

How to be Deaf friendly with or without Interpreters



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For those who are hearing:

Please do not be afraid of Deaf or Hard of Hearing persons. This paper is a simple guideline how to communicate with those who cannot hear well. It is divided into two sections which one is on your own without an interpreter and the other section is with an interpreter. Remember this is a general guideline that works for most people.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing people utilize various modes of communication so therefore what works for one person may not work for another. There are no limits on figuring out the best way to communicate.

If you want to talk with a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person you would need to get his/her attention first. Here's how:

- 1. Simply wave your hand and make sure to get eye contact between both of you so that the person would know you are trying to get their attention.**
- 2. Go up to the person and give a gentle tap on the shoulder to indicate you want to talk with that person.**
- 3. If two Deaf or Hard of Hearing people are talking to each other you can wave to get their attention if you want to say something or ask something?**

First of all be open minded to various communication methods.

Section I: Without a Sign Language Interpreter. Here's a list of how to communicate with a Deaf or Hard of Hearing Person.

- 1. First ask the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Person how he or she prefers to communicate whether it is by signing, lip reading, or writing. It takes patience to communicate because it usually takes longer than a normal hearing conversation.**
- 2. If a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person chooses to lip read instead of using an interpreter please be mindful that 75% of English looks the same on the lips so therefore ask the person if he or she understands if they seem to be confused or lost. Instead of repeating what you say just rephrase it with different vocabulary which may help with understanding the conversation. Majority of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people have some difficulty with the lip reading.**
- 3. Do not shout because that would not help the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Persons to understand. Instead use a normal voice and be aware if it is too fast or too slow and if it is too loud or too soft. It takes some time to learn how to use your voice with a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Person.**
- 4. If lip reading fails try to write back and forth. Many Deaf or Hard of Hearing people prefer this way if there is no interpreter available. But be mindful of your English since the best way is to keep it in simple vocabulary. Don't be surprised that for Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons English seems rather odd. This happens when English is not their first language.**
- 5. It is ok to use your hands gesturing what you are trying to say. But do not forget about using your facial expressions because that is a big part of American Sign Language grammar. It means a lot to a Deaf and Hard of Hearing people to use facial expressions.**
- 6. Also if you are going to meet Deaf or Hard of Hearing people again in the future please try be prepared to use pencil and paper. Also it would be a nice idea to try learning some frequently used signs.**

Section II: If there is a sign language interpreter available, here's the proper way to use interpreter:

- 1. Consider moving to a quieter area if possible and be mindful of the lighting in wherever the communication happens. Avoid glare and other bothersome lighting. However you need to be in well lighted area.**
- 2. Have eye contact with the Deaf or Hard of Hearing person and have the interpreter sitting or standing next to you so that Deaf and Hard of Hearing person can see both interpreter and your body language including facial expressions**
- 3. Look at the Deaf or Hard of Hearing person as if you are speaking directly to him or her. Do not look at the interpreter.**
- 4. Avoid saying to the interpreter "tell him or her" Instead of talking to the Deaf or Hard of Hard of Hearing person directly.**
- 5. Please do not shout at the person because that usually does not work, use your normal voice and be mindful if you are talking too fast or too slow, and too soft or too loud.**

Final notes:

- 1. Deaf and Hard of Hearing People use their eyes a lot and Please do not be offended if we need to take eye breaks to rest our eyes.**
- 2. What is being said in American Sign Language often times does not translate well in English and vice versa.**