



Deaf Inter-Link  
100 St. Francis – Suite 206  
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## Tips for Interacting with the Deaf - “Do's” & “Don'ts”

### **“Do's”**

- Ask the Deaf person directly what is the best way to interact and communicate with them.
- If you must use pen and paper initially, use short, simple sentences.
- Remember, the Deaf person's grammar may not be perfectly correct nor read well in English.
- Position yourself 3-6 feet from the person.
- Convey your willingness to communicate, and include the Deaf person in the conversation..
- Give clues to the person about your topic, especially as the subject of the conversation changes.
- Be aware of your facial expressions, eye gaze, etc. as well as the Deaf person's.
- Use appropriate gestures and facial expressions and speak at your normal rate.
- Repeat yourself if necessary, and use simple to understand language.
- Allow for more time in the communication process, you are crossing several language barriers.
- Be friendly; they merit the same respect as anyone else.
- Look directly at the person, keeping your hands and face toward the Deaf person you are speaking with, even when they are looking at an interpreter.

### **“Dont's”**

- Don't underestimate a person's intelligence based on their inability to communicate directly.
- Don't assume communication is occurring correctly - nodding doesn't mean “I understand.”
- Don't pretend to understand if you don't. Ask for clarification if you need it.
- Don't exaggerate your words, mouth movements, or yell.
- Don't have objects in your mouth, or cover your mouth while speaking.
- Don't repeat the same word if there is difficulty understanding it. Use a synonym.
- Don't speak to a Deaf person with your back to a strong light, bright window or shiny mirror.
- Don't refer to Deaf people in the third person as if they weren't present - “Tell them/Ask them”.
- Don't tell the interpreter, “Don't say this to the deaf person...”
- If you must discuss something you don't want “heard”, leave the room, or wait until the Deaf person leaves.

### **To get a Deaf Person's Attention:**

- When entering a room, flip the light switch off/on once or twice so they know you are there.
- Ask what how they prefer to be nudged – a rap on a desk; a light shoulder tap; or arm tap.