

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATING THROUGH AN INTERPRETER

1. Speak directly to your student, not the interpreter. Maintain eye contact with your student to convey a feeling of direct communication.
2. Remember that the interpreter is a few words behind the speaker. Give the interpreter time to finish before you ask questions so that your student can ask questions or join in the discussion.
3. Students will need to sit close to the speaker for maximum intake of visual cues.
4. The speaker should face the class as much as possible and speak clearly and audibly. It is helpful to all students if the instructor repeats questions asked by the class.
5. Avoid asking the interpreter to “tell her...” this is considered rude or disrespectful by students who have hearing impairments.
6. Never say “never mind” or “it’s not important.” The message conveyed to a deaf person is that s/he is not important.
7. The interpreter is not permitted to participate in the conversation and views interpreting situations as confidential.
8. Interpreters are not the only means of communication with the deaf. If the interpreter can’t be there at the beginning of the session, use other resources such as visual aids, body language, writing, etc.
9. Interpreters neither add to nor delete from any interaction which takes place. Everything you say will be interpreted. If you are using a sign language interpreter everything signed by your student will be voiced.
10. Interpreters may not counsel you or your student.
11. Only in special circumstances may interpreters provide tutorial assistance to students.
12. Use visual aids carefully. Too much movement between the teacher, interpreter and the visual aids can be confusing.

13. Whenever possible, supply a list of words or terms in advance to your student and interpreter. This eliminates confusion when acquiring new concepts and certainly facilitates the learning process. You may find this helpful for the entire class.
14. Many students with hearing disabilities need to receive assignments in written form in order to ensure proper understanding of the requirements.
15. The student with a hearing disability may need a notetaker so that s/he can give full attention to watching the speaker or interpreter.
16. Organize the material in small units. Do not present the student with a complete lesson and then ask them if they understand the material.
17. Speak in short sentences. Using sentences with several subordinate clauses loaded with strings of modifiers is confusing. Eliminate unnecessary words from your verbal and written communication. Avoid using idioms.
18. The interpreter or your student may ask you to slow down or repeat a word or sentence for clarification. Likewise, be sure to ask for something to be repeated if it is unclear.
19. It is preferable for only one person to speak at a time so that the interpreter can follow the conversation accurately. In group settings, allow time for the speakers to be identified before they begin to speak.
20. The instructor should give a deaf student adequate time to respond to questions or participate in class discussions. There is a lag time between the end of a comment and the end of the interpretation into sign language.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact Ryan Saddler at the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities, 333-6161.