

## What do interpreters do?

A sign language interpreter is a language professional fluent in at least one spoken and one signed language and who interprets from one of these languages to another. The interpreter's task is to facilitate communication in an impartial manner, ensuring equal access to information and participation. The interpretation will be accurate, unedited and will contain all the nuances, tone and intent of the original speaker or signer. Interpreters adhere to a code of ethics covering confidentiality, linguistic and professional competence, as well as professional growth and development.

## Tips for Effective Communication in an Interpreting Situation

- Speak directly to the Deaf person and NOT to the interpreter
- Face the Deaf person when the interpreter is voicing what the Deaf person is signing
- Only one person should speak at a time: interpreters can only interpret one at a time
- Speak directly to the Deaf person and maintain eye contact with them. The interpreter is there to facilitate direct communication between you and the Deaf person, so there is no need to say 'Tell her ...' or 'Ask him ...'
- Speak naturally at your normal pace. Expect a short time delay; this is normal when translating from one language to another. The interpreter will ask you to slow down or to repeat something if necessary. S/he may also ask for clarification when required
- It is helpful to pause at natural breaks in the

conversation to ensure the Deaf person has the opportunity to respond and/or ask questions. Reading from long written texts is likely to result in poor and inadequate interpretation

- The interpreter must be visible. Therefore, in group situations it may be best to arrange people in a circle
- The interpreter will interpret everything that is being said or signed so don't say anything that you do not wish to be conveyed to the Deaf person
- The role of the interpreter is to remain impartial and neutral; do not engage them in conversation while interpreting or ask them for their opinion
- When using audiovisual media, check that there are subtitles or alternative formats, for all audio content, including sounds.

## Health and Safety for Sign Language

### Interpreters

#### Regular Breaks

Sign language interpreting is a complex task that requires considerable cognitive processing. Therefore, regular breaks are essential to ensure the quality of the interpretation is maintained. Below are some guidelines which may help when scheduling breaks:

- For a non-complex assignment, with one interpreter working on their own, there should be a break at least every 45 minutes. For complex or fast-paced assignments, breaks may be needed every 20-30 minutes
- If the interpreter does not break after the recommended time then the quality of the interpretation will be affected. This drop in quality may not be noticed by clients. Also, working for longer periods of time can contribute to work-related conditions, such as Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI)

- Breaks benefit everyone! So don't wait until the interpreter is tired. Take breaks as scheduled and allow 5-10 minutes for each one.

## Tips for Conference Organisers

- Try to book your interpreter *at least* two weeks in advance of your event
- All information circulated to the attendees should also be circulated to the interpreters i.e. the schedule, the audience seating arrangement, coffee facilities, etc
- Send materials, such as conference papers, Powerpoint presentations and speeches to the interpreters in advance whenever possible, even if only in draft form. The interpreter will need to prepare, i.e. review vocabulary, clarify technical jargon etc. All documents will be held in strictest confidence
- Plan breaks for the interpreters independent of breaks organised for the audience—audience breaks can still be 'work time' for interpreters as clients may want to use them for networking purposes
- If it is a full day conference then three interpreters may be required on a rota basis
- The backdrop should be plain so that the Deaf person has a clear view of the interpreter signing. A table for papers, notes and water should be provided
- Usually the interpreter will stand near the speaker so that the Deaf person can watch the speaker also.

## Additional Tips for Working with Interpreters in Educational Settings

- Book interpreters well in advance. Provide the timetable and block book to ensure continuity of service and to allow the interpreter to build up knowledge of the subject
- All lecture notes should be given to the interpreter in advance to allow sufficient preparation. All documents will be held in strictest confidence
- Add the interpreter's email address to your list of students in the class. In this way, the interpreter can stay informed about class cancellations, additions, projects and assignments, etc.
- Certain factors, such as the difficulty of the subject, the day's timetable and/or the interpreters knowledge of the area, may mean that the interpreter requires additional support for some classes
- It can be helpful to write technical words or jargon on the white board. The Deaf student cannot take written notes while watching the interpreter

## When You Should Use an Interpreter

- Doctor Appointments
- Hospital Appointments
- Meetings
- Conferences
- Training
- Job Interviews
- School, College or University
- Social Events
- Legal appointments
- Garda Stations
- Religious Ceremonies

## The Importance of Using Qualified Interpreters

Please use a qualified sign language interpreter at all times. The consequences of using non-qualified or non-accredited interpreters for legal, medical, mental health or other situations may lead to a misdiagnosis or a miscarriage of justice as well as miscommunication.

## Cork Deaf Association

**The Cork Deaf Association** works hard to promote the rights of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in Cork city and county. We aim to see full and equal participation of Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in all aspects of society. Services include Deaf awareness talks, Sign language classes, adjustment to hearing loss programmes, assistive technology and social work supports.

### Our Services

Information Centre

Education

Social Work Service

Hard of Hearing Support

Assistive Technology (Deaftech)

Employment Support

Support Groups and Activities

Outreach Programmes

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Cork Deaf Association

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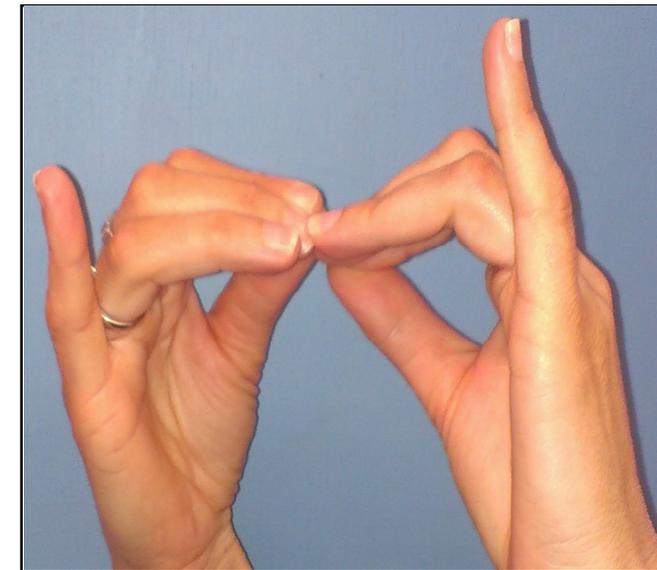
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# Guidelines for Working with ISL Interpreters

Cork Deaf Association