

Deaf and Hearing Impaired Students

Deaf or hard of hearing students, like hearing students, vary to some degree in their communication skills. Factors such as personality, degree of deafness, age at onset, and family environment all affect the kind of communication the student uses. As a result of these and other variables, a deaf student may use a number of communication modes.

Sign Language

One form of communication used by many, but not all, deaf and hard of hearing persons is American Sign Language, or "manual" communication. In sign language, thoughts are expressed through a vocabulary of hand and arm movements, positions, and gestures. The intensity and repetition of the movements and the facial expressions accompanying the movements are also important elements of manual communication. Finger spelling consists of various finger and hand positions for each of the letters of the alphabet.

Interpreters

In the classroom, many students who are deaf will use an interpreter to enable them to understand what is being said. There are two types of interpreters - oral and manual. The oral interpreter "mouths" what is being said while the manual interpreter uses sign language. The two methods are often used in combination. There is a time lag, which will vary in length depending upon the situation, between the spoken word and the interpretation or translation. Thus, a deaf or hard of hearing student's contribution to the lecture or discussion may be slightly delayed. It is also important for the professor not to get too far ahead of the interpreter during a lecture. In general, interpretation is easiest in lecture classes and more difficult in seminars or discussion classes. Because class formats are so varied, it is recommended that the professor, interpreter, and student arrange a conference early in the course to discuss any arrangements that may be needed.

The interpreter and the deaf student will usually choose to sit in the front of the classroom. The interpreter is aware that sign language may be a distraction to the class and the professor. The interpreter has also learned that the initial curiosity of the class wanes and the professor adapts easily to the interpreter's presence. Interpreters who are certified by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf subscribe to a strict code of ethics that requires confidentiality of private communications and honesty in interpretation or translation. (See also "Interpreters" in the "Services for Deaf or Hard of Hearing Students" section below.)

Captionists

In some cases, a captionist using a laptop computer provided by the captionist's agency, types on a keyboard the classroom presentations/conversations enabling the student to watch the computer monitor for information being presented and/or discussed. This system is especially helpful during classroom discussion when the student is not fluent in any sign language, and/or conversations are more difficult to follow. After class, the student has the option of obtaining a printed copy of the presentation/conversation from the captionist. Whatever method the student uses, he/she is responsible for the material covered in class. (See also "Note Taking" in the Services section.)

Class Notes

Because it is difficult to follow an interpreter or speech read what the instructor is saying and take notes at the same time, a deaf or hard of hearing student may need someone to take notes for them. For students in need of note takers, we offer...
recommend that the instructor make an announcement to the class, usually without mentioning the name of the student. Interested parties are instructed to contact the ODS to complete the appropriate paperwork to serve as a notetaker. It is then the responsibility of the student who is deaf or hearing impaired and the notetaker to finalize note-taking arrangements. You will be contacted if this type of announcement is needed. In that case you may also consider allowing the student to use your notes. For students who are registered with ODS and qualify for note-taking assistance, ODS will provide notetakers with a carbonless notebook to facilitate the effective provision of notes. These services are free of charge, as are all services offered by ODS. You may also consider allowing the student to use your notes (depending upon their pedagogical utility).

Tests and Exams
Most students who are deaf or hard of hearing will be able to take examinations and be evaluated in the same way as other students. However, if the method of evaluation is oral and the student does not use his/her own voice, the interpreter may voice what the student is signing. Similarly, testing that is administered orally may need to be signed to the student, and the allowance of extended time to complete the exam may be appropriate.

Partial Hearing Loss
The student who is hard of hearing may require nothing more than some form of amplification to participate in class - a hearing aid, public address system, or professor/student transmitter/receiver unit (also known as an auditory training unit or an FM unit). (See also "FM Unit" in the Services section.)

Accessible Subject Matter
Assumptions cannot automatically be made about the deaf student's ability to participate in certain types of classes. For example, deaf students may be able to learn a great deal about music styles, techniques, and rhythms by observing a visual display of the music on an oscilloscope or similar apparatus, or by feeling the vibrations of music. Some deaf students will have enough residual hearing so that amplification through earphones or hearing aids will allow participation. It is always best to discuss with the student the requirements of the class and to determine if there are ways that the material can be modified so that the student can participate in what may become an exciting learning experience for all concerned.

Speech
Many deaf students can, and do, speak. Most deaf people have normal organs of speech and many learn to use them in speech classes. Some deaf people cannot automatically control the tone and volume of their speech so the speech may be initially difficult to understand. Understanding is improved when one becomes more familiar with the deaf person's speech.

Guidelines for Communication
The following list of suggestions, compiled from publications of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, and Gallaudet University, is included in this handbook to facilitate the participation of deaf or hard of hearing students in (and out of) the classroom:

- Look at the person when you speak.
- Don't chew gum or otherwise block the area around your mouth with your hands or other objects.
- Speak naturally and clearly. Don't exaggerate lip movements or volume.
- Try to avoid standing in front of windows or other sources of light. The glare from behind you makes it difficult to read lips and facial expressions.
- Using facial expressions, gestures, and other "body language" is helpful in conveying your message.
- When other people speak who may be out of the deaf or hard of hearing person's range of vision, repeat the question or comment and indicate who was speaking (by motioning) so the individual can follow the discussion.
- Avoid speaking with your back to the deaf person, such as when writing on the chalkboard. Overhead and opaque projectors are often a good substitute and allow you to face the class while writing.
- During video presentations and use of overhead projection, keep light levels high enough in the classroom so that the deaf or hard of hearing student will be able to clearly see what an interpreter is signing or typing in real time captioning.
- When particularly important information is being covered, be sure to convey it very clearly. Notices of class cancellations, assignments, etc., can be put in writing or on a chalkboard to ensure understanding.
- If you are talking with the assistance of an interpreter, direct your communication to the deaf individual. This is more courteous and allows the deaf person the option of viewing both you and the interpreter to more fully follow the flow of conversation.
Establish a system for getting messages to the student when necessary. For example, the New Jersey Relay Center can be used (see "Services" below). Class cancellations are particularly costly if an interpreter cannot be informed in advance of the change.

New Terminology
Whenever new materials will be covered which involve technical terminology not in common usage, if at all possible, supply a list of these words or terms in advance to the student and the interpreter. Unfamiliar words are difficult to speech read or interpret.

Visual Aids
The use of visual media may be helpful to deaf students since slides and videotaped materials supplement and reinforce what is being said. However, the student can only look at one thing at a time (e.g., a slide vs. the interpreter). The student will benefit if each teaching aid remains visible for a short period following the professor’s explanation.

Captioning
Using captioned versions of films, videos, or other visual aids is extremely helpful for deaf or hard of hearing students and other auditory processing difficulties. If appropriate, foreign language films with English subtitles are also useful. Some visual aids used in classes are already captioned.

If a video to be used is not captioned, a captioned version can be created upon request. Be aware that to create such captioning, ODS requires a minimum turn-around time of thirty business days from the receipt of the video. In addition, please provide us with a transcript if one is available. Creating captioning from a transcript simplifies the process and may shorten turn-around time. In most cases, you will be contacted by an ODS staff member. If there is a deaf or hard of hearing student in one of your classes who needs captioning. However, if you are aware that you will be using videos in a class with an enrolled deaf or hard of hearing student, please contact ODS to discuss how captioning can be created for you. When requesting audio-visual equipment, make sure that you request equipment with a captioning decoder.

Interpreting During Audio-Visual Presentations
Interpreting may be used when captioning is not available, and the student is fluent in this form of communication. However, lower lighting, such as during a film, interferes with the deaf student's capacity to read manual or oral communication. In addition, audio-visual materials may be difficult to interpret because of sound quality and speed of delivery. Therefore, if a written script is available for a non-captioned film or video, provide the interpreter and student with a copy in advance.

Services for Deaf or Hard of Hearing Students

Interpreters & Captionists
The ODS office can provide interpreters and/or captionists for academic purposes. For their classes and activities, students are responsible for making these arrangements with us. For other functions such as award ceremonies and Commencement, the sponsoring unit contacts ODS directly and there is an interpreter charge for this service. (See also "Interpreters", "Captionists" and "Guidelines for Communication" near the beginning of this section.)

Verification of Disability
As needed, the professor is entitled to confirmation of the student’s disability from a qualified source such as ODS. At the student’s or professor’s request, with a release from the student, we will provide the student with a Letter of Accommodation verifying his or her disability and detailing options for accommodations needed in class and/or in testing situations. The student may then share this letter with the professor during office hours and discuss how accommodations will be implemented.

Note Taking
Some students with hearing impairments use paid notetakers. For students in need of note takers, we often recommend that the instructor make an announcement to the class, usually without mentioning the name of the student. Interested parties are instructed to contact the ODS to complete the appropriate paperwork to serve as a notetaker. It is then the responsibility of the deaf/hearing impaired student and the notetaker to finalize note-taking arrangements. You will be contacted if this type of announcement is needed. In that case you may also consider allowing the student to use your notes. For students who are registered with ODS and qualify for note-taking assistance, ODS will provide notetakers with a carbonless notebook to facilitate the effective transcription of notes. These services are free of charge, as are all services offered by ODS. You may also consider allowing the student to use your notes (depending upon their pedagogical utility).

Assistive Listening Devices
On a short-term basis, the ODS office will lend FM amplification systems for students to use in the classroom and other school related functions. In addition, various
auditoriums and classrooms on campus are equipped with amplification devices. You may contact ODS for a listing of these sites and to discuss your equipment needs.

New Jersey Relay Center
The New Jersey Relay Center allows telephone customers using Telephone Typewriters (TTY), telecommunications devices for the deaf, to call persons or businesses without TTYs anywhere in New Jersey, and vice versa. Contact them directly for more information.

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