

## Charities for deaf people call for more see-through face masks

### Level 2 • Upper intermediate

#### 1 Warmer

During the coronavirus pandemic, many activities have been banned in order to protect people from the virus. Which of these did you miss (or do you still miss) the most? Rank them in order from 1 (most missed) to 6 (least missed).

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 1. _____ | a. travelling abroad                        |
| 2. _____ | b. going to class as a teacher or a student |
| 3. _____ | c. eating in restaurants                    |
| 4. _____ | d. meeting friends and family               |
| 5. _____ | e. travelling to work each day              |
| 6. _____ | f. shopping in department stores            |

#### 2 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

prototype	issue	outpatient	lip-reading	gesture
guidance	impact	tip	transparent	abuse

- An \_\_\_\_\_ is someone who receives medical treatment at a hospital but does not stay there overnight. (para 2)
- An \_\_\_\_\_ is a subject that people discuss or argue about. (para 3)
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is a movement that communicates a feeling or instruction. (para 3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the technique of looking at someone's lips to understand what they are saying because you cannot hear them. (para 3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ consists of angry, offensive comments. (para 4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ is advice about what you should do or how you should behave. (para 5)
- A \_\_\_\_\_ substance is clear or thin enough for you to see things through it. (para 7)
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is the first form of something new, made before it is produced in large quantities. (para 7)
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is a useful suggestion. (para 8)
- An \_\_\_\_\_ is the effect or influence that something has. (para 8)

#### 3 Find the information

Find the following information in the text as quickly as possible.

- How many people in the UK are deaf or have hearing loss?
- At the time the article was written, where did face coverings have to be worn in England?
- What percentage of people over 70 have hearing loss?
- What does BSL stand for?
- What three deaf-awareness tips are mentioned in the article?
- What is Holly Parker worried about?

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Nicola Davis

16 June, 2020

- 1 In the UK, deaf charities have said that see-through face masks should be widely available. They warn that the growing use of face coverings is causing communication difficulties for the 12 million people in the UK who are deaf or have hearing loss.
- 2 Face coverings must be worn in England on public transport and by hospital visitors and outpatients, and all hospital staff must wear surgical masks. Face coverings have also been recommended more widely, including in Scotland, in situations where social distancing is difficult.
- 3 “The main issue is that people who are deaf and have hearing loss rely heavily on visual clues for communication – that includes body language, gestures, facial expression and lip-reading,” said Ayla Ozmen, of Action on Hearing Loss. “British Sign Language (BSL) users also rely heavily on seeing lip patterns as well as facial expressions to understand BSL.”
- 4 People who are travelling on public transport in England with someone who relies on lip-reading do not have to wear face coverings, but Ozmen said many people don’t know about this rule, so people not wearing masks for a legitimate reason could face abuse.
- 5 And there are other problems, Ozmen said. She said that the rules about masks and face coverings in hospitals are in conflict with the obligation on health and social care providers to meet people’s communications needs. “There has been no guidance from the government on how to handle that conflict in both health settings and social-care settings,” she said. She added that more than 70% of people over 70 have hearing loss, so many people in hospital with coronavirus will experience difficulties in communication. “We absolutely understand the public health need for wearing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), but there is also a safety issue if people aren’t able to communicate,” said Ozmen.
- 6 Holly Parker is an 18-year-old from Essex who is very deaf and mainly relies on lip reading. She said she has had problems as a result of face coverings. “My main method of communication is taken away. In shops, I am no longer able to understand shopkeepers, and this makes me very anxious,” she said. She added that she was very worried about the prospect of going to university if face masks had to be used during practical lessons.
- 7 Deaf charities, including Action on Hearing Loss, said they welcomed the idea of transparent masks. Philip Gerrard, chief executive at Deaf Action, said the charity is testing several prototypes of transparent face masks. It hoped it would soon provide these to members of staff, clients and other people.
- 8 “We would also like to see the government support the development of deaf-friendly face masks in hospitals and care settings throughout the UK,” he said. Ian Noon, of the National Deaf Children’s Society, agreed. He added: “In the meantime, people can pick up some tips to follow when communicating with a deaf person: be patient, write things down or use gestures if necessary. This can have a big impact.”
- 9 The Deafness Research Centre at University College London also asks for greater awareness of the challenges around hearing difficulties and face masks. But it said transparent face shields were a better solution because then deaf people can see the whole face. But, it added, dialogue with deaf communities was very important. “Deaf and hard-of-hearing people should advise on design needs to ensure any products work properly for them.”

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#### 4 Comprehension check

Are these statements true (T) or false (F) according to the text?

1. Face masks are a problem for many deaf people because they rely on visual clues for communication.
2. People travelling with a deaf person on public transport have to wear face coverings.
3. Holly Parker has to wear a face mask, and shopkeepers can't understand what she is saying.
4. Transparent face masks would make life easier for deaf people.
5. If someone wears a transparent shield, you can see their whole face.
6. Deaf people should not be allowed to give advice on the design of face shields.

#### 5 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

1. a noun meaning *an organization to which you give money so that it can help people who are poor or ill, or need advice or support* (para 1)
2. a two-word adjectival phrase meaning *transparent* (para 1)
3. an adjective meaning *allowed by the law or correct according to the law* (para 4)
4. a three-word phrase meaning *not in agreement with* (para 5)
5. a noun meaning *something that you expect or know is going to happen in the future, or the thought of this* (para 6)
6. a suffix that is used with nouns to make a new adjective meaning that something helps a particular type of person (para 8)
7. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *learn* (para 8)
8. a three-word adjectival phrase meaning *unable to hear well* (para 9)

#### 6 Two-word phrases

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make expressions from the text.

- |             |               |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. facial   | a. mask       |
| 2. surgical | b. distancing |
| 3. widely   | c. loss       |
| 4. body     | d. available  |
| 5. social   | e. expression |
| 6. hearing  | f. language   |

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### 7 Word-building

Complete the table using words from the text.

	verb	noun
1.	use	
2.	develop	
3.	express	
4.	guide	
5.	solve	
6.	provide	(person)

### 8 Discussion

Discuss the statements.

- Face masks are a waste of time because they don't stop viruses from spreading.
- People shouldn't leave their homes during a pandemic.