



COMMUNICATION

What should I know when I communicate with a Deaf person, one-to-one?

- Get their attention by calling their name, tapping them on the shoulder, waving or using another visual signal.
- If possible, use the deaf person's preferred mode of communication. Deaf people communicate in different ways depending on their age at diagnosis, type of deafness, amplification choice, family environment, and educational background. I may be using sign language, oral speech, a combination of sign and oral speech, or I may communicate with the assistance of a sign interpreter.
- Refrain from covering my face with my hands or eating/chewing gum while speaking. Many deaf people rely on speech-reading (lip-reading).
- Speak clearly and at a normal pace without shouting or elaborating words. Exaggerated pronunciation of words distorts lip movements, making speech-reading more difficult.
- Give key words or phrases to set the topic of our conversation, and avoid sudden changes of topic. Speak face to face. Maintain eye contact, even if an interpreter is present. Always use "I" and "you" when communicating through an interpreter.
- Lighting is very important. Make sure that my face is not in a shadow and that the light is shining on my face, not in the eyes of the deaf person.

- If the deaf person has difficulty understanding me, rephrase my message rather than repeating it over and over. Use a pencil and paper if necessary. Getting the message across is more important than the medium used.
- Use facial and body expressions, as the tone of my voice may not be heard.
- When using a sign language interpreter or real time captioning interpreter, pace my speech so that the interpreter can keep up with me.

What should I know when I communicate with a deaf person, in a group?

- In advance, ask the deaf person what type of communication support they need (assistive listening device, sign language interpreter, note taker), If in a large group with a large number of deaf and hard of hearing people, real time captioning is often used.
- Offer the deaf person a seat across from the speaker, who should be in good lighting. Ideally, use a round table so that everyone is visible.
- Written (notes, chalkboard, overhead projector) information is a good backup to ensure that the deaf person receives all information given. This is particularly important if there are changes in meeting times, special assignments, additional instructions etc.
- Repeat questions or statements made within the group. Remember that it is sometimes difficult for a deaf person to participate in a group because they are cut off from whatever happens outside their visual area. Also, they are not always sure when speakers have finished.
- Be aware of turn-taking.
- Use visual aids and provide written outlines.