

Accommodations In The Classroom

Serving Deaf & Hard of Hearing Students

I Have My First Deaf/Hard of Hearing Student— What Do I Do Now?

Like your hearing students, deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) students are as individual as fingerprints – their language, culture, mode of expression, and learning style all impact the type of accommodations they may request. Below are various types of common accommodations for DHH students:



Interpreters: There are different kinds of interpreters: ASL, sign language, oral, and tactile/close vision.

- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters convey messages using sign language. In general, sign language interpreters may employ a mixture of English, ASL, and various sign systems.
- Oral interpreters silently repeat what the speaker is saying for lip-readers.
- Tactile/close vision interpreters work with individuals who are deaf-blind.
- Interpreters are professionals, not classroom aides; they do not tutor students or impart additional information. Their sole focus is facilitating communication in your classroom.

Captioning/Speech-to-Text/Transcription: Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART or verbatim translation) as well as C-Print and TypeWell (meaning-for-meaning translation) are options. Some students choose verbatim: this includes nearly every word spoken including false starts, misspeaks and filler phrases. Other students prefer shorter meaning-for-meaning where the captionist eliminates non-essential wording. Visual media used in your classroom must be captioned so deaf and hard of hearing students can access course contents.

Notetaking: It is close to impossible to watch a teacher and interpreter and to simultaneously take accurate class notes. In its most basic form, a qualified notetaker is intelligent, reliable and able to produce legible, clearly organized, accurate notes.



Helpful Communication Hints In The Classroom

- Speak at natural pace: A pace that is too slow is as difficult to interpret as a pace that is too fast.
- Build in time for PowerPoints: The visual learner cannot watch the interpreter and look at a PowerPoint at the same time. After introducing a PowerPoint, allow time for the student to obtain the information conveyed and then focus on the screen before you proceed.
- Refrain from talking during written class work unless you're sure you have the student's attention.
- Have all videos/films captioned: Many new videos/ films are already captioned. Nevertheless, always check to make sure: 1) they are indeed captioned; and 2) you know how to turn on captions should the media be "closed captioned."
- Learn how to orchestrate an interpreter and a student-friendly class discussion. Ask all students to raise their hands and be recognized before speaking. Wait until the interpreter has finished interpreting the entire chunk of information (i.e., a discussion point), so that the student has time to process the chunk of information and raise their hand to participate in the discussion.
- Speak directly to the deaf individual in the first person. When talking to your student, look at the student, and not at the interpreter. Use "I" and "you" rather than such third-person statements as "ask her" or "tell him."
- Plan breaks as necessary. Visual learning is challenging and can cause eye fatigue. The task of interpreting is cognitively and physically demanding. The allowance of breaks is especially important when there is only one interpreter in the class.
- Avoid standing in front of a light source (windows, projected images). The backlighting or glare can make it difficult for the deaf or hard of hearing student to see your face clearly.
- Provide a written outline of the main topics to be discussed. This is especially helpful for individuals who depend on speech reading to pick up on key words in a conversation.
- Use visual aids, gestures, and body language when appropriate. The old saying that one picture is worth a thousand words is very true.