

TOP TEN STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS IN ASYNCHRONOUS ONLINE COURSES

INTRODUCTION

Online education offers flexibility, but effective online teaching for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) students requires intentional design, accessibility, and engagement. From 2022–2024, the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) gathered insights from eight experienced Teachers of the Deaf who completed specialized training and taught asynchronous online courses. Their firsthand experiences revealed challenges and highly effective strategies for supporting DHH learners.

This Top Ten list reflects their collective expertise and provides practical, evidence-informed recommendations to help instructors create accessible, inclusive, and engaging online learning environments for ALL learners.

1. CREATE STRUCTURED, ACCESSIBLE NAVIGATION

Use intuitive course navigation with clear organization. Structured navigation reduces confusion and makes content more accessible.

Strategies: Create a “Start Here” module; Use consistent heading and folder naming; post Weekly checklists and preview videos

2. EMPHASIZE INTERACTIVE LEARNING

Replace static content with active learning activities, such as discussion boards, group projects, and quizzes. These activities foster engagement and encourage critical thinking.

Strategies: Use Google docs or Padlet boards for discussions, incorporate captioned interactive tools (Kahoot, Flip); incorporate small group collaboration

3. SCAFFOLD ASSIGNMENTS

Break down complex assignments into smaller, manageable tasks. Scaffolded learning helps students build skills, ensuring they stay on track and deepen comprehension.

Strategies: Provide milestone deadlines; use short how-to videos or visuals to clarify each step; provide early formative feedback

4. LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY THOUGHTFULLY

Use easy, accessible tools that align with objectives. Provide clear instructions or tutorials to reduce barriers.

Strategies: Provide tutorial videos; add a “Tech Help” page; Use accessible platforms that support captioning and screen readers

5. PROVIDE OPTIONS FOR PARTICIPATION

Let students choose formats that match their strengths. Offering flexibility fosters inclusivity and accommodates diverse learning styles.

Strategies: Allow text or captioned video discussion responses; let students choose between written reports or multimedia project; provide clear rubrics

6. SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Clarify requirements for logging in, communication, and deadlines. Clear guidelines ensure accountability and help students manage their time effectively.

Strategies: Publish both student and instructor expectations in the syllabus; post due dates in multiple places; model expected response times in your communications

7. INCORPORATE UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

Provide providing multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. Design accessible materials from the start. UDL helps meet the diverse needs of students .

Strategies: Check accessibility in Word/PowerPoint/LMS; Add alt text to images and use high-contrast color combinations; caption all media

8. BUILD COMMUNITY

Promote connection among learners through group projects, peer-to-peer discussion boards, and instructor engagement. Encourage students to ask questions and respond to one another, which promotes collaboration and critical thinking.

Strategies: Use Community board for informal sharing; post weekly instructor updates; create group roles and vary them within groups

9. USE FEEDBACK FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Seek feedback and adjust course design accordingly.

Strategies: Provide a mid-course survey; Share changes with students; Apply suggestions to future courses

10. INVEST IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Attend training programs and external workshops. These opportunities provide invaluable insights into best practices, accessibility, and innovative engagement strategies.

Strategies: Attend training on accessible design; Join relevant professional groups; Stay current with LMS updates

These strategies are grounded in the experiences and reflections of NTID faculty in their asynchronous online classes. They demonstrate that thoughtful design, interactivity, and accessibility are key to successful online instruction for DHH students. By adopting these strategies, instructors can create engaging and effective learning environments for ALL students.

To learn more:

Visit DeafTEC's resources on online teaching and learning

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