

# TSD Presents:

## Tips for Presenters Working with the Deaf

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1. **Interpreter "lag-time":** Asking questions and encouraging interactivity is an important aspect of successful videoconferencing, as they help to keep the students engaged. However, some first-time presenters have said that it feels like "an eternity" between the time they ask a question, and the time they receive a response, but successful presenters do wait. In the meantime, the interpreter has had to translate the information into sign, the teacher has called on a student to respond, and the interpreter has had to wait for enough of the student's signed message to be produced to be able to process a voice response.
2. **Speed:** Since the gross motor movements of the hands take longer to produce than voice, it usually takes longer to convey the same information in sign than in voice. Presenters who tend to talk quickly need to be coached to slow down. Bear in mind that perceptions are always different. I remember one videoconference for which I tried to prepare the presenter beforehand. Over the telephone, I could tell he was a fast talker. I cautioned him to slow down for the presentation. During the conference I periodically reminded the presenter to slow down. Even then, he was still a very fast talker. But on reviewing the videoconference with him later, I was very surprised to learn that he perceived himself as speaking "very slowly" throughout the conference.
3. **Voice-Over:** The difference between videoconferencing and telephoning is that videoconferencing is visual. Using visuals---pictures, drawings, charts, graphs, signs,

symbols, objects, etc.---are very important in helping videoconferences to be successful. Hearing presenters tend to use "voice-over" with their visuals. Deaf students, however, can't look at the visual image and look at the interpreter simultaneously. This problem occurs especially with demonstrations, or when drawing attention to a particular part of a visual, or when changing from one visual to another. Successful presenters give deaf students time to look at and absorb the visual before talking about it. One way to coach presenters who plan to demonstrate is to have them "show, then tell, then show." I usually recommend that the presenter wait ten-seconds or longer between drawing attention to a particular aspect of a visual and talking about it, or ask for a verbal cue when students are ready for the voice information ("Let me know when you're ready.") Don't forget that before students can attend to the visual, there is an interpreter time-lag.

4. **Visual Breaks:** Sometimes, a picture can be worth a thousand words. In addition, visuals help emphasize key points, provide "visual breaks" for the eyes (which become tired more readily than the ears), and help keep students engaged. Students and new presenters, however, may not fully realize the benefits of visuals, or how to create them. One simple but effective visual is for the presenter to print an important vocabulary term on a card ahead of time, then display it for the camera during the conference. Or, the presenter can use a card to display a question that will be asked during the conference. A plain, flat surface for the visual works best. Shiny surfaces may not transmit very well due to reflections.
5. **Learning activities:** Some presenters like to have students interact with each other for specific purposes at various points within the presentation. However, these presenters need to be aware that deaf students can't focus on a task and listen to the presenter simultaneously, as hearing students can do. The task, therefore, needs to be explained clearly before students begin, and the presenter needs to wait until the task is complete and students' attention is focused back on the monitor or screen before speaking again.