

When working with a Sign Language Interpreter...

Ten Tips:

1. Look at and speak directly to the Deaf person. Don't stare at the interpreter. Yes, sign language can be fascinating to watch but remember that you are having a conversation with the Deaf person not the interpreter.
2. Speak in your normal style. Speak in the first person just like you would with anyone else. Avoid saying things like "tell him" or "explain this to her".
3. Speak in your normal tone and pace. Don't break up your speech to "help" the interpreter. This slows things down. If you are wondering why you are speaking and the interpreter is not signing, it's because the grammar of ASL is different from that of English and until you complete your thought or sentence, the interpreter does not yet know how to proceed. It works best if you forget about the interpreter and just talk.
4. If you are giving a presentation or using written notes or reading from a text, it is helpful to give the interpreter copies of these materials ahead of time. If it is a meeting or other situation where you are passing out paperwork, agendas, minutes, etc., please give one to the interpreter as well.
5. If you need to lower the lights please maintain enough light for the interpreter to be seen by the Deaf person. If necessary, use a small, directional spot-light.
6. Never ask the interpreter to not interpret something. Just like your interactions with hearing people, there are no "take backs"...if you say it, we interpret it. This includes environmental noise as well (announcements, phone calls, alarms, etc.). If other people can hear it then we interpret it.
7. If you are curious about ASL or want to know how to sign something ask the Deaf person (not the interpreter), remember...you are talking to the Deaf person.
8. Make sure your message is clear. If you don't know what you're talking about, we don't either.
9. Interpreters follow a professional code of conduct that emphasizes confidentiality. Your information is secure.
10. Please take an interest in Deaf Culture. There is a vast amount of information available to you.