

TEACHING DEAF OR HEARING IMPAIRED STUDENTS

DEAFNESS: A deaf person is one who, even with a hearing aid, cannot understand the spoken language. Deafness can occur before or after birth by malformation or severe damage to the auditory nerve, Rubella, high fevers, or industrial accidents.

HARD-OF-HEARING: A hard-of-hearing individual is one who, with amplification, can understand most spoken communication. The causes include the onset of old age or those named above with less extreme damage.

HEARING AIDS: Most hard-of-hearing, and many deaf students, use hearing aids. These are usually set either behind the ear and/or are connected to an ear-mold that fits directly in the ear. These devices can add up to 25db to a person's hearing thereby contributing substantially to voice reception, but, unfortunately, also amplifying distortions. It is, therefore, beneficial to use a normal tone of voice when communicating with a hearing-impaired student. Keep in mind that there will still be spoken sounds that are not heard.

LIP READING: Most hearing-impaired people lip-read to some extent. However, due to the structure of articulated speech, approximately fifty percent of the sounds either do not show at all on the lips or are identical to other sounds. For example, words such as "bats" and "mad" look the same to the deaf person. It is, therefore, important to articulate clearly without distraction and at a normal pace. Any exaggeration distorts the patterns the deaf person has learned. It is also helpful to check and see if asking the person to repeat an instruction back or asking the student if he/she understands you. The deaf read facial and body expressions very dearly.

SOME COMMON LIMITATIONS:

- A hearing impairment is a major communication disorder. A deaf person's language is frequently substantially below that of a hearing person of the same age and experience.
- Speech is an accomplishment gained after years of difficult study. Certain speech sounds (such as the "s") are very difficult to make for the hearing impaired. The rhythm of a deaf person's speech may not be "natural". Because the student has spent a great deal of his life learning how to speak, he/she is most appreciative of those who will take the time to listen.

An interpreter will assist most hearing-impaired students in the classroom on an appointment situation. This individual will translate with factual and emotional accuracy the content of all communication into sign language. He will also interpret whatever the deaf person says into English.

The student will also normally require the services of a note-taker.

What an instructor can do:

1. Seat the student, interpreter and note-taker in clear view of each other and yourself.
2. Whenever possible, face the student and try not to obscure your face with hands or objects.
3. Use media to illustrate principles. Even a simple diagram on the board helps.

The role of the interpreter:

1. Because of the small percentage of words that can be lip-read, an interpreter is often essential.
2. The interpreter is NOT capable of teaching the course and will NOT attempt to do this. The interpreter facilitates communication between the instructor and deaf student.
3. You are able to converse with your deaf students at any time through their interpreter.
4. Occasionally glance at the interpreter. If you note strain or lack of hand movement, you are possibly speaking too quickly and the interpreter may be behind.
5. Not all words have signs. If you use technical and complex terms, all must be spelled out on the fingers and this takes time.
6. Not all deaf students are at the same English language comprehension level. For many American Sign Language is the primary language; Standard English is not the main method for communication. Consequently, depending on the student, the interpreter may need to simplify phrases or sentences.
7. Do not hesitate to ask questions of the student, privately if you like, thus determining for yourself if you have been understood.

8. The student may hesitate to participate in discussions until he feels confident and secure in the situation. You can help establish a rapport by including him/her in the usual before and after class chatter. He/She will probably be more relaxed at that time.
9. An interpreter is unable to interpret more than one speaker at a time, so a class discussion can sometimes be confusing to the deaf student.
10. Make sure your interpreter and student are seated close to you and that the student is able to see you clearly.
11. Don't worry about the initial distraction to the rest of the class of moving hands. Research studies have proven that this distraction becomes minimal or non-existent as the semester progresses.
12. The hearing students are curious; perhaps the beginning of the semester is a good time to let them ask questions of the deaf student and the interpreter. Studies show that this question period satisfies curiosity and focuses attention once again on the instructor who may gently remind the class that the interpreter is not teaching the course.
13. The interpreter is not permitted to discuss a student's progress, attendance, or classroom behavior with the instructor. These concerns may be directed to the student through the instructor with the interpreter facilitating the communication or to DSPS.

INFORMATION FOR INSTRUCTORS WITH DEAF STUDENTS IN THEIR CLASSES

Each faculty member has made a commitment to the individuals he/she encounters in the classroom. It is his/her aim to communicate clearly and to encourage mutual growth through professor-student interaction. However, with the deaf student who is isolated, for the most part, from the world of sound and must depend primarily on visual clues, effective communication becomes difficult. To aid the instructor in his/her endeavor to provide the best learning situation for the deaf student, DSPS has organized this list of suggestions.

This list is designed to familiarize the instructor with some of the special problems for deaf students and offer ways in which these problems might be handled. Each instructor is encouraged to familiarize himself with the entire list and to incorporate into his teaching techniques as many suggestions as he deems appropriate.

ONE-TO-ONE COMMUNICATION:

1. It is important to have the student's attention before speaking. The deaf student cannot hear the usual call to attention. He may need a tap on the shoulder, or wave, or other signals to catch his eye.
2. Speak slowly and clearly, enunciating each word, but without exaggerating or over pronouncing. Although it is necessary to speak slowly and clearly, exaggeration and overemphasis distorts lip movements, making lip-reading more difficult. Try to enunciate each word, but without force or tension. Short sentences are easier to understand than long sentences.
3. Look directly at the student while speaking. Even a slight turn of the head can obscure the student's vision, making lip-reading more difficult. Avoid holding hands and books where they hide your face.
4. Try to maintain eye contact with the student. Deaf students, like most students, prefer the feeling of direct communication. Eye contact establishes this feeling. Even in the presence of an interpreter, try to communicate to him. The student can then turn to the interpreter as he feels the need.
5. Try to rephrase a thought rather than repeating the same words. Sometimes particular combinations of lip movements are very difficult for a student to lip-read. If he does not understand you, try to rephrase the sentence.

CLASSROOM SITUATIONS:

1. The student should be seated to his best advantage. Generally this is up to the student. It is very helpful if the instructor will assist the student to select an appropriate seat if he fails to do so.
2. Try to avoid standing with your back to a window or other light sources. Looking at someone standing in front of a light source practically blinds the deaf student. Lip reading is difficult, if not impossible, since the speaker's face is left in a shadow.
3. Notify the interpreter in advance when you plan to use materials that require special lighting. Since it is impossible to lip-read in the dark, the interpreter must have advance notice so necessary lighting can be provided.

4. A brief outline would aid the interpreter and the student to follow the lecture. It is very helpful to a deaf student to know in advance what will be studied next. He will then have a chance to read ahead and study vocabulary. After the lecture, he can better organize his notes.
5. Try to present new vocabulary in advance. If this is impossible, try to write new vocabulary on the chalkboard or overhead projector since it is difficult, if not impossible, to lip-read or fingerspell the unfamiliar.
6. Visual aids are a tremendous help to deaf students. Since vision is a deaf person's primary channel to receive information, a teaching aid that he can see may help him assimilate this information. Make full use of chalkboards, overhead projectors, films, diagrams, charts, etc.
7. Try to avoid unnecessary pacing and speaking while writing on the chalkboard. It is difficult to lip-read a person in motion and impossible to read from behind. It is preferable to write or draw on the chalkboard, then face the class and explain the work. The overhead projector adapts readily to this type of situation.
8. Slowing the pace of communication often helps to facilitate comprehension. Speakers tend to quicken their pace when familiar with the material. In addition, there is an unavoidable time lag in the presentation when an interpreter is involved. Try to allow a little extra time for the student to ask or answer questions since he has less time to assimilate the material and to respond.
9. When vital information is presented, try to make sure the deaf student isn't left out. Write on the chalkboard any changes in class time, examination dates, special assignments, additional instructions, etc. In lab or studio situations, allow extra time when pointing out the location of materials, referring to manuals or texts, etc., since the deaf student must look, then return his attention for further instruction.
10. In the absence of an interpreter, questions or statements from the back of the room should be repeated. Deaf students and hearing impaired students are cut off from whatever happens that is not in their visual area. Since it is often necessary to know the question in order to fully understand the answer, questions or statements from the back of the room should be repeated. Be certain to use the assistive listening device for the hearing impaired student.

11. If the student is clearly having difficulty in following the class and you feel an interpreter is necessary, contact Disabled Student Programs & Services at ext. 5861.