

How to use Sign Language Interpreters Effectively:

Speak at your natural pace but be aware that the interpreter may wait to hear and understand a complete thought before beginning to interpret. The interpreter will let you know if you need to repeat or slow down.

Look at and speak directly to the deaf person. Do not say “tell him” or “tell her”. The deaf person will be watching the interpreter and glancing back and forth at you.

- Remember that when the interpreter speaks, he/she is voicing the words of the deaf individual. The interpreter is not a participant in this interaction. Respond directly to the deaf person.

It is usually best to position the interpreter next to you (the hearing person) or the person presenting the information, opposite the deaf person. This makes it easy for the deaf person to see you and the interpreter in one line of vision.

If you are handing out materials during class give a copy to the interpreter. Remember to pause before giving your explanation of any visual aids so that the deaf person has time to see it, look back at the interpreter and still keep up with the information being presented.

If showing videos during class, please try to show a captioned video. It is difficult for the deaf person to watch a video and the interpreter at the same time.

Interpreters and hearing speakers should avoid standing with their backs to windows, bright lights or busy colorful designs. These backgrounds make it difficult to see and receive a clear message. A solid, dark colored backdrop or background is recommended.

Two interpreters will be assigned to a job over one hour in length. Interpreters working in a team allow communication to flow smoothly and thereby minimize distractions to the meeting process. One interpreter will actively interpret for 20-30 minutes while the other provides back-up to the active interpreter. The interpreters switch every 20-30 minutes.

The interpreter is present to facilitate communication. If you have questions about the deaf person or sign language, ask the deaf person directly and the interpreter will interpret your questions. The interpreter will not give advice or their personal opinion on anything that is discussed.

To find an interpreter in your area please go to:

https://www.aslterpsutah.org/uip/interpreter_agencies.php