



CLASS
ACTS

TEACHER'S GUIDE

2009-2010 season
sponsored by **Siciliano** INC

Nobody's Perfect

Monday, March 22, 2010
10 a.m.

SANGAMON AUDITORIUM 



Teacher's Guide Contents

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Dear Educator,

Welcome to *Class Acts* at Sangamon Auditorium, UIS! We hope this guide will help you expand on concepts from this particular performance and incorporate them into your classroom teaching, both before and after the performance.

Before arriving at the Auditorium, you can prepare your students by helping them understand the story or by sharing basic information about the performing art form. Preparation also includes learning about theater etiquette. (See page 2-3 for Sangamon Auditorium's behavior guidelines.)

After the performance we strongly encourage you to talk to your students about their experience. Did they like the performance? What did they learn? How was the performance different than what they expected? We want students to think of the arts as an integral part of their lives, not just a one-time isolated event. We hope the information and activity ideas included in this guide will help your students gain a deeper understanding of the performance they see.

We look forward to seeing you! If you have any questions about these materials, please feel free to contact me at 217.206.8286 or Shank.Carlyn@uis.edu.

Carly Shank
Director of Audience Development



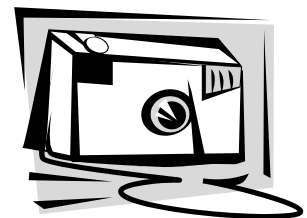
Youth programming in the *Class Acts* series and in conjunction with other Sangamon Auditorium events is supported in part by the Helen Hamilton Performing Arts Endowment for Youth Fund, gifts from Elizabeth and Robert Staley, and a grant from the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency.

Please use this information to help prepare your students for attending a theater performance. For many, this may be their first experience with live theater. By reviewing the guidelines with your students before arriving at the auditorium, we can help make sure everyone has an enjoyable experience. Please note that students whose behavior is disruptive to others will be asked to leave the auditorium.

Going to a live theatrical performance is different than watching a movie or TV show – the members of the audience are very important, and the way they behave will affect the performance. Therefore, theaters have their own special rules about behavior.

Sangamon Auditorium Guidelines:

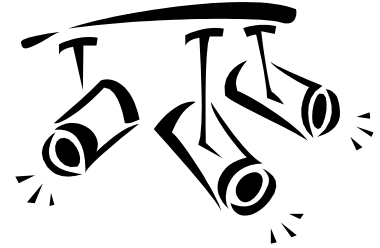
- **Turn off and put away cell phones, iPods, electronic games, beeping watches, or anything else that can light up or make noise** – These can be very distracting to the performers and your fellow audience members.
- **Do not eat, drink, or chew gum in the auditorium** – Even the quietest chewers and slurpers make a great deal of noise in the auditorium! The noise is very distracting to the performers and to the other people around you. Also, even if you are very careful, food and drinks can sometimes make a mess in the auditorium. We try to keep the auditorium as clean as possible so that it will be just as nice for the next audience.
- **Never throw anything in the auditorium** – This is distracting and dangerous for the performers and people in the audience.
- **Do not put your feet on the back of the seat in front of you**
- **Use the restroom before the performance begins** – As soon as your class arrives and is seated in the auditorium, your teacher can arrange visits to the restroom before the performance begins. The ushers will help you find the closest restroom. Of course, if you *must* use the restroom during the performance, please be as quiet as possible about leaving your seat. Once you get to the aisle, an usher will help you find the way.
- **Please do not wear a hat inside the auditorium** – It is difficult for the people behind you to see the stage if you're wearing a hat.
- **Do not take pictures during the performance** – The flashes can be distracting to performers, and it is against the law to take pictures or recordings of many performances.
- **Refrain from talking, whispering, singing along, or tapping in time to the music during the performance** – Remember that live performers can see and hear you from the stage. It is very distracting to the performers and the other audience members if you talk during the performance. After all, the audience came to hear the professionals perform, not you! Save your singing for the ride home.



How to be a good audience member:

- **Ask the ushers if you need help with anything** – The people who wear red coats are volunteer ushers, and they want to make sure everyone is able to enjoy the performance. They will guide you to your seat, and they can help you find a restroom. In any emergency situation, the ushers will help guide your class to safety. Please follow the instructions of the ushers at all times. There may be as many as 1700 people coming to see the performance. The ushers have a lot of work to do to be sure that everyone gets into the auditorium safely and has a seat.

- **When the lights begin to dim, the performance is beginning** – This tells the audience to stop conversations, get settled in their seats, and focus their attention on the stage. A person will come out and make an announcement before the performance begins. Pay close attention to the announcement because it might include special instructions that you will need to remember.



- **Remember that the overture is part of the performance** – If the performance has music in it, there might be an opening piece of music called an overture before any actors appear on stage. Give this piece of music the same respect you give the performers by being silent and attentive while the overture is played.
- **It's ok to react to the performance** – Spontaneous laughter, applause, and gasps of surprise are welcome as part of the special connection between the performers and the audience during a live show. However, shouts, loud comments, and other inappropriate noises are rude and distracting to the actors and your fellow audience members.
- **Clap at the appropriate times** – If you are enjoying the performance, you can let the performers know by clapping for them. During a play or musical, you can clap between scenes (during a blackout) or after songs. During a music concert or dance performance you can clap after each song or piece is performed. In a jazz music concert it is ok to clap in the middle of a song when a musician has finished a solo. If a music ensemble plays a piece with several sections, called movements, the audience should only clap at the very end of all the movements.
- **The performers will bow when the performance ends** – This is called a curtain call. You should applaud to thank the performers for their hard work, but you should not move around or begin to leave the auditorium until the curtain call is over and the lights become brighter. If you really enjoyed the performance, you are welcome to give a standing ovation while you applaud. This is reserved for performances you feel are *truly outstanding!*
- **Respect the hard work of the performers** – You may not enjoy every performance you see, but I hope you will recognize that each performance requires a tremendous amount of dedication on the part of the performers and those who work backstage. It is polite to keep any negative comments to yourself until you have left the building.



Curriculum Connections

The Illinois State Board of Education identifies thirty State Goals in seven areas as required learning targets for elementary and secondary students and schools.

The Illinois Learning Standards in the Fine Arts (State Goals 25-27) address the language of the fine arts (visual arts, music, drama, and dance), sensory elements, organizational principles, and expressive qualities and how the arts are similar, different, or related to each other. Students learn about production and performance in the arts and the role of the arts in civilization. When students study the arts they become informed audience members and informed consumers of the popular culture including electronic media. The standards in fine arts define a comprehensive arts education and reflect a commitment to a quality education for every Illinois school child.

Attendance at a *Class Acts* performance directly relates to the achievement of the following Illinois State Goals in the Fine Arts:

GOAL	DESCRIPTION
25A	Understand the sensory elements, organizational principles, and expressive qualities of the arts.
25B	Understand the similarities, distinctions, and connections in and among the arts.
27A	Analyze how the arts function in history, society, and everyday life.
27B	Understand how the arts shape and reflect history, society, and everyday life.

The concepts in this particular performance can also be expanded to relate to the following additional state goals:

Literature

GOAL	DESCRIPTION
1C	Comprehend a broad range of reading materials.
2A	Understand how literary elements and techniques are used to convey meaning.
4A	Listen effectively in formal and informal situations.
5B	Analyze and evaluate information acquired from various sources.

Social/Emotional Learning

GOAL	DESCRIPTION
SEL 2A	Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.
SEL 2B	Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.
SEL 3A	Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.



Discussion Questions & Activities

Below are some ideas for general questions and activities that can relate to any *Class Acts* performance. The following pages contain additional information and activity suggestions from the performance company.

Before the Show

1. Discuss the different types of performing arts (music, dance, theater) and different types of theater performances (plays, musicals). Have you experienced a live theater performance before? What did you see? What was it like?
2. How is live theater different than other types of entertainment like movies and TV?
You are sharing a one-time experience with other people.
The performance will never be exactly the same again.
3. Familiarize your students with the following theater terms
For younger students – box office, lobby, stage, spotlights, costumes, props, makeup, scenery, actor, director, program, plot
For older students – playwright, lyricist, composer, producer, proscenium arch, overture
4. If the show is based on a book, read the story with your class. If the performance is a presentation of a cultural art form, such as a particular style of dance, help your students understand the basic elements of that art form.

After the Show

1. What did you like? What didn't you like? What did you learn? It's ok if you didn't like what you saw, but you should think about why you didn't like it or what you would have done differently. How was the performance different than what you expected?
2. SETS AND PROPS: Describe the sets. What props or decorations were used? Did it represent a specific place or time period? How were the sets and props moved on and off stage? What materials do you think were used to build the sets? Think of a simple scene your students will be familiar with, such as a classroom, and have them describe what would be needed for a basic set and props.
3. LIGHTING AND SOUND: How did the lighting help create a mood, season, time of day, etc? What sound effects were used?
4. COSTUMES: What would you need to know to design costumes for this show? (historical or cultural research, sewing techniques, any special effects such as quick changes) How does a costume help you understand a character?

5. MUSIC: Was music used in the performance? Was it live or recorded? Did it help develop the plot? What type or style of music was used? How did the music affect your feelings?
6. DANCE: Describe the type of dancing you saw – How is it similar to or different than the types of dancing you do? What purposes did dance serve in this show (emotional expression, portray movements of animals, communicate an idea or message, etc).
7. Draw a picture of your favorite scene or character.
8. Create a diorama of the stage and sets.
9. Design your own program or advertisement for the performance.
10. Learn about theater critics and then write a review of the performance.
11. Write a letter to the author or one of the performers.
12. Make a list of all the people needed to create this production (director; choreographer; performers – actors, dancers, musicians; designers – sets, props, costumes, lights, sound; stagehands; ticket office staff; marketing staff; ushers; etc).



Write to Us!

We would love to hear from you and your students! If your students write about the performance they saw or create artwork related to it, you are welcome to send it to us via email to audonstage@uis.edu or through the mail to

Class Acts
Sangamon Auditorium, UIS
One University Plaza, MS PAC 397
Springfield, IL 62703-5407

We love sharing student work with our *Class Acts* sponsors, so they can see the impact of their donations.

About the Show

The Story

My name is Megan and I'm about to turn 10 years old. To celebrate I'm having a positively purple birthday party. Why purple? It's my favorite color! I've made party invitations for all the girls in my class, including my best friends, of course.

Then what happens? A new girl – Alexis – arrives. At first, she seems perfect. But when I invite her to my party, she says no. That hurts my feelings. I'm afraid she doesn't like me because I'm deaf (that means I can't hear).

And then it gets worse. Our teacher assigns Alexis and me to work together on a science fair project! To find out how it all ends, you'll have to come to the performance.



Tami Lee Santimyer as Megan. Photo credit: Carol Pratt.

Nobody's Perfect is . . .

. . . a musical . . .

That's a story acted out on stage with actors, lights, words, and songs.

. . . performed in two languages . . .

I speak American Sign Language, or ASL. It is its own language, just like Spanish or French. In ASL, instead of using your voice to talk, you "talk" with your hands, body, and facial expressions. In the musical, actors will use both ASL and spoken English. Don't worry! If you don't know ASL, you can listen to one of the actors who will be speaking out loud what I am silently signing, or you can read the words on a screen onstage.

. . . with big ideas!

As you watch and listen, think about:

1. what different people, like me and Alexis, could learn from each other
2. what the title, Nobody's Perfect, means

The Characters

- Me
- My older brother, Matt
- My best friends
 - Cindy
 - Keisha
 - Bethany
- Alexis, the new girl
- Her younger brother, Justin
- My teacher, Mr. Morgan
- The class hamster, Zippity . . . yes, a hamster plays a role – you'll see!

Here's a little secret. All the boys' roles are played by the same actor. How can one actor change quickly from one role to the other? Watch closely to see how he does it.



(l-r) Jennifer Irons as Alexis, Omoro Omoighe as Keisha, Florrie Bagel as Bethany, Rachel Brennan as Cindy.
Photo credit: Carol Pratt.

Learning Points & Activities

Types of Deafness

Some people are born unable to hear any sounds at all. Other people lose their hearing because of an accident or from being sick. Others can hear some, but not all, sounds – so, they might use hearing aids to headphones to make sounds louder.

Why My Voice Sounds Different

I speak sometimes during the performance. I learned how to speak but not all people who are deaf do. For audience members who can hear, my voice may sound unusual. That's because I cannot hear my own voice. (Hearing people depend a lot on sound to help them pronounce their words exactly right.)

Why Justin Acts Differently

Justin is a boy whose brain works differently. He has autism (pronounced AW-tih-zum). Children who have autism usually behave differently and they might need extra help communicating.

Game 1: Let's Pretend!

How can an actor pretend to be a hamster? Standing upright and using only movement and facial expression, work with your friends to plan and practice a good way to show an audience member you're a hamster. (At the show, watch for how the actor does it!)

Game 2: Setting the Stage

How can we help the audience image the different places the musical takes place – my bedroom, Alexis' bedroom, the classroom, and the shopping mall? Work with your friends to plan simple ways to set the stage for each location. Draw your idea. (At the show, watch for how we do it!)

About American Sign Language

What is American Sign Language?

American Sign Language (ASL) is a complete, complex language that employs signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. It is the first language of many deaf North Americans, and one of several communication options available to deaf people. ASL is said to be the fourth most commonly used language in the United States.

Is sign language the same around the globe?

No one form of sign language is universal. For example, British Sign Language (BSL) differs notably from ASL. Different sign languages are used in different countries or regions.

Where did ASL originate?

The exact beginnings of ASL are not clear. Many people believe that ASL came mostly from French Sign Language (FSL). Others claim that the foundation for ASL existed before FSL was introduced in America in 1817. It was in that year that a French teacher named Laurent Clerc, brought to the United States by Thomas Gallaudet, founded the first school for the deaf in Hartford, Connecticut. Clerc began teaching FSL to Americans, though many of his students were already fluent in their own forms of local, natural sign language. Today's ASL likely contains some of this early American signing. Which language had more to do with the formation of modern ASL is difficult to prove. Modern ASL and FSL share some elements, including a substantial amount of vocabulary. However, they are not mutually comprehensible.

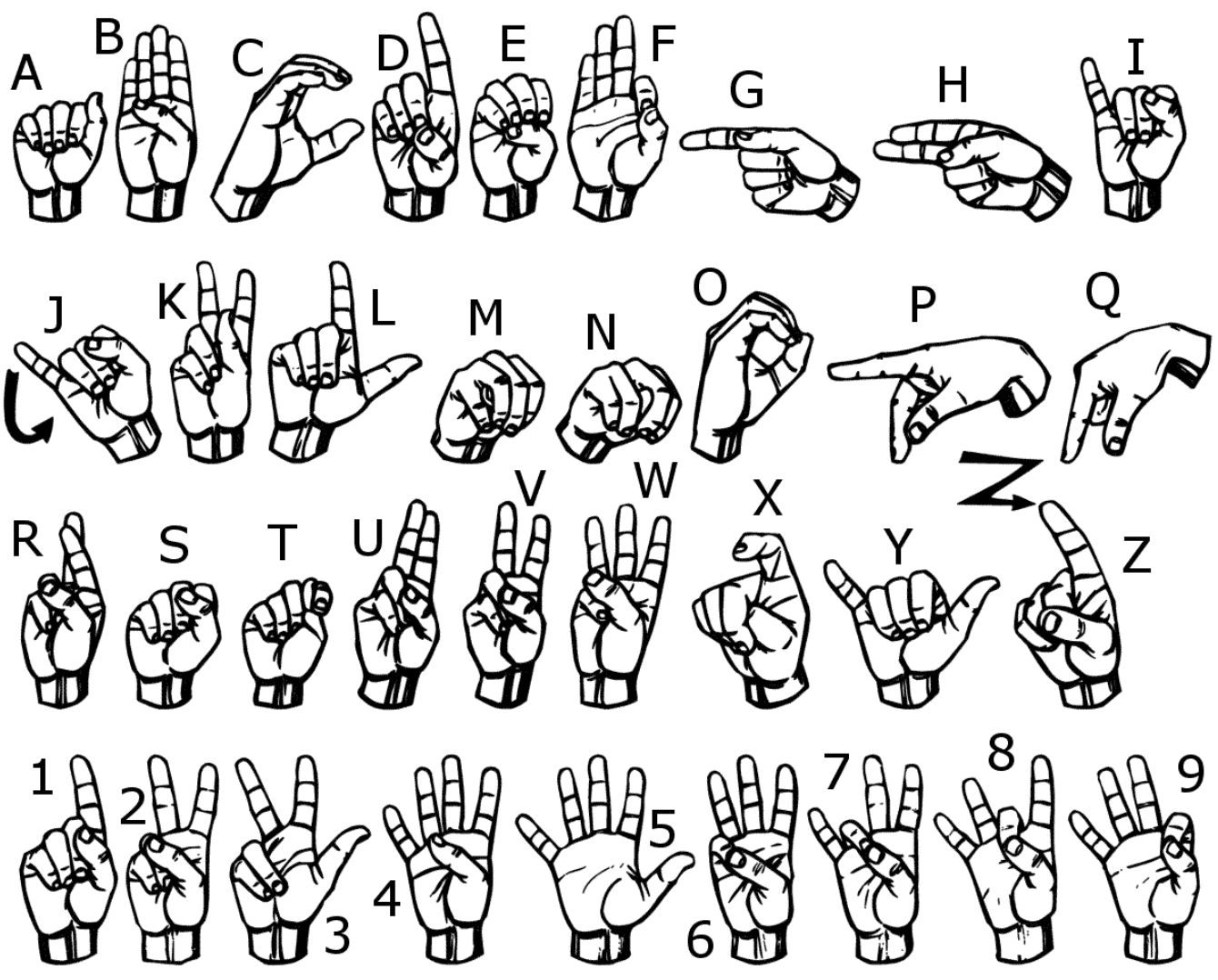
How does ASL compare with spoken language?

In spoken language, the different sounds created by words and tones of voice (intonation) are the most important devices used to communicate. Sign language is based on the idea that sight is the most useful tool a deaf person has to communicate and receive information. Thus, ASL uses hand shape, position, and movement; body movements; gestures; facial expressions; and other visual cues to form its words. Like any other language, fluency in ASL happens only after a long period of study and practice.

Even though ASL is used in America, it is a language completely separate from English. It contains all the fundamental features a language needs to function on its own--it has its own rules for grammar, punctuation, and sentence order. ASL evolves as its users do, and it also

allows for regional usage and jargon. Every language expresses its features differently; ASL is no exception. Whereas English speakers often signal a question by using a particular tone of voice, ASL users do so by raising the eyebrows and widening the eyes. Sometimes, ASL users may ask a question by tilting their bodies forward while signaling with their eyes and eyebrows. Just as with other languages, specific ways of expressing ideas in ASL vary as much as ASL users themselves do. ASL users may choose from synonyms to express common words. ASL also changes regionally, just as certain English words are spoken differently in different parts of the country. Ethnicity, age, and gender are a few more factors that affect ASL usage and contribute to its variety.

This information is from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) and is available online at <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/hearing/asl.asp>



Deaf Culture

Deaf Culture

It often comes as a surprise to people that many deaf people refer to themselves as being members of Deaf culture. The **American Deaf culture** is a unique linguistic minority that uses American Sign Language (ASL) as its primary mode of communication. This tipsheet provides a description of Deaf culture and suggestions for effective communication.

Common terms used within the Deaf community:

The American Deaf culture has labels for identifying its members. These labels reflect both cultural values and beliefs.

Deaf - This term refers to members of the Deaf community who share common values, norms, traditions, language, and behaviors. Deaf people do not perceive themselves as having lost something (i.e., hearing) and do not think of themselves as handicapped, impaired, or disabled. They celebrate and cherish their culture because it gives them the unique privilege of sharing a common history and language. Deaf people are considered a linguistic minority within the American culture. They have their own culture and at the same time live and work within the dominant American culture.

Deaf, hard of hearing, and deafened - Within the Deaf culture these words refer to a person's audiological status. Notice lower case "d" is used. People who describe themselves as "hard of hearing" or "deafened" do not see themselves as members of the Deaf culture. Some may know sign language but their primary language is English.

Hearing Impaired - This term often is used by the media and society in general to refer to people with a hearing loss. A more acceptable generic phrase is "deaf and hard of hearing" to refer to **all** people with a hearing loss. Within the Deaf culture, the term "hearing impaired" often is seen as offensive. It suggests that Deaf people are "broken" or "inferior" because they do not hear.

Hearing - Within the Deaf culture the term "hearing" is used to identify people who are members of the dominant American culture. One might think the ASL sign for "hearing" is related to the group's ability to hear (e.g., pointing to the ear). However, the sign for "hearing" is related to the ability to "talk." The act of talking is clearly visible to Deaf people, whereas listening or hearing is not. From the Deaf culture perspective, it is the act of "talking" that clearly separates the two groups.

Comparison of Values:

The most dominant cultural pattern in the United States is **individualism**. Most Americans have been raised to consider themselves as separate individuals who are exclusively responsible for their own lives. Common phrases that reflect this cultural pattern are "Do your own thing," "Look out for number one," and "I did it my way." For example, when Americans introduce themselves, they feel it is important to include their name and occupation, which serve to emphasize their uniqueness. Closely associated with individualism is the importance Americans place on privacy. Americans have "personal space" and "personal thoughts." They find it odd if a person does not value "being alone."

In contrast, one of the most dominant cultural patterns in the Deaf culture is **collectivism**. Deaf people consider themselves members of a group that includes **all** Deaf people. They perceive themselves as a close-knit and interconnected group. Deaf people greatly enjoy being in the company of other Deaf people and actively seek ways to do this. When Deaf people first meet, the initial goal is to find out where the other person is from and to identify the Deaf friends they both have in common.

A person's physical appearance is noted and remembered because it is the landscape for all signed communication. Sometimes a person's name may not come up until the end of the conversation. Closely associated with collectivism is the importance of open communication. Having secrets or withholding information work against an interconnected collective.

The behaviors associated with cultural values are deeply rooted. We do not consciously think about the rules involved when making introductions or how to say goodbye when we leave. As children we saw these behaviors repeated often and have long since fully incorporated them into our cultural repertoire. It is only when we are placed in a culture that uses different rules that we realize there is another possible way to accomplish the same task. For example, when a Deaf person leaves a gathering of other Deaf people, the process is quite lengthy. In Deaf culture one approaches each group to say goodbye, which often results in further conversation. The entire process may take more than an hour to accomplish. This behavior may seem unusual; however, if we remember that Deaf culture highly values being interconnected with all of its members, the behavior makes a great deal of sense.

American Sign Language:

Another important cultural value for Deaf people is their language - ASL. Most Deaf people spend the majority of their lives with people who do not know ASL. It is only when Deaf people are in the presence of other Deaf people that all communication barriers are removed.

It is obvious to most people that ASL is a visual language. What is not so obvious is how the visual nature of the language impacts on the rules for communication. In spoken languages there is no requirement for eye contact between the speaker and listener. In fact, we spend very little time looking at each other. We are not used to maintaining eye contact for long periods of time. Also, we often allow environmental noises to take our attention and we divert our eyes. In a signed conversation the "listener" must always look at the "speaker." From the Deaf perspective, broken eye contact or the lack of eye contact shows indifference.

Most hearing people do not freely and effectively use their face and body to communicate, so Deaf people see their communication as lifeless and lacking emotion.

Facial expression and body language are integral parts of ASL. Deaf people have an exceptional ability to use and read nonverbal communication. They pick up on very subtle facial and body movements. An important aspect of body language is the use of "touch." Touching another person is used in Deaf culture to greet, say goodbye, get attention, and express emotion.

Guidelines for Communication:

1) Most people feel uncomfortable when meeting a Deaf person for the first time. This is very normal. When we communicate with people, we generally don't have to think about the process. When faced with a Deaf person, we are uncertain which rules apply. We don't know where to look, or how fast or loud to speak. When the Deaf person gives us a look of confusion, we don't know how to correct the problem. Accept the fact that your initial communications will feel uncomfortable and awkward. As you interact more, you will start to feel more comfortable and know how to make yourself understood.

- 2) It's okay to write to a Deaf person. The Deaf person will appreciate your effort even more if you use a combination of gestures, facial expressions, body language, and written communication. Some Deaf people can lip read very well. If one approach doesn't work, try another. If the Deaf person uses her/his voice and you don't understand, it's fine to indicate the person should write.
- 3) Most people engage in very quick and efficient conversations. We often lose patience when someone is having difficulty understanding. We look for ways to speed up the interaction. Deaf people highly value face-to-face communication and perceive it as an investment, not an imposition. Take the time to communicate and connect. If the Deaf person does not understand, she or he will ask questions. If you do not understand the Deaf person, stop the conversation and ask for clarification. Never fake understanding or say, "Never mind, it's not important." No matter how trivial, share the information.
- 4) Deaf people listen with their eyes. A Deaf person cannot look at an object and at the same time listen to you describe how to use it. Only talk when you have eye contact with the Deaf person.
- 5) Many Deaf people will use a sign language interpreter. You should speak directly to the Deaf person, not to the interpreter, and maintain eye contact with the Deaf person. This will feel awkward because the Deaf person will be looking at the interpreter, not you, but it will be noticed and appreciated by the Deaf person.
- 6) Some people are reluctant to attempt to communicate directly with a Deaf person when they use an interpreter. Use the beginning and end of the conversation as an opportunity for direct communication with the Deaf person. When you take the initiative to shake hands, make eye contact, use gestures, touch and/or smile, you are communicating in a visual and tactile manner.

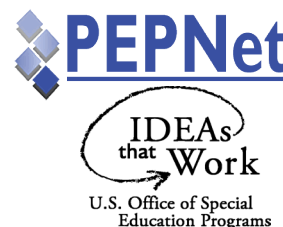
Please note these guidelines aren't meant to be an inclusive list in working with culturally Deaf people, but a starting point for improved conditions.

For more information, contact:

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