

The Basics of Sign Language Interpreting

What is sign language interpreting?

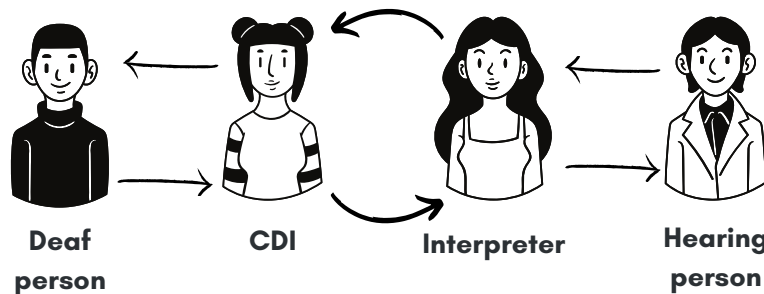
Sign language interpreting is used as a way to facilitate communication between someone who uses sign language and someone who uses spoken language. Interpreters are used in various settings, and there are a couple different types of sign language interpreters.

ASL Interpreters

ASL interpreters are individuals who have extensive knowledge of ASL and English. It is not necessary to be a native signer, as many interpreters learn ASL as a second language. Knowledge of the Deaf community is still required, but the interpreter does not have to be a part of the community themselves.

Deaf Interpreters (DI)

Deaf interpreters are individuals who are culturally Deaf and have extensive knowledge of the Deaf community, ASL, English, and other visual/tactile methods of communication. ASL interpreters and DIs typically work together. The DI interprets what the signer communicates into true ASL, which is then translated to spoken English by an ASL interpreter.



Interpreting Settings

Wherever any type of language is used (spoken or visual), interpreters can be present! Common places where interpreters can be found are medical appointments, classrooms, performance events, legal settings, and social events. Interpreting services can also be either virtual or in person depending on several factors related to the event.

Requesting Interpreters

In an educational setting, an interpreter can be requested through the institution's disability services center. Requesting interpreters through the RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf) is also an option in other settings.

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI)

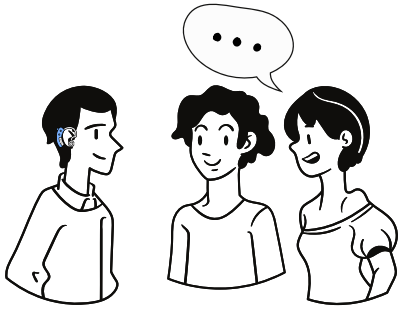
VRI services provide access to interpreters anywhere, as long as there is a device with a camera and internet connection. VRI can be used for medical appointments, in-person meetings, etc. All parties are visible with VRI, as it is basically like having an interpreter in the room (but they are on a screen instead of physically there)!

Video Relay Service (VRS)

VRS is a federally-funded service that makes phone call more accessible. The Deaf person is connected to an interpreter through video call, and the interpreters relays the message in spoken English through the phone. The slight disadvantage to VRS is it can only be used for phone call purposes, unlike VRI which can be used for both virtual and in-person events.

Remember, interpreters are there for both the individual who is D/deaf or hard of hearing AND you! They are there as a resource to make communication more accessible for every person involved, regardless of hearing status or language modality.

A Guide to Working with Sign Language Interpreters

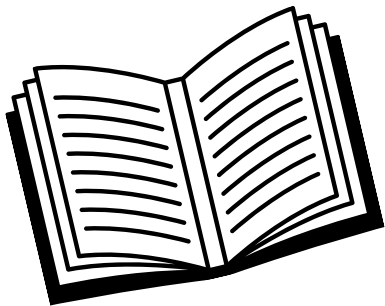
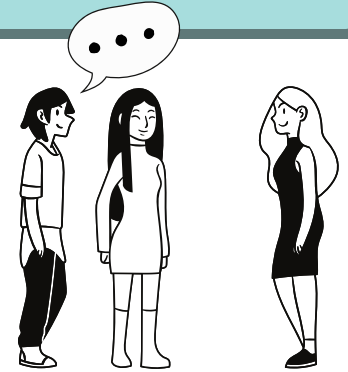


Speak to the individual, not the interpreter

Interpreters are there to do exactly what their name entails – interpret! Avoid phrases like “Can you ask them...” or “Will you tell them...” etc. The interpreter is there to bridge the language gap, not be an active participant in the conversation.

Look at the individual, not the interpreter

Maintain eye contact with the person you are speaking with, not the interpreter. This allows the individual who is D/deaf or hard of hearing to pick up on your non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions.

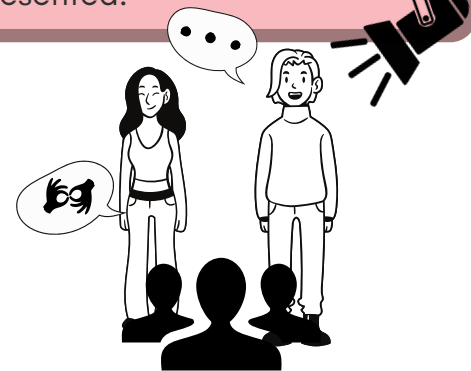


Give the interpreter materials in advance

If you are teaching or giving a presentation of some sort, give the interpreter your material (slideshow, notes, etc.) in advance. This allows them to prepare before the event in case they are unfamiliar with the topic being presented.

Be mindful of your surroundings

Make sure you are in a space with enough light and there is nothing blocking the individual or interpreter’s line of sight. Making a space accessible to the signer and the interpreter is vital to ensure effective communication.



Don’t ask the interpreter to omit information

Interpreters abide by a professional code of conduct outlined by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID). They are there to give individuals who are D/deaf or hard of hearing the same access to events and information as their hearing peers, meaning they will interpret everything spoken into sign language, even if you ask them to omit something.

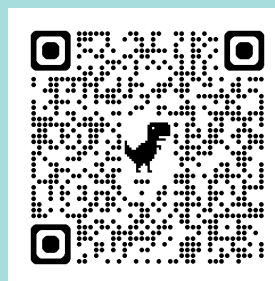
If you are unsure about something, ask!

Avoid personal conversations with the interpreter while they are doing their job, but if you are unsure about how to approach something don’t hesitate to ask! The interpreter is there to support you and the individual who is D/deaf or hard of hearing.

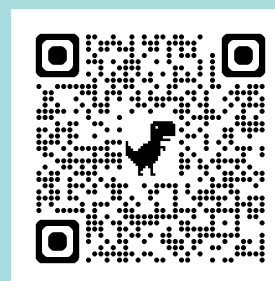


Interpreting Resources

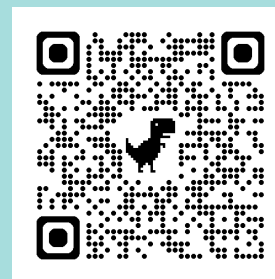
**Deaf Interpreter
vs.
ASL Interpreter**



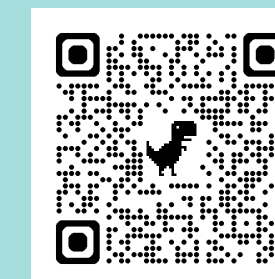
VRS and VRI



**General Tips for Working
with Interpreters**



**Tips for Working with
Interpreters in Education**



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