

WORKING WITH STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

Below are some best practices for working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students. Please keep in mind that every student is unique and not all recommendations will work for all students.

- You generally do not need to slow down or alter your speech pattern or vocabulary to accommodate a DHH student. The student or interpreter will let you know if you need to slow down. Some students may need you to minimize moving around the classroom.
- Work with the student and his/her interpreter to assure a proper seating arrangement that maintains the best sight lines, along with the least distractions (often this is a front row seat).
- Since an overhead projector or screen projector (e.g., PowerPoint) allows you to face the students, it is preferable to a white board. If you use a whiteboard, finish writing before turning to the class to discuss the material rather than speaking while facing away from class.
- It is helpful if you write out key names and terms to be discussed that day on the board, overhead, or in a handout because the interpreter will be finger spelling or keying these terms. This is especially important for difficult-to-spell words.
- Because it is difficult to write while someone is interpreting for you, it is helpful for you to write on the board any important reminders, assignments, due dates, schedule changes, etc.
- Because DHH students cannot watch an interpreter while reading, give students a few moments to read handouts before discussing the material on them, (i.e., try to avoid saying, "As you look this over, let me mention...").
- Before answering students' questions, repeat, or rephrase them. If the question comes from the back of the room, the student and/or interpreter might not have heard it completely.
- During group discussions, ask students to speak one at a time and acknowledge/identify them or have them acknowledge/identify themselves before they comment. Asking students to raise hands before being called on tends to promote fairer participation for DHH students than allowing students just to start speaking.
- Keep in mind the slight lag time involved in interpreting when you prompt the class for any type of response; wait just a few seconds longer for responses than you normally might.
- Understand that most DHH students will be using a note-taker since it's difficult to read lips or focus on the interpreter and take notes at the same time.

The following are specific activities/actions it is generally best to avoid with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students:

- Don't exaggerate your mouth movements, speak louder than normal, or direct additional attention towards a DHH student. Do try to keep an eye out for expressions of frustration, confusion, and inattention in such students. Feel free to talk with the student outside of class if you sense any problems.
- Don't turn to the interpreter and say, "Ask her to do the next problem," or "Is he getting everything?" Please speak and ask questions directly to the DHH student. Even questions like, "Am I going too fast?" can be directed to the student.

- Try not to ask students to fill out forms or sign attendance sheets while you are lecturing. Consider using a class list that can be quickly marked or discretely start a sign-in sheet with the DHH student. Start lecturing when he/she is done.
- Try to avoid large podiums, microphones or other materials that obscure or block your face and mouth since many DHH students use facial and lip-reading cues to follow what is being said (even when using a sign language interpreter).

TEST-TAKING, ASSESSMENTS, GRADING, EVALUATIONS

- Please be sure that instructions/directions are written on exams. Because the service provider will often not stay around during an exam period, write important information (e.g., time remaining, corrections, additional instructions, etc.) on the board or overhead.
- You should grade DHH students the same as any other students and hold them to the same standard. Assignments/requirements that need to be modified due to the student's disability should involve the same amount of work and degree of academic rigor as the original assignment. "But, I spelled that wrong on the exam because my interpreter did" is not an acceptable excuse if the student would have also seen the terminology elsewhere.

WHAT INTERPRETERS WILL DO

Interpreters interpret auditory stimuli into American Sign Language (ASL), or translate auditory stimuli into sign communication, word for word, idea for idea, depending on the need of the student. The interpreter will sign what the instructor is saying, any comments from the students in class, and any extraneous noises such as overhead aircraft. They will:

- Sit or stand near the instructor in order to both understand what is being spoken, and to provide to the student visual access of both the instructor and the interpreter at the same time. This enables the student to be able to read the signs of the interpreter, and to observe facial expressions and body language of the instructor. This provides the student additional information such as tone and mood of the instructor.
- Voice what the DHH student is signing.
- Keep information presented during class or conferences confidential.

WHAT INTERPRETERS WON'T DO

- Add or delete information/explain, define, or repeat information.
- Take responsibility for students' absences or classroom performances.
- Take notes or pass out papers.
- Provide non-interpreting services during tests.
- Participate in class discussions or activities.
- Attend class when the student is absent.

** Adapted from the University of Virginia Teaching Resource Center