarify similar or ambiguous consonant sounds
- the positions of the hand near the mouth which clarify similar or ambiguous vowel sounds.

When sounds look different on the lips they can share the same handshape or position. Examples of this are the group of consonants 't', 'm' and 'f', (which share the 'full' handshape) and the vowel group 'u', 'aw' and 'ee' (which share the mouth position).

However, sounds like 'k', 'g' and 'h', and 'f' and 'v', which are indistinguishable on the lips, are clarified by different hand shapes.

The cues (handshapes and position) are always an accompaniment to speech and must be simultaneous with speech. With practice it is possible to cue at the speed of normal speech.

For further information see the chart on the back page.

**Cued Speech takes the guesswork out of lipreading.**

*Cued Speech is a simple sound-based system comprising eight handshapes used in four positions near the mouth together with the lip patterns of normal speech so as to make all the sounds of spoken language fully comprehensible to deaf babies, children and adults*

### **More information?**

*Video, booklet and more information sheets available.*

### **Learn to Cue**

*Regular courses (some residential) are arranged, with low cost or free tuition.*

### **Contact us at:**

**Cued Speech Association UK**  
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**Call an experienced user now to discuss the benefits of Cued Speech**

## Cued Speech use with deafened people

### History

Cued Speech was devised in 1966 in America by Professor R. Orin Cornett in order to help young profoundly deaf children and babies to 'see', and therefore think, in the English language and thus improve their communication with hearing family and friends and their literacy. Although early users of Cued Speech were taking a gamble with this new method it quickly became apparent that Cued Speech was very successful. Research showed that profoundly deaf children brought up with Cued Speech had an understanding of spoken language which was vastly superior to children with an oral or signing background (Peterson 1991) and that their reading skills were equivalent to those of hearing children (J E Wandel 1989).

The use of Cued Speech with children has grown steadily in America and in Europe and in some places it has also been taken up by deafened people and their families.

### The Needs of deafened people

Deafened people have very different needs from born-deaf children. They know and can use spoken language; but for deafened people spoken language becomes inaccessible in varying degrees according to the level of their hearing loss.

One deafened Cued Speech user, Frankie Lange, wrote recently: "Total deafness was harder for me than the death of my wonderful husband. I mourned it just like his death; but it was with me every waking second". She counsels that Cued Speech is not a panacea but says: "I would **STRONGLY** advise anyone who is losing their useful hearing to learn Cued Speech while they still have some hearing left. **EVERYTHING** is easier while we can still hear!".

### Learn to Cue

Learning to cue is quite unlike learning a new language.

Because Cued Speech is a sound-based language tool - not a language - students learn an additional way of expressing and understanding **their own** language. An essential part of each Cued Speech instruction course is learning about the sounds that make up spoken language but there is no new vocabulary or grammar to learn. It is possible, therefore, to learn to cue in only a few days.

It takes an average of 20 hours for deafened and hearing people to master the basic skills of Cued Speech and to be able to cue any word in the English language. Experienced cuers can cue at the speed of normal speech but beginners will initially be slow and practice is needed before cues become fluent and fast.

Deafened people should learn with a family member or friend. The deafened person does not need to acquire the physical skills of Cued Speech in order to benefit from watching others cue.

Many deafened people report that Cued Speech gives immediate help by differentiating between sounds like 'm', 'b' and 'p' and by clarifying word endings. However, some people find that learning to read the cues of others accurately - particularly at speed - may take as much as three to six months.

Some deafened people like to have occasional 'difficult' words cued to them but others prefer to 'see' every word clarified by Cued Speech. It is important to remember that Cued Speech is a language **tool**. It can be used in different ways and for different purposes by people with differing needs.

## Cued Speech helps in the following ways:

1) With Cued Speech you can see every sound of speech. **Communication with people who cue can become easier and less tiring.**

2) An essential part of learning Cued Speech is learning about the sounds of spoken language, and recognising them on the lips. Because of this deafened people often say that **knowledge of Cued Speech helps them to lipread those who do not cue more easily.**

3) Cued Speech can **help with the pronunciation of a new word or name.** As

one deafened cuer says: "I hate to hear a late deafened signer say about a name or new word, "However you pronounce it!" With cues, I learn to correctly pronounce a lot of names/ words that are new to me. I don't have 'to sound' deaf just because I am!"

4) Cued Speech Transliteration (using a skilled cuer to clarify the speech of another – rather like an interpreter) will allow for **equal access in lectures and meetings.**

5) Improved lipreading skills can lead to greater self-confidence.

## The personal story of a deafened cuer from the USA

"Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Jane Knight, and I was deafened at age 23 in a horseback accident. I live in Crosby, Texas. I am now 43 years old, and have a 17 year old son. I completed my Masters in Deaf Education in 1995.

When I became deaf (it was a sudden, total deafness), I was quite young. I had been married for just over a year, and had not been out of college long (the University of Texas at San Antonio). My accident was near fatal, and left me totally deaf and legally blind. I was in a coma for 16 days, and had a 5% chance to survive. An article about me was written for Redbook magazine.

I got by reading lips and writing to people after my accident. While the loneliness and isolation were terrible, I got by. Not until I unexpectedly became pregnant did it petrify me - how was I going to communicate with my child? I desperately began a search for a communication method.

I saw quickly sign language was not an option. Since it is a language, it would take years to master fluency. And I could not expect the hearing people around me to dedicate years to be able to speak to just ME - we knew no other deaf people. And expect a baby/toddler to learn a foreign language just

to speak to Mom? No.

I was directed to Cued Speech, and it was a life saver. Since it is learned so quickly, it was reasonable to expect it to be acquired by both family and friends to be able to use. And what is so wonderful is, it makes lip reading TOTALLY understandable with such little effort.

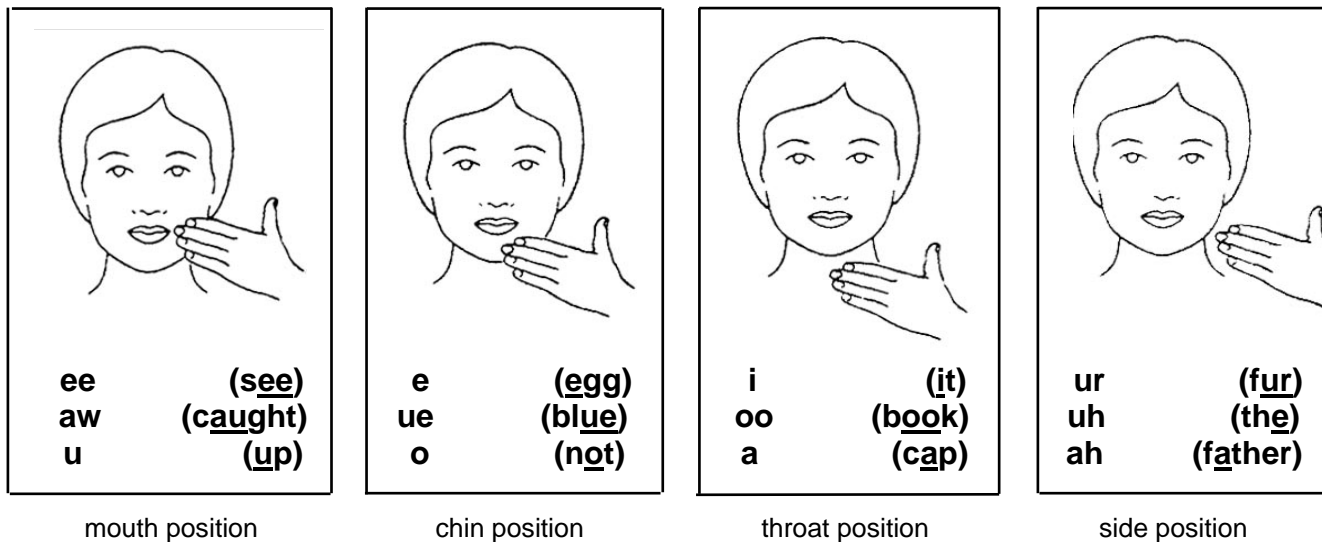
But the test came when my son, John, was born. The day he started trying to cue to me was an enormous relief. Of course, he tried to cue "bobble" (bottle) and the cue "pee pee"! ha! It was just incredible.

When John was 4 years old, I received a cochlear implant. It is amazing how much hearing it restored for me. However, this made the need for Cued Speech quite reduced, and we rarely cue now. I WISH people would cue more to me. People assume my hearing was 'fixed' with a cochlear implant, and that is a misconception. There are many times I need cues to help me out with my hearing. Noisy situations are very difficult to hear in. And of all things, my son is a national calibre debater on the school team, and speaks so rapidly I cannot understand him most of the time! Cues would be an enormous help."

# Cued Speech Chart - Standard English pronunciation

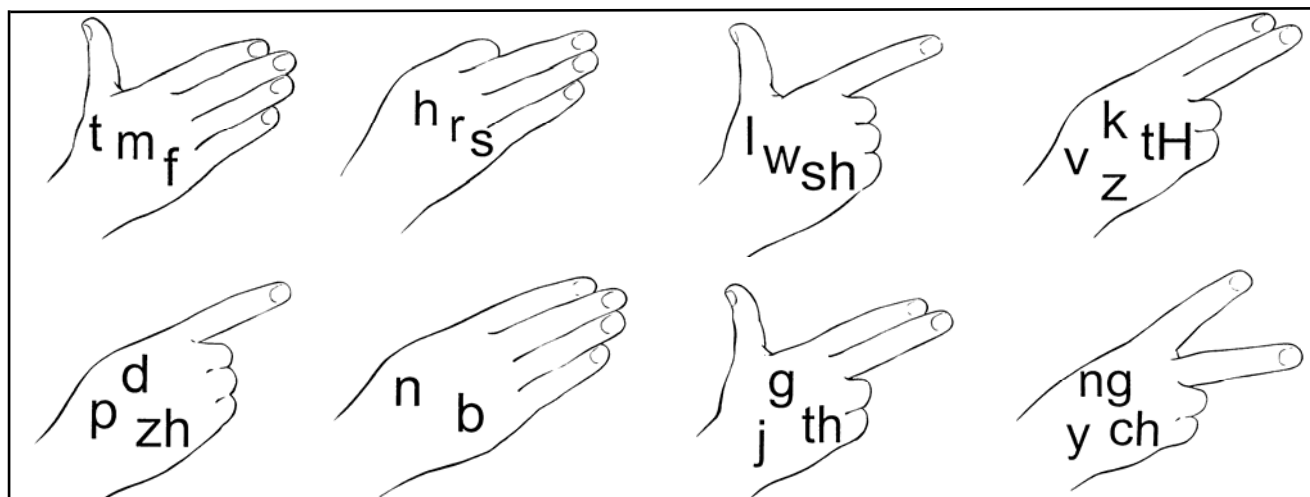
(The sounds are written in Dr. R. Orin Cornett's 'Fuhnetik Speling').

## Hand positions - to clarify vowel sounds



The English language also contains diphthongs where one vowel sound runs into another (e.g. ear, air, eye). Diphthongs are cued by moving the hand from one vowel position to another as appropriate.

## Handshapes - to clarify consonant sounds



The first handshape shown above (t m f) is also used with an isolated vowel - that is, a vowel not preceded by a consonant.

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