



Office of Accessibility Resources  
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# How to Communicate with Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

## How prevalent is hearing loss?

According to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, approximately 15% of American adults (37.5 million) aged 18 and over report some degree of hearing loss (NIDCD, 2014).

[Job Accommodation Network](#) –Strategies in working with people that are deaf and hard of hearing [https://askjan.org/disabilities/Hearing-Impairment.cfm?cssearch=2444919\\_1](https://askjan.org/disabilities/Hearing-Impairment.cfm?cssearch=2444919_1)

## Do written notes offer an effective means of communicating with deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals?

This will depend on the reading level of the individual. The reading level of many deaf individuals is much lower than that of hearing people. Additionally, many deaf people consider American Sign Language (ASL) to be their first language. Because the grammar and syntax of ASL differ considerably from English, writing back and forth may not provide effective communication between the deaf student and the MVCC employee. Moreover, written communications are slow and cumbersome and information that would otherwise be spoken may not be written. If an advisor, financial aid employee, or other staff is providing less information in writing than he or she would provide when speaking to a hearing person, this is an indication that writing is not effective communication in that context. For many deaf individuals, the services of a sign language interpreter offer the only effective method of communication. However, some deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals who do not use sign language, such as individuals who have lost their hearing later in life, may communicate more effectively in writing.

## Lip Reading:

The truth about lip reading is that it's not a viable way of communicating for many people who are deaf. Because only 30% of all English phonemes can be read on the lips, lip reading requires a lot of exhausting guesswork and filling in the blanks. Lip reading is a great tool if a deaf person

has some residual hearing, but it cannot replace American Sign Language or the use of hearing appliances.

Depending on the situation and meeting, communication could be detrimental. Liability issues should be of great concern. Utilizing the skills of a professional interpreter is the best choice for accurate and effective communication with a deaf individual.

[Communicating with the Deaf \(http://interwestinterpreting.com/comm\\_with\\_deaf.aspx \)](http://interwestinterpreting.com/comm_with_deaf.aspx)

Working with interpreters and people who are deaf is new to many people. The process is very simple and nothing to be concerned about. Some basic information is below to provide a starting point and to offer a few tips so you know what to expect.

### **Understanding Captioning Services and Real Time Captioning**

<https://www.hearingloss.org/hearing-help/technology/cartcaptioning/>

Captions are words displayed on a television, computer, mobile device, or movie screen, providing the speech or sound portion of a program or video via text. Captions allow viewers to follow the dialogue and the action of a program simultaneously. Captions are created from the program's script or audio file. A caption writer translates the dialogue into captions and makes sure the words appear in sync with the audio. Computer software encodes the captioning information and combines it with the audio and video to create a new master tape or digital file of the program.

### **To request Real Time Captioning or an ASL interpreter at MVCC**

The person who is deaf or hard of hearing and/or the MVCC staff should contact the Office of Accessibility Resources at 315-792-5644 or [oar@mvcc.edu](mailto:oar@mvcc.edu) . Requests should be made a minimum of 3 days ahead of the assignment, more if possible is preferred. Assignment information must include the exact location of the assignment, date, start and end time, the type of appointment or assignment with (when appropriate) a description of what will be occurring and who the person is meeting with or who the onsite contact person is with their phone number. Also include the individual's name that is deaf and M # for our billing process and request procedure for interpreting.

# Using an Interpreter

*\*Please read "Using an Interpreter" and "Do's and Don'ts of Working with a Deaf individual" before your appointment.*

- Speak directly to the Deaf individual.
- Speak in the first person. Avoid such phrases as "Tell her" and "Ask him."
- In most cases, the interpreter will try to position himself/herself next to you so that the Deaf individual may benefit from your non-verbal cues.
- It works best to speak in your normal tone and pace. The interpreter will tell you if you need to pause or slow down.
- When reading extensively from written materials or using a power point presentation, consider supplying a copy to the Deaf individual. When this is not possible, be aware of the pace of your speech.
- When distributing agendas, outlines, or other instructional materials to be referenced during a presentation, offer one to the interpreter as well.
- Obtain captioned versions of videotapes to be shown.
- Maintain enough light for the interpreter to be seen during presentations.
- Whenever possible, make presentation materials available to the interpreter before the event, so that he/she may become familiar with the terminology.
- Please be aware that the interpreter must interpret everything said. Avoid discussing subjects with the interpreter you do not wish the Deaf individual to know.
- When out of the presence of the Deaf individual, avoid giving messages to the interpreter for later relay to the Deaf individual.
- Try to avoid personal conversations with the interpreter during the professional situation.
- Feel free to correct, agree with, bring back to subject, or give any other feedback to the Deaf individual, as you would a hearing client in the same situation.
- The interpreter will not share personal opinions regarding the Deaf individual.

# Do's and Don'ts of Working with a Deaf Individual

## “Do's”

- Directly Ask the Deaf individual what is the best way to interact and communicate with them.
- If you must use pen and paper initially, use short, simple sentences.
- Remember, the deaf individual may not read well in English and may not have perfectly correct grammar.
- Position yourself 3-6 feet from the person.
- Convey your willingness to communicate, and include the Deaf individual in the conversation.
- Give clues to the person about your topic, especially as the subject of the conversation changes.
- Be aware of your facial expressions, eye gaze, etc. as well as the Deaf individual's.
- Use appropriate gestures and facial expressions and speak at your normal rate.
- Repeat yourself if necessary, and use simple-to-understand language.
- Allow for more time in the communication process; you are crossing several language barriers.
- Be friendly; they merit the same respect as anyone else.
- Look directly at the person, keeping your hands and face toward the Deaf individual you are speaking with, even when they are looking at an interpreter.

## “Don'ts”

- Don't underestimate a person's intelligence based on their inability to communicate directly.
- Don't assume communication is occurring correctly - nodding doesn't mean “I understand.”
- Don't pretend to understand if you don't. Ask for clarification if you need it.
- Don't exaggerate your words, mouth movements, or yell.
- Don't have objects in your mouth, or cover your mouth while speaking.
- Don't repeat the same word if there is difficulty understanding it. Use a synonym.
- Don't speak to a Deaf individual with your back to a strong light, bright window or shiny mirror.
- Don't refer to Deaf people in the third person as if they weren't present, e.g. “Tell her” or “Ask him”
- Don't tell the interpreter, “Don't say this to the Deaf individual...”
- Don't discuss something you don't want “heard”. Wait until the Deaf individual leaves.