

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

The following suggestions can help maximize the deaf or hard of hearing student's learning potential.

Create a Visual Learning Environment

Classrooms often move at a fast pace. Making sure that the deaf or hard of hearing student has access to everything that is going on will be of the utmost importance. Here are some considerations that may help facilitate communication in the classroom. Many of these strategies which make the classroom a more visual environment, will be helpful for all of the students in the classroom.

For all deaf or hard of hearing students:

1. The student should have a clear view of the faces of the teacher and the other students.
2. Do not seat the student facing bright lights or windows, where a glare or strong backlighting will make it difficult to see the faces of others.
3. Remember that the best place for a deaf or hard of hearing student may change with the teaching situation. Make sure the student feels free to move about the room for ease of communication.

For students who depend upon spoken language communication:

1. Confer with student about best seating placement for them. Not all ears are equal and front row seating does not allow for classroom involvement by speech-reading. A second row side seat is often more successful because it allows the student to see more of the class. Recommend best ear toward the class. Encourage the student to advocate for their needs in the classroom.
2. Do not exaggerate mouth movements or shout, as this may cause distortion of the message through the hearing aid and cause greater difficulty for the student.
3. If communication breakdowns occur, try repair strategies such as rephrasing the message, repeating it at a slower pace, or writing it down when appropriate.

For students depending on visual communication:

1. Try to remove "visual noise" (visual interference) from communication situations (e.g., bottle on table, door open, paper in hand while signing, jewelry of signer, overhead projector in the way)
2. When a sign language interpreter is being used in the classroom, make sure the interpreter has an opportunity to complete the message before moving on to the next point.

Facilitating classroom discussions:

1. When possible, have students sit in a circle.
2. Remind students to speak one at a time.
3. Point to the student who will speak next. Wait for the deaf or hard of hearing student to locate the speaker.

General DOs to help deaf or hard of hearing students:

- DO use as many visual aids as possible. Use written instructions and summaries, and write key words and concepts on the blackboard. Utilize captioned films when possible.

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- DO use attention-getting techniques when they are needed: touch the student lightly on the shoulder, wave your hands, or flash the lights in the classroom.
- DO set up a buddy system to help deaf or hard of hearing students with note taking, clarifying assignments, etc.
- DO ask questions and spend individual time with deaf or hard of hearing students periodically to make sure they understand and are following the instructions.

General DON'Ts to keep in mind:

- DON'T change the topic of conversation quickly without letting the deaf or hard of hearing students know that the topic has changed.
- DON'T talk with your back to the class, your face obstructed by a book, or with a pencil in your mouth.
- DON'T call attention to misunderstandings or speech errors in front of the class. If this becomes a problem, discuss it with the student to avoid future situations.

Source: Kendall School, Gallaudet University