

An Instructor's Role in Working with Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students

Helpful Tips:

1. Use the blackboard or PowerPoint to present new information in a visual way. New vocabulary should be presented in print as well as verbal form.
2. Identify speakers during group discussions to enable the student to follow and participate in discussions.
3. Minimize movements which distract or block the student's view of you.
4. Provide the student with an outline of the class format so he/she can follow the process.
5. Address student directly.
6. If the student works with an oral or sign language interpreter, look directly at the student not the interpreter when talking. The interpreter will sign what is being said. It is important that you watch the student's expressions in response to his/her statements and questions. This will assist in communication.
7. Speak at a normal rate. Do not exaggerate the movement of your mouth in an effort to clarify. This helps the interpreter and the student. The interpreter is there to relay messages back and forth. If feelings are expressed, the interpreter is obligated to interpret what is said.
8. It may be necessary to recruit a hearing student to be a note-taker for the Deaf/hard of hearing student during class lectures. Disability Services may ask for your assistance in finding a peer volunteer.

What is an Educational Interpreter?

An educational interpreter is a person hired to facilitate communication between a Deaf/hard of hearing student and hearing individuals in a classroom setting. The educational interpreter is responsible for "translating" from a spoken message to a signed language and from a signed message to a verbal one. The interpreter will sign to the student everything that is said by the instructor and/or other students or guests in the classroom. The interpreter will also speak to express what the student communicates in sign language so the other students and the teacher can understand the student.

It has been demonstrated that the presence of an interpreter in a classroom does not have a detrimental effect on the instructional process. Although hearing students may show initial attention to the sign language, the interpreter soon is accepted as a routine aspect of instruction.