

Tips for Teaching Students Who Are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing

- Please note these tips also apply to videos that students are required to watch.
 - If a student requests an interpreter or any other accommodation, contact Access & Accommodation Services (A&AS) at 870-972-3964.
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- When showing a videotape to the class, make sure it is **captioned**, and the television has a **decoder**. When ordering videos, make sure they are specifically captioned. Videos may be “**open-captioned**” (always visible) or “**closed-captioned**” (visible only when a decoder reveals them).
 - Having a student who is deaf or hard-of-hearing in your class, does not mean you have to learn sign language. Although it is preferable for you to learn some fingerspelling or some sign language (perhaps being able to say, “My name is...” or “Good morning. How are you?”) to help put the student at ease. It is not expected that teachers who only occasionally have deaf or hard-of-hearing students in the classroom, to learn to sign. Interpreters will be provided upon request to facilitate the communication in the classroom (or the lab, field trips, etc.).

Issues specific to students whose first language is American Sign Language (ASL)

- If you have a student who is deaf who uses ASL, it will be helpful for you to have some basic information about this complex language. ASL is used primarily in the USA and Canada. It is a visual language with its own rules for syntax and grammar, unrelated to English. Extracting meaning from an English sentence is solely dependent on word order (syntax), thus making it a linear language. ASL is three-dimensional using space in conjunction with signs to convey meaning.
- There are many linguistic differences between English and ASL. As you evaluate your students’ work, keep in mind that students whose primary language is ASL, may unwittingly follow some of the linguistic characteristics of that language when writing in English. Some examples of the linguistic differences between English and ASL include:
 1. Plurals are signified in a variety of ways in ASL, whereas English adds an ‘s’ on nouns and verbs.
 2. In ASL the adjective is usually after the noun (just as it occurs in Spanish, French, and other spoken languages), whereas in English, the reverse is true.
 3. In English, verbs are conjugated to indicate past, present or future. Tense is highly developed in ASL as well, however, not with verb conjugations. In ASL, only one form of verbs is used. This is handled by establishing the time frame first, and then all subsequent verbs will remain in that tense until the signer changes the time frame.

4. No two languages have exact word-to-word equivalents. One sign in ASL can mean several different words in English, just as one word in English can be translated into several different signs in ASL.
 5. ASL does not have the verb 'to be'. ASL, like many other languages, indicates this information in other ways.
- There are many, many more examples, but hopefully this brief list will give you an idea of the challenges of written English that face students who are deaf.
 - It has been said that students who communicate through ASL, read and write English as a foreign language, or a second language. That is true, in that many times English is their second acquired language. However, the statement can be misleading. Individuals who are deaf and communicate through ASL do not mentally process language in the same manner as do "second language" students. Deaf students who rely primarily on visual modalities to gain information (i.e., ASL), process this data in a different hemisphere of the brain than the hemisphere for the spoken word. Even the written form of a spoken language is based on sound. Unlike other "second language" students, the student who is deaf must adapt to a different way of processing language, when learning English (both written and spoken). For purposes of teaching, however, much of the second language pedagogy has been helpful in teaching students who are deaf.

Here are some tips about reading and writing assignments that have helped other teachers:

- Encourage the use of technology, such as the student using a computer with a spell-checker or grammar-checker.
- Teach idioms. Many times deaf and hard-of-hearing students have difficulty with idiomatic expressions, because of the linguistic differences between English and ASL. Idioms don't translate well, and therefore, may not be understood by the student whose second language is English.
- Be aware that many students never learned to read academically. Teach what questions are actually asking, and explain inference, and its relationship to academic reading.

Lectures and Other Teaching Sessions

- Keep instructions brief, and uncomplicated, as much as possible. When repeating instructions, repeat exactly without paraphrasing.
- Clearly define course requirements, the dates of exams, and when assignments are due. Provide advance notice of any changes.

- Use more than one way to demonstrate or explain information.
- Make instructional on-line course materials available in text form. For that material which is graphical in nature, create text-based descriptions of material.
- When new materials are to be covered which involve technical terminology not in common usage, supply a list of these words or terms in advance to the student and interpreter. Unfamiliar words are difficult to interpret.
- Remember deaf and hard-of-hearing students rely on visual cues such as body language and expressions, to gather information.
- Try to avoid speaking any time the student can't see your face, such as when you write on the board, or walk around the room.
- When referring to items on the board, try to be specific about the word or phrase you're making reference to by pointing directly to it.
- Deaf or hard-of-hearing students may also have visual disabilities, thus each situation with each student may have different solutions.

As you see, teaching students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing presents unique challenges. Your awareness of the issues discussed in the flyer will help you prepare for meeting those challenges. Remember, you can make a difference.

Information taken from: "Make a Difference Tips for Teaching Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Handbook".

<https://www.umaryland.edu/media/umb/oa/campus-life/disability-services/documents/Tips-for-Teaching-Students-Who-Are-Deaf-or-Hard-of-Hearing.pdf> Retrieved July 8, 2015