

Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing students' List of the "Top Ten" things they would like teachers to do

1. Don't use words like "this" and "that" as referents in the class or lab.

For example in the lab don't use sentences like "move these things over there." Instead use proper names – including technical terminology – when referencing items in this fashion, for example: "Move the small beaker to the table by the window." Allow time for students (and an interpreter or captionist if present) to reference the item or location so that the proper association is made. When you are more specific it helps all students, hearing or deaf, to understand.

2. Have PowerPoint and lecture notes available to the students before class.

Providing these materials ahead of the class makes it easier for deaf and hard-of-hearing students to prepare for class and as importantly provides a context for class discussions. Make sure that support service providers (interpreter, notetaker, tutor, and/or captionist) are provided with access to the material too – either through a hard copy provided in advance of the class if possible, or through some other source like email or web distribution.

3. Treat all students equally.

When students register for your class they are all there to learn, although each has different skills and understanding. Keep in mind that although deaf and hard-of-hearing students have special needs they are basically the same as hearing students. Treat them equally. You set the tone – perhaps without realizing it – for the entire class; make sure it is one in which all students are treated equally.

4. Have a positive/flexible attitude.

A positive and flexible attitude helps everyone's day. You are a model for your students. We encourage you to be open in your interactions with deaf and hard-of-hearing students in your classes.

5. Interpreters are not always an accurate reflection of students when voicing for them.

Be patient when an interpreter voices for students. Deaf and hard-of-hearing students use diverse communications skills. If you do not understand the student's question or statement, ask for it to be repeated, and consider that the interpreter may not be voicing accurately and/or may need time to clarify unclear information with the student.

6. Be aware of "process time," which is the time required to process information into another language. Slow down! It maybe beneficial to take a small break.

Recognize that there is a processing time of 5-10 seconds between what you say and the time that an interpreter signs the material to students. This has significant implications, particularly in an interactive classroom. If you ask for class participation (to answer questions, state opinions, give examples, etc.) allow the necessary time for your statement to be interpreted before calling on a student. This will provide an equal opportunity for deaf and hard-of-hearing students to participate.

Slow down. We know it's tough, but this list indicates that the rapid pace of instruction is one of the top areas of classroom concern by deaf, hard-of-hearing, and hearing students.

7. While using PowerPoint slides, overheads, or other similar material, give students time to read it before moving on.

This will allow students to absorb information before you begin to explain the content – this will minimize later confusion. Allow ample time for deaf and hard-of-hearing students to read presented media before you begin to speak.

8. Allow deaf students to have access to the first few rows in class on the first day.

The principal concern is that all students can see you clearly. Deaf and hard-of-hearing students frequently need to sit at or near the front of the room in order to have a clear view of you, of the interpreter, of the captioning, and of any classroom materials. However this orientation also means that when hearing students are contributing to the class, the deaf and hard-of-hearing students will not know who is speaking. We encourage you to identify the speaker, have the speaker pause to allow him/her to be identified, and then speak. If smooth communication is not possible, repeat the student statement yourself.

9. Don't force groups of deaf/hearing students to work together – well before you establish groups, ask students privately for their preferences in group assignments.

Ask the deaf and hard-of-hearing students before class for their preferences regarding group organization, and of their need for an interpreter, captionist, or notetaker. This can be crucial to finding a satisfactory solution for your particular environment and available resources. If you force students to work together, as uncomfortable situations may arise.

10. If you are using a laser pointer, allow the pointer to remain on the object for an extended period of time.

By allowing the pointer to remain positioned, deaf and hard-of-hearing students will be able to locate its position, read the content there, and return their attention to you (and an interpreter or captionist if present).