

TOP TEN THINGS DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING STUDENTS WOULD LIKE TEACHERS TO DO

1. DON'T USE WORDS LIKE "THIS" OR "THAT" AS REFERENTS.

Avoid giving vague instructions like "move this" or "divide that," as they can be difficult to understand and lack clear reference points for interpreters and captionists. Instead, be precise and specific. For example, say "Move the small beaker to the table by the window" or "Divide the data by the transfer time".

Being specific enhances understanding for all students, whether they are hearing or deaf.

2. MAKE SLIDES AND NOTES AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS BEFORE CLASS.

Providing materials before class helps all students prepare for class and understand the context of class discussions. Ensure that support service providers (such as interpreters, notetakers, tutors, or captionists) have access to these materials by adding them to the class list in your learning management system.

3. BE AWARE OF INTERPRETING "LAG TIME" - SLOW DOWN.

A fast teaching pace can be challenging for deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing students alike. Keep in mind that there's a 5-10 second delay (lag time) between what you say and when the interpreter signs it or the captionist types it. When you ask a question, pause allowing enough time for the interpreter to sign it or the captionist to type it before calling on a student. This ensures all students have an equal opportunity to participate.

4. GIVE STUDENTS TIME TO READ VISUAL MATERIALS BEFORE SPEAKING.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing students cannot look at slides and the interpreter and/or captions at the same time. Allow time for students to read the displayed information before you start explaining. Consider using numbered lists instead of bullets to make it easier for interpreters to reference material and for students to follow along.

Also, think about using an interactive whiteboard or visualizer to display documents. This approach enables students to follow along with the documents while receiving information from their interpreters, helping everyone make clear connections between the documents and the discussion.

5. UNDERSTAND THAT INTERPRETERS ARE NOT ALWAYS AN ACCURATE REFLECTION OF STUDENTS WHEN VOICING FOR THEM.

Be patient when an interpreter voices for students. If a student's answer or comment seems a bit off, it might not be their fault. Interpreters may not always fully understand what a student signs, which could lead to inaccuracies in voicing.

If you don't understand what the student said or are confused by their answer, ask them to repeat it and allow the interpreter time to clarify things with the student if needed.

6. ALLOW DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING STUDENTS TO HAVE ACCESS TO THE FIRST FEW ROWS IN CLASS ON THE FIRST DAY.

Deaf and hard-of-hearing students often need to sit at the front to see you, the interpreter, captioning, and classroom materials. On the first day of class, it's best to ask the student privately if they prefer these seats.

Please note that this arrangement can make it difficult for deaf and hard-of-hearing students to know who is speaking behind them. To address this, point to the speaker, have them pause to be recognized, and then speak. If smooth communication isn't possible, repeat the speaker's comment or question yourself.

7. ALLOW A LASER POINTER TO REMAIN ON THE OBJECT FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME.

Keep the laser pointer in place for an extended time. This allows the deaf and hard-of-hearing students to locate it, read the content, and then refocus on you and the interpreter or captions.

8. CONSIDER HOW TO ARRANGE STUDENTS INTO GROUPS.

When deciding whether to mix deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing students for group work or to have them form separate groups, consider the number of deaf and hard-of-hearing students in the class. If there are enough to form a separate group, ask for their group preference first. However, if your goal is to promote diverse teamwork, consider forming groups that include deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing members.

Keep in mind that a hard-of-hearing student with residual hearing may struggle with group work. When multiple people are talking in a room, that student just hears the "buzz" and cannot hear individuals speaking in their group. Consider finding a quieter space, such as another room or the hallway, for that group to meet.

9. TREAT ALL STUDENTS EQUALLY AND RESPECTFULLY.

You know that the students enrolled in your class, come with varying skills and knowledge. It is important to remember that while deaf and hard-of-hearing students have unique needs, they are just like hearing students in many ways. They are also individuals with communication needs unique to them which need to be respected.

10. HAVE A POSITIVE/FLEXIBLE ATTITUDE.

Maintaining a positive and flexible attitude benefits everyone. As a role model for your students, it's important to be open and approachable in your interactions with deaf and hard-of-hearing students, both inside and outside of your classroom. Don't hesitate to ask other educators about what has worked for them in supporting and teaching deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

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