Clear Communication Principles

DO
Find out the person’s preferred communication method.
Make sure you have the person’s attention before you begin to speak.
Switch off background noise such as radios or TVs. Move to a quieter place.
Face the deaf person at all times, position yourself approximately between 3-6 feet away and on the same level – both standing or both seated.
Use a firm clear voice.
Make sure the deaf person knows what you are talking about – it will help them anticipate the likely vocabulary. Let them know if you are going to change the subject.
Ensure that your face is in a good light – move if necessary or switch lights on.
Speak slightly more slowly than usual, but not too slowly.
Try to use an expressive face and natural gesture.
Come to the point quickly.
Speak in sentences or phrases so the lip reader can gain some clues from the other words in the sentence. Limit single words to “yes” or “no”.
Check the deaf person has understood before continuing.
Use plain straightforward language. Using technical words or jargon makes lip reading much more difficult.

DON’T
Shout – this distorts both your face and your voice and can be physically painful to a person using a hearing aid.
Over-exaggerate your lip movements.
Slow your speech too much. This creates extra syllables which confusing to a lip reader.
Drop your voice at the end of a sentence.
Cover your face or mouth with your hands, smoke or eat whilst speaking.
Turn away or look down while speaking. Speech movements are extremely rapid and can be easily missed.
Give up and say “it doesn’t matter” – use a pencil and paper if necessary.
Use long sentences – get to the point.
Remember lip reading is tiring and have patience if communication takes a little longer.