

Hearing Impairments

Description of impairment

Functional hearing loss can range from mild to profound. Depending on the amount of hearing loss, individuals are referred to either as hard of hearing (hearing loss of 25dB to 90dB) or deaf (hearing loss greater than 90dB).

Students who are hard of hearing present in different ways as shown in the following examples:

- A student who is hard of hearing may have difficulty following lectures in large classrooms, particularly if the acoustics cause echoes or if the speaker talks quietly, rapidly or unclearly
- A student who is hard of hearing may have difficulty following or participating in classroom discussions, particularly if the discussion is fast-paced and unmoderated, since there is often lag time between a speaker's comments and the interpretation/captioning
- A student who is hard of hearing may have difficulty simultaneously watching demonstrations, following verbal descriptions, or taking notes if they are watching a speaker's lips, a sign language interpreter, or a captioning screen

Students who are hard of hearing may typically only hear specific frequencies or sounds within a certain volume range. They rely heavily on hearing aids and/or lip reading. Students may use amplification systems such as an FM amplification system which requires an instructor to wear a small microphone to transmit amplified sound to the student. Students who are hard of hearing may or may not use sign language. Students who are hard of hearing may have speech impairment due to the inability to hear his/her own voice clearly.

Students who are deaf may have little or no speech depending on the severity of the hearing loss and the age of onset. Not all students who are deaf are fluent users of all communication modes used by the deaf community. For example, not all students who are deaf read lips; many use sign language. There are several types of sign language:

- American Sign Language (ASL) is widely used and has its own grammar and work order
- Fingerspelling is the use of the manual alphabet to form words
- Sign Language Transliteration is the combination of sign language and mouth movements using elements of ASL and English
- Students who have sign language skills will usually have an interpreter in the classroom environment. The interpreter serves as a "communications intermediary" between the instructor and the student. A student who is deaf and does not have sign language skills may use captioning. Captioning is the typing of the spoken word which is then projected onto a screen for the student to use. A student who is deaf and has used sign language most of his/her life may not have mastered the grammatical subtleties of English and may need additional support or tutoring for written work

Common accommodations:

Accommodations provided by Student Disability Services:

- amplification systems
- interpretive services
- captioning services (if needed)

Accommodations provided by Student Disability Services:

- note taking services/access to class notes
- alternative test arrangements (i.e. extended test time, reader, etc.)
- provision of written lecture outlines, copies of overhead, etc. when possible
- provision of a script or outline of films, videos, or slides; captioned films are extremely helpful, if available

If you need assistance or have questions about a student's accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services.

Classroom considerations when working with students with hearing impairments:

- make sure you have the student's attention (a wave or other visual signal) before you begin speaking
- speak clearly and at a normal rate
- make sure the student can see your face; avoid obscuring your lips or face with your hands or a book, avoid facing the board when speaking, etc.
- avoid unnecessary pacing and moving
- avoid standing in front of a light source as the glare from behind may make it difficult for a student to read your lips
- write discussion questions/answers on the board or overhead
- repeat discussion questions and statements made by other students
- use visual aids with large images and few words in large font
- assure the conveyance of important information such as class cancellations, classroom relocation, assignment and test date reminders, etc. in writing either in a handout or on the board

For more information on working with students with hearing impairments go to:

<http://www.washington.edu/doit/Faculty>

Considerations when working with an interpreter:

- speak directly to the student
- avoid using phrases such as "tell him" or "ask her"
- relax and talk normally noting that there may be a lag time between the spoken word and the interpretation

- when referring to objects or written information, allow time for the translation to take place; replace terms such as “here” or “there” with more specific terms such as “on the second page” or “in the left corner”
- provide the interpreter access to course materials so that he/she will be able to preview materials, ask questions, research technical vocabulary, etc. to aid in smoother translation
- work out a seating arrangement with the student and the interpreter so that the interpreter can be located near the speaker
- inform the interpreter in advance if there is an audiovisual element in a presentation so arrangements can be made for lighting and positioning
- be sensitive to classes that extend longer than one hour; the interpreter may require a short break to maintain proficiency