

Communication Tip Sheet

Working with Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

There is no “one size fits all” approach to communication, nor is there a “typical” individual who is deaf or hard of hearing. Each individual is unique and brings their own set of communication needs. It is important not to make assumptions about an individual’s communication. You can simply ask the individual about their preferred communication needs.

1. If student who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing is in your course, here are a few things to remember:
 - a. Speak clearly. Do not yell, exaggerate, or over pronounce. This distorts lip movements and makes speechreading more difficult.
 - b. Avoid turning away from your audience, walking around, or talking to the board as you write. Those students who do speechread need to be able to see your face to understand you. Also, encourage students who are presenting in front of the class to do the same.
 - c. Do not put your hands in front of your face, chew gum, etc.
 - d. Avoid standing in front of a light source. Backlighting or glare can make it difficult to see your face clearly.
 - e. First repeat, then try to rephrase a thought if you have problems being understood, rather than repeating the same words again. Some words are more difficult to understand than others. Rephrasing allows for an opportunity to catch what was missed. (Approx 30% of English speech sounds are visible on the mouth. Speechreading involves use of residual hearing, watching body language/facial expressions and the individual’s knowledge of the topic.)

2. If a student who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing is using the services of an interpreter or captionist, here are a few things to remember:
 - a. **If you have a question or would like to address the student, speak directly to the student, NOT the interpreter.** Face the student and speak to them in a normal manner.
 - b. Allow extra time when asking questions in class or facilitating a discussion. Keep in mind the interpreter or captionist is a few words behind you. Give the service provider time to finish so that the student can ask questions or respond to your comments.
 - c. The interpreters or captionists may not be familiar with the material being discussed in class. Please allow them access to your notes, PowerPoints, videos, etc. so they can be prepared for the lecture.
 - d. If a student has asked to talk with you without their interpreter present, don’t be afraid to meet with them. You can use a pen/pencil or paper. Students can also type notes in their smart phone to communicate. The student will let you know their preferred method.
 - e. Line of sight is important. The student will choose a seat that enables them to see you, the whiteboard, the PowerPoint, and the interpreters. Please keep this in mind if you decide to move students around for any reason.