

# Tips for working with a Sign Language Interpreter

* Provide the interpreter, wherever possible, with any written materials ahead of time (so that they can review vocabulary and clarify any technical terms, acronyms, and/or jargon).
* If possible, meet the interpreter beforehand so you both have the opportunity to clarify any possible language issues.
* Allow the interpreter and Deaf person to guide you in setting up the room to maximise communication (seating arrangements, lighting, etc.).
* Usually, the interpreter will sit or stand beside you so that the Deaf person can direct Deaf person gaze towards you while watching the interpreter.
* Speak naturally at your normal pace. The interpreter will ask you to slow down or repeat if necessary.
* Say only things that you want to be interpreted. The interpreter ethically must interpret everything they hear.
* There is a time delay when translating between two languages (e.g. English to ISL). Allow Deaf person ample time to receive the message and to respond if Deaf person wishes to.
* Maintain eye contact with Deaf person. The interpreter is there to facilitate the communication between you and Deaf person, so avoid directing comments to the interpreter (i.e. “Tell him….” or “Ask her….”)
* In a group setting, remember that an interpreter can only interpret one speaker at a time, so only allow one person to speak at a time.
* Relax and enjoy the process.
* Using an interpreter is not meant to be difficult or overwhelming. If there is something you are unsure of, just ask Deaf person. Tips for communicating with Deaf person (through spoken English)
* Accept reality. Reconcile yourself to the fact that I am Deaf. Please treat me like a Deaf person, not like a Hearing person.
* Ask the Deaf person about their communication strategy (do they lip-read, how much can they lip-read, can they hear, how much they can hear, would they like a sign language interpreter for certain situations).
* Get the Deaf person’s attention before you speak, flash the light in their work space/office, tip then on the shoulder, wave your hand in their line of sight, stamp your foot on the floor (if the floor is wooden).
* Remember that the Deaf person will have trouble hearing you when there is background noise, so try and keep it to a minimum (turn off radio, fan, close door).
* Remember that the Deaf person will have trouble hearing you if there are other people talking, i.e. any kind of group situation (e.g. coffee/lunch). So, if you need to discuss something specific with the Deaf person, it might be better to speak with them alone in a quiet office, rather than where there are other people talking.
* The best distance for communication is 3 to 6 feet and on the same level as the Deaf person.
* Speak clearly and at a moderate pace. If you speak at a moderate pace (slow-to-normal rate) and pause between sentences, you will give the Deaf person time to see-hear-understand. This is important because it can take more time for the Deaf person to absorb what you have said, because the Deaf person is working so hard to understand what you are saying.
* Look directly at the Deaf person when speaking and maintain eye contact.
* Keep movement to minimum while speaking to me. Continuous movement will make it difficult for the Deaf person to read your lips and the Deaf person also needs to see your face to get clues to your tone of voice.
* Don’t talk to the Deaf person with your back to them.
* Don’t start walking away while you are still talking to the Deaf person.
* If I turn away (e.g. to check something on a computer, to look down to read written material), stop talking until I look at you again.
* Remember that listening and/or lip-reading is mentally and physically exhausting. Sometimes the Deaf person need some time on my own to ‘recover.’ This means that sometimes the Deaf person do not have the energy for coffee/lunch. It don’t mean to be “anti-social.”
* Be patient, positive and relaxed. It may take some time to learn how best to talk with a Deaf person.
  + Ask the Deaf person how your style of communication is working for them, and how the Deaf person style is working for you.
  + Ask the Deaf person how they want you to communicate with me, and how you want me to communicate with the Deaf person.
  + Experiment!

Further information at:

<http://www.tcd.ie/about/policies/accessible-info-policy.php#appendix-3>

and deaf awareness information

http://www.tcd.ie/disability/staff/students/Hearing-Deaf.php