

Communication Tip Sheet

Working with Students who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Interpreters and Captionists

There is no “one size fits all” approach to communication, nor is there a “typical” individual who is deaf or hard of hearing. Everyone 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 student about their preferred communication needs.

- Face the student and speak to them clearly to facilitate lip/speech reading. Speak directly to the student, NOT the interpreter.
- Avoid turning away from your audience, walking around, and talking to the board as you write.
- Line of sight is important. The student will choose a seat that enables them to see you, the whiteboard, PowerPoint, and the interpreters. Please keep this in mind if you decide to move students around for any reason.
- 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. Repeating questions and comments from other students can ensure all communication is interpreted.
- The interpreters or captionists may not be familiar with the material being discussed in class. Allow them access to your notes, PowerPoints, videos, etc. so they can be prepared for the lecture.
- **If a student has asked to talk with you without their interpreter present**, you can use pen and paper, phone, computer, or tablet to communicate when needed. When speaking to students clarify concepts by rephrasing if necessary, as approximately only 30% of English vocabulary is clearly discernable. Speechreading involves use of residual hearing, watching body language/facial expressions and the individual’s knowledge of the topic.