



A Hearing Person's Guide to Using ASL Interpreters

Once an individual or company, new to the Deaf community, realizes how empowering this **tool** is, they will be excited to continue to use the services of an ASL interpreter for years to come.

Yes, a professional interpreter is a **communications "tool"**, much like a telephone.

In short, the interpreter is not a part of your event or there to express their personal opinions. The interpreter is there to **facilitate communications between hearing and non-hearing people and groups**.

Professional interpreters are required to follow a strict code of ethics, which includes keeping strong boundaries and maintaining strict confidentiality. You can learn more about Ethics and Standards at <http://ASNWonline.com>.

Some basic guidelines for using a Sign Language Interpreter

- Communicate directly with the person you are speaking or signing to, not the interpreter.
- Look at the person who is signing / speaking to you. This may feel awkward at first since the message is coming through your interpreter. Just remember, the interpreter is a tool, you are not communicating with them, they are facilitating communication between you and the Deaf person.
- Address the person you are communicating with directly:
 - Appropriate: "What is your date of birth?"
 - Inappropriate: "Ask him his date of birth."
- If you are making a presentation, where lots of material will be covered during the presentation, try to provide the interpreter with an advanced copy of notes, program outlines or handouts.
- If you are in an industry where special terminology is frequently used, it can be helpful to provide the interpreter a glossary of terms in advance.
- If, while using an interpreter, you plan to turn down the lights, remember to leave enough lighting on the interpreter to insure the Deaf person can see them.
- The interpreter may ask for specific seating/positioning to facilitate the best viewing angles.
- Sign/Speak in your normal tone, at your normal pace. The interpreter will tell you if you need to pause or slow down.
- People sometimes read aloud differently than they typically sign/speak. When reading extensively from written materials, consider supplying a copy to the audience and the interpreter. Be aware of the pace of your signing/speech.
- Even when an interpreter is present, it is best that you position yourself so that the person you are communicating with can see your mouth when you are speaking.
- Be aware that the interpreter should interpret *everything* said. Avoid discussing subjects you don't wish the other person to know.
- When separated from the person you are communicating with, avoid giving messages to the interpreter for later relay to the individual.
- Relax. If you are unsure of the appropriate way to proceed in a particular situation, just ask.