



PEN-International

For Students Who Are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing

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Communication Tips

General

- * Use the term 'international guests' rather than 'foreigners' or 'foreign nationals'.
- * Communicating with international guests requires patience, courtesy and flexibility. There will be misunderstandings but do not lose your patience or get anxious—simply continue to clarify.
- * Despite the language barrier, do not be shy. Using spoken/ sign communication and/or gestures, show an interest in the international guest. Take some time to find out what topics are of interest to them.
- * Making the effort to learn a few commonly used words or signs of the international guest's native language (e.g. 'Thank you') is always much appreciated.
- * If the international guest possesses some knowledge of your language, communicate slower and clearly. However, do not make the message so simple that you appear condescending.
- * Speak with more formality, however, do not be stiff in your communication (e.g. instead of saying 'hi there', say 'hello'. Instead of saying 'he'll', say 'he will')
- * Slang, idioms, or jargon are very difficult to translate and are often taken literally, which can lead to misunderstandings. For example, the idiom, "The door is always open", which is used to indicate that a guest is always welcome, might be greeted by the question, "Why do you always leave your door open?"
- * Do not use rhetorical questions as that may confuse the listener. Rather than say, "Why do we do this?", say, "We do this because....."

- * For international guests who have limited knowledge of your language, try writing important things down, or using pictures and diagrams (e.g., directions, instructions, schedules).
- * Use universal standards for descriptions (e.g. 2:00 p.m. can be translated into 14.00 hours, March 12, 2005 can be translated into 12 March 2005, and miles can be converted to kilometers).
- * Use a bilingual dictionary to assist with communication.
- * Many cultures use formality in communication. Avoid calling international guests by their first names, unless invited to do so. Use titles (e.g. Mr., Mrs., Doctor, Professor). If you are unsure of their surname, simply ask. (*Travel Industry Association of America*).
- * While body language can be a very useful communication tool, use caution. For example:
 - * Different cultures may have a different ‘comfort zones’.
 - * Minimize hand gestures, as some gestures may have negative meanings in some countries
 - * In general, avoid physically touching international guests as it may be perceived as aggressive in some cultures. On the other hand, in some cultures, touching is very common but where and how one is touched is critical. Follow the lead of others, but only if you yourself feel comfortable.
 - * Some cultures may consider direct eye contact as intrusive and disrespectful. Try to mirror the degree of eye contact they give you.
 - * The handshake has many variations among cultures. Wait and see if the international visitor extends his/her hand, and if so, try to match the pressure and length of the handshake. (*Travel Industry Association of America*)

Presentations using interpreters

- * It is possible that communication may be two, three, or even four way. For instance, a deaf presenter who uses American Sign Language (ASL) may require an ASL interpreter to voice into English. A second interpreter would translate from spoken English into the spoken language of the international guest. Then, a third interpreter would translate from the spoken language of the international guest into their native sign language.
- * Audience members should be assertive and take responsibility for their communication needs. Make your needs known. If you do not understand, let others know and make suggestions for change.
- * Be sure that the interpreter set up allows for all participants to have clear visual access. Audience members are encouraged to sit with their peer groups for the purpose of visual lines and interpreting.
- * Presenters should deliver their information in small segments. Say only a few sentences on a topic but make sure that the sentences communicate a complete idea. Pause, and wait for the interpreters to translate the information to the audience. Then, move on to the next few sentences of your presentation.
- * Presenters should use simple, literal sentence structures which leave less room for misunderstandings, and are best for the interpreters to translate. Less material is better than too much material.
- * Presenters should encourage and allow time for questions from the audience, and for the translation process.

* Presenters should be flexible and prepared for the unexpected! The dynamics of communication change constantly. There may be times when you need to talk and sign at the same time due to the interpreting set-up and audience needs.

* Everyone should use active listening. Clarify what you see/hear so that the interpreters can translate for the audience.

* Take a few minutes at the beginning of the day, and at the end of the day, to review the communication set-up.

References

1. Travel Industry Association of America, 1100 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 450, Washington, DC 20005-3934, Copyright 2005.

http://www.tia.org/Tourism/ntw_tipsinternational.asp

2. The Center for Association Leadership, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, DC, 20004. Copyright 2001, 2002.

<http://www.centeronline.org/knowledge/whitepaper.cfm>