

# **Increasing Accessibility for In-Person Library Instruction for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals During COVID-19**

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# Why is making instruction accessible important?

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- People intake information in a variety of different ways
- Accessible design provides a variety of ways for people to access information according to their needs
- By incorporating accessibility measures into our services, we can better serve all our patrons

# Issues with Masks

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- Masks are a great tool to prevent the spread of COVID-19

But...

- Masks cover facial expressions, which are a necessary component of communication via sign language
- Masks cover lips, preventing lip reading to better understand what is being said
- Masks muffle speech



Photo by [Charlotte May](#) from [Pexels](#)

# Clear Paneled Masks

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- Provide a clear window (made of PVC or Vinyl) to see lips and lower facial expressions
- However, clear paneled masks still present some challenges.



Image: Safe 'N' Clear "The Communicator" Mask

# Acoustic Effects of Masks

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- University of Illinois Augmented Listening Lab conducted experiments on how different mask types affect speech.
- Surgical masks and KN95 respirators dampened speech the least
- Clear paneled masks dampened speech the most, affecting high frequency sounds (“s”, “f”, “th”)

# Masks and Amplification

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- However, the use of clear paneled masks in combination with microphones can minimize sound distortion
- Lapel microphones work best with most masks
- Clear paneled masks with lapel microphones can increase visual cues while not sacrificing sound quality

# Other Tips

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- Decrease background noise
- Repeat questions or comments from audience into microphone
- Provide captioning
- Provide audience access to presentation materials

# Resources

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## Impact of Masks on Communication for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People

- [“Double Masking” and Hearing Loss: New Pandemic Realities Pose Additional Challenges for People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#) by American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
- Ten Hulzen, R. D & Fabry, D. A. (2020). [Impact of Hearing Loss and Universal Face Masking in the COVID-19 Era](#). *Mayo Clinic Proceedings*, 95(10), 2069-2072. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mayocp.2020.07.027>

## Acoustic Effects of Masks

- [Face masks make it harder to hear, but amplification can help](#) by Illinois Augmented Listening Laboratory



# Resources - continued

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## Clear Masks

- [Safe 'N' Clear](#)
- [ClearMask](#)

## Making Presentations Accessible

- [How to Make Your Presentations Accessible to All](#) by W3C WAI
- [Present with real-time, automatic captions or subtitles in PowerPoint](#) by Microsoft