



Tips for Instructors: Communicating with Deaf Students

- 1) Look directly at the student while speaking. Even a slight turn of the head can obscure the student's vision. Other distracting factors affecting communication includes mustaches, obscured lips, and habits such as pencil chewing or putting hands in front of the face.
- 2) Speak clearly; exaggeration and over-emphasis of words distort lip movements making speech reading more difficult.
- 3) It is important to have the student's attention first before speaking. The student cannot hear the usual call to attention; they may need a tap on the shoulder, a wave of the hand, or other visual signals to gain attention.
- 4) Try to maintain eye contact with the student. Eye contact helps convey the feeling of direct communication. If an interpreter is present, continue to talk directly to the deaf person if the need arises.
- 5) Try to re-phrase a thought rather than repeating the same words. Sometimes a group of lip-movements is difficult to speech read. If the person does not understand you, try to re-state the sentence.
- 6) Don't be embarrassed about communicating via paper and pencil. Getting the message across is more important than the medium used.
- 7) When communicating with a deaf student, is a good idea to remember that intelligence, personality, age of onset of deafness, language background, listening skills, lip reading, and speech abilities all vary with each deaf person, just as the skills and personalities of hearing people vary.
- 8) Every deaf person will communicate in a different way. Some will use a combination of sign language, finger spelling, speaking, or writing. In addition, some will use body language and facial expressions to supplement their interactions. In any case, conveying the message is more important than how the message was conveyed.
- 9) The proper term for an individual with a hearing loss using sign language is "deaf" or "hard of hearing," depending on the amount of hearing loss. Please refrain from using "hearing impaired"
- 10) Use as many visual clues as possible. Deaf students likes it when visuals are used as supporting materials. (i.e. charts, pictures, write new or unusual vocabulary on the chalkboard, overhead projector, etc.)
- 11) Treat the deaf and hard of hearing students as you would any other students. They should be held to the same standards as stated in the class syllabus.