# Facial Coverings Pros and Cons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surgical Mask</th>
<th>Cloth Mask</th>
<th>Cloth Mask with Window</th>
<th>Face Shield</th>
<th>Humanity Shield</th>
<th>Clear Mask</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROS:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Minimal impact on speech clarity/loudness</td>
<td>- Readily available to purchase</td>
<td>- Allows access for speechreading &amp; limited facial cues</td>
<td>- Allows for full access for speechreading &amp; facial cues</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Cost effective</td>
<td>- Can make yourself</td>
<td>- Washable/reusable</td>
<td>- Can be washable/reusable</td>
<td>- Covers both nose, mouth, and below chin</td>
<td>- Minimal fogging</td>
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<tr>
<td>- May provide improved speech perception when used with remote mic, as compared to mask only</td>
<td>- Improved speech perception when used with remote mic, as compared to mask only</td>
<td>- Improved speech perception when used with remote mic, as compared to mask only</td>
<td>- Minimal fogging</td>
<td>- Notable improvement in speech perception when used with remote mic, as compared to shield alone</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CONS:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- No access to speechreading/facial cues</td>
<td>- Notable decrease in listener’s speech perception abilities and causes some sound reduction</td>
<td>- Decrease in listener’s speech perception abilities</td>
<td>- Health concerns due to opening below chin</td>
<td>- Decrease in listener’s speech perception abilities and/or sound reduction</td>
<td>- Somewhat uncomfortable</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Decrease in listener’s speech perception abilities</td>
<td>- Sound reduction (~5 dB)²</td>
<td>- Sound reduction (~12-21 dB)²³⁴</td>
<td>- &quot;CDC does not recommend use of shields for everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings due to a lack of evidence of effectiveness for source control.&quot;¹</td>
<td>- High initial cost, however, it’s reusable</td>
<td>- Foam portion difficult to clean/intended for one-time use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sound reduction (~5 dB)²</td>
<td>- No access to speechreading/facial cues</td>
<td>- Some facial cues still limited</td>
<td>- &quot;CDC does not recommend use of shields for everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings due to a lack of evidence of effectiveness for source control.&quot;¹</td>
<td>- Not cost effective if one-time use</td>
<td>- Not cost effective if one-time use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Intended for limited/one-time use</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Window may fog up</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Notable decrease in listener’s speech perception and some sound reduction</td>
<td>- When used with remote mic, causes significant reduction in speech perception³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What works best for one, does not work best for all! Please work with your student who is deaf or hard of hearing to determine which facial covering provides the best ACCESS!

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**Facial Covering Information**

**Did You Know?**

- Children spend approximately 70% of their school day listening to oral instruction (Flexer, 2016).
- Everyone experiences some degradation of the speech signal with the use of masks and physical distancing. These effects are compounded for those who are Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing (Educational Audiology Association, 2020).
- Depending on the type of mask, there can be a 3-21 dB attenuation of the speaker’s voice in the mid to high frequency range, which is a very important range for speech understanding. “In short, the speech quality degradation, in combination with room noise/reverberation and the absence of visual cues, renders speech close to unintelligible for many” (Atcherson, Finley, McDowell, & Watson, 2020; Goldin, Weinstein, & Shiman, 2020, p.8).
- The greater the distance, the more attenuation of the speech signal. Specifically, for every doubling of distance, sound decreases by 6 dB, resulting in less audibility of the speaker’s voice.
- Clear face coverings can provide an improvement in communication by providing visual cues.

**Additional accommodations may be needed, including but not limited to:**

- Strategic seating in the classroom
- Electronic accessibility (captioning) or ASL Interpreting
- FM/DM/Remote microphone systems
- Use speech-to-text apps, write notes on paper, or use mobile devices
- Reduce background noise
- Social-emotional monitoring
- Frequent comprehension checks and/or listening checks
- Appropriate lighting
- Pre-teaching material, note outlines, or note-takers
- Good communication strategies: obtain individual’s attention before speaking, speak clearly but don’t exaggerate, speak at a natural rate of speech, always face the individual when speaking, rephrasing, etc.

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**How Do We Decide What is Best For the Child?**

- Determine what the child relies on when communicating.
  1. Does the child rely heavily on visual cues?
  2. Does the child have access to oral information using auditory input only?
  3. Does the child communicate using both visual and auditory information?
- Try various face coverings and ask the child what he/she prefers.
- Ask your SDSD Outreach Consultant to complete a Functional Listening Evaluation (FLE) using various facial coverings.
- Ask an audiologist to test multiple face coverings utilizing booth testing and child’s FM/DM system.

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**Information is subject to change based on evolving research.**