



Best Teaching Practices When Working with Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Tips for Positive Communication

- Attract the attention of the hearing-impaired student before speaking with a cue such as a tap on the shoulder or wave.
- Face the person while talking (try to avoid facing the chalkboard while speaking).
- Speak clearly and naturally without exaggerating lip movements or volume.
- Avoid standing in front of a light source like a window — the glare from behind makes it difficult to read lips.

Suggested Classroom Accommodations

- Extended time for taking tests in a quiet place.
- Seat hearing-impaired students where there is an unobstructed view of the professor.
- Try to repeat comments and questions asked by other students who are not in the range of vision of the hearing-impaired student.
- Use visual media (especially overhead projectors or PowerPoint) as much as possible — they are effective tools.
- Prepare a brief course outline, a syllabus, and a list of learning objectives for the class ahead of time.
- Assure the conveyance to hearing-impaired students of important information like class cancellations, class relocation, assignments, and tests by stating the details in writing in a hand-out and on the chalkboard.
- Establish a system of getting messages to hearing-impaired students — especially if a note taker or interpreter is not given advance notice of class cancellations and changes.
- Be prepared to reword sentences when a hearing-impaired student does not understand what is being said. (Persons with hearing impairments, like most of us, are not eager to draw undue attention to themselves; therefore, they may smile in acknowledgment when in fact they have not understood.)
- Facing the class and engaging people with eye contact;
- Allowing time after sentences, or between thoughts, or after a question/comment. This will allow the interpreter to catch up, especially if you are asking the class if they have any questions.
- Keep in mind that ASL interpreters are about 1 to 5 seconds behind you as you speak. This is because they are usually waiting for the idea behind your words so they can interpret it. ASL is not a word-for-word translation of your speech.



Etiquette When Using a Sign Language Interpreter

- Look at the person when signing/speaking to them, not at the interpreter.
- Look at the person who is signing/speaking to you, even though this may feel awkward since the message is coming through an interpreter.
- Address the person directly: Appropriate communication: "Where were you born?" Inappropriate communication: "Ask him where he was born."
- When possible, please share any notes, outlines, or handouts with the interpreter in advance, or at the very least, provide a copy of these items to the interpreter during the assignment. If, during the assignment, you plan to turn down the lights, remember to leave enough lighting on the interpreter.
- The interpreter may ask for specific seating/positioning to facilitate the best viewing angles for himself/herself and for the client.
- Sign/speak in your normal tone of voice at a moderate pace.
- The interpreter will tell you if you need to pause, slow down or repeat the information.
- People sometimes read aloud in a different manner than they typically sign or speak. When reading extensively from written materials, consider supplying a copy to the audience and the interpreter.
- Be aware of the pace of your speech, especially when reading aloud.
- Be aware that the interpreter should interpret everything said, so avoid discussing subjects you don't wish the deaf/hard of hearing person to know.
- When separated from the person you are communicating with, avoid giving messages to the interpreter to relay at a later time to the individual.
- Relax. If you are unsure of the appropriate way to proceed in a particular situation, just ask.
- Please do not ask questions directed at the interpreter during your lecture. They need to be able to focus and concentrate on what you are saying and can't answer questions at that time.