

Do's and Don'ts for Educational Interpreting in Sign Language—essential for maintaining professionalism, ethical practice, and supporting effective learning for Deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

Do's for Educational Interpreting in Sign Language

1. Do Prepare in Advance

Familiarize yourself with the lesson plan, vocabulary, subject matter, and any specific terminology.

2. Do Foster Team Collaboration

Work closely with teachers and staff to ensure access and inclusion.

3. Do Position Yourself Appropriately

Ensure the student has a clear line of sight to both the interpreter and the instructional content (e.g., whiteboard, projector).

4. Do Use the Student's Preferred Sign Language

Adapt your interpreting style to match the student's preferred mode of communication.

5. Do Interpret Everything

Interpret both spoken instructions and incidental classroom talk (e.g., jokes, peer comments, off-topic remarks) when appropriate.

6. Do Monitor for Understanding

Be aware of student cues and clarify or request clarification when communication breaks down.

7. Do Promote Independence

Encourage students to interact directly with teachers and peers, not just through the interpreter.

Don'ts for Educational Interpreting in Sign Language

1. Don't Omit or Alter Information

Do not filter, simplify, or change the message unless instructed (e.g., by an IEP plan or student request).

2. Don't Intervene in Instruction

You're not the teacher—avoid giving your own examples, instructions, or explanations.

3. **Don't Take Over Student Tasks**
Let the student respond for themselves; don't answer questions on their behalf.
4. **Don't Have Side Conversations**
Avoid chatting with students or staff during class unless necessary for clarification.
5. **Don't Isolate the Student**
Help integrate the student into classroom dynamics. Don't let them rely solely on the interpreter for interaction.
6. **Don't Assume Comprehension**
Just because a student is looking at you doesn't mean they're understanding. Adjust your interpreting style if needed.
7. **Don't Use Inappropriate Register**
Match the tone, level, and vocabulary of the speaker; don't simplify unless the speaker does.
8. **Don't Ignore Cultural Considerations**
Be aware of Deaf culture and the educational background of the student when interpreting.
9. **Don't Multitask Unnecessarily**
Stay fully focused on the classroom environment to catch all relevant communication.
10. **Don't Substitute for Support Services**
You are not a note-taker, tutor, or behavioral aide unless explicitly assigned those roles.

Do's in Higher Education Interpreting

1. **Do Prepare Thoroughly**
 - Review syllabi, readings, lecture slides, and course terminology.
 - Request access to course materials in advance from professors.
2. **Do Maintain Professional Boundaries**

- Act as a communication facilitator, not a tutor or participant in class discussions.
- Stay professional, especially in peer-heavy environments.

3. Do Foster Direct Communication

- Encourage Deaf students to interact directly with professors and classmates.
- Voice for them only when requested or when necessary.

4. Do Interpret Accurately and Completely

- Preserve technical vocabulary, academic tone, and classroom discourse without simplifying.

5. Do Clarify Role and Expectations

- Introduce yourself to professors and students at the start of the semester to explain your role.
- Advocate for equal access without disrupting academic flow.

6. Do Be Adaptive

- Adjust signing styles based on the Deaf student's language proficiency
- Use visual aids or fingerspelling when appropriate for complex terminology.

Don'ts in Higher Education Interpreting

1. Don't Assume the Student Understands Everything

- If unsure, discreetly check in and clarify after class or through proper channels.

2. Don't Speak for the Student Without Consent

- Always allow the Deaf student the opportunity to voice their thoughts first.

3. Don't Get Involved in Academic Conflicts

- Stay out of grading, disputes, or any form of advocacy unless requested through formal processes.

4. Don't Become the "Only" Access Point

- Encourage professors to use accessible teaching methods—captions, visual aids, transcripts.

5. Don't Show Bias

- Even if familiar with the topic, avoid editorializing or favoring one point of view in your interpretation.