

We've all had days when our hearing's gone a bit murky because we got water in our ear in the shower. Or maybe you remember falling asleep after a loud music event with your ears still ringing, wondering if you'll wake up the next day with everything back to normal. For around 285 million people, these kinds of problems are ever-present. Many people who visit your website will have trouble hearing in one way or another. They may even be profoundly deaf. If you have animations, videos or unrealistically rely upon sounded forms of communication without providing a written equivalent, you are going to irritate a lot of people who will take their custom elsewhere.

If you can't hear very well, you may use one or many of these following technologies; subtitling services (which Youtube now endeavours to provide), hearing aids, sound enhancers, programs to winnow out background noise, programs that create avatars to sign Sign Language or provide a mouth to lip-read from.

Making your site hearing-impaired-friendly isn't always as simple as dealing with other access issues. However, you certainly can ensure that there is a transcript of any spoken word or video. If you can't provide a transcript, a short account of the details or a link to a page that doesn't require the audio/visual is also sufficient. If you offer customer service contacts, have some that work via online chat or email, rather than merely telephone operators. If you have alerts that pop up on your site, be sure to provide a visual equivalent alongside any beeping noises. It is also worth remembering that, for some who are deaf, your language may be their second language, with Sign Language being the first. Converting your site to Sign Language is likely to be beyond your scope but it is still a consideration to bear in mind.

As with all preparation for website accessibility, keep your code clean and your content and presentation separate through systems like CSS and updating your HTML. With a little extra consideration, you can expand the number of prospects available to you and make your user experience a great one for all interested parties!