

How to

work with sign language interpreters



How to series / WSLI2007

Interpreters will help you get your message across. You can help them by following some simple advice:

DO:

- ✓ Brief your interpreter in full before a meeting. Give them as much advance warning as possible and details about the assignment. This should include date, time, location, building, room, contact people and their phone numbers, transport arrangements, subject matter, etc.
- ✓ Position the interpreter where they are directly visible to the deaf person

AND where the interpreter can clearly hear and be heard.

- ✓ Make sure lighting is sufficient for signing.
- ✓ Make sure that people speak one at a time, in turn.
- ✓ Indicate whose turn it is to speak next, if in a group.
- ✓ Ask the interpreter for a run through of how it works for clarity.
- ✓ Consider whether the subject matter is sensitive and decide whether you need an interpreter to be male or female.

- ✓ Give details of the people involved beforehand in case they are known to the interpreter and it might affect the interpreter's impartiality.
- ✓ Speak clearly and not too fast.

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✓ Appoint a chair, if there is a group. The chair can designate who is speaking and stop people from talking out of turn – which will help interpreter and the deaf person.

✓ Allow extra time and pauses for communication both ways.

✓ Avoid long, complex sentences, and do not use slang, jargon, or colloquial expressions. Explain organisations or concepts that might be unknown.

✓ Allow breaks. A break every 30 minutes if you are having simultaneous interpreting and every hour or so if consecutive. It also allows the deaf person time to recuperate from visually concentrating on the signing.

✓ Allow 5 minutes for the interpreter to introduce themselves and explain their role and the fact that they are impartial and will treat all matters as confidential. You can also

introduce yourself and explain your own role.

✓ Remember that deaf people cannot read displayed info (e.g. a presentation) AND look at the interpreter at the same time.

✓ Give a summary at the end.

DON'T

✗ Speak to the interpreter directly. Always speak directly to the deaf person.

✗ Refer to the interviewee in the third person.. “can you ask her”... just talk to the deaf person as you would anyone else.

✗ Say things “off the record” - it is the interpreters duty to interpret every word that is said.



Other documents in the How to series:

- How to work with interpreters
- How to plan a multilingual meeting
- How to save money on translation costs
- How to use free translation tools online
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