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Intentionally or not, our physical rooms convey an atmosphere to our guests and this is part of projecting a welcoming image. One colleague of mine has his office desk facing the wall. When you enter the room, there is a comfortable chair for you, and my friend swivels around facing you. You sit almost knee to knee with nothing between you. Another colleague has his desk facing the door. He is on the other side with the desk between you. Besides putting space between you and him, his sitting behind the desk signals authority and creates a status gulf besides the physical gap created by the desk.

Look for ways to be a virtual online host and create an online atmosphere. Find ways to be warm and welcoming. In a face-to-face class, I do not stand at the door to welcome students as they arrive. On the computer, I try to recognize students personally once they have become virtually connected.

### **3. Model The Behavior You Want From Your Students**

Obviously, you will use the syllabus or other introductory materials to describe the course structure and explain how it will function. Especially for students new to online learning, they may not be sure how to interact in this setting. There is nothing like modeling the behavior you want from your students to provide them with clues to how they should behave. For example, if you want a relaxed, spontaneous and sharing kind of class, make your personal introduction to the class in a relaxed and informal style. Talk about your family, your hobbies and show your non-professional side along with providing your academic qualifications. If you want a class that is highly structured; one where all the work turned in to you has been proof read and spell checked, use an introduction that is formal and academic. In one case when you make online responses, you will carefully use proper grammar, no slang and even spell check spontaneous interaction. If you want spontaneity from your students, make your interactions relaxed and informal.

Different courses have different demands. Remember, the class will not see your body language. You can put the same kind of message into the format of written communication, a kind of verbal body language. Most students will reflect back to you the kind of behavior that you model for them.



#### **4. Be Interactive**

The uniqueness of the Internet is its potential for interaction. Make the most of it. Many studies of the impact of the Internet and the personal computer is that both tend to flatten power relations. This has also been shown true for distance learning. While some teachers find the lessening of power to be threatening, others find it liberating. It is now an old and hackneyed saying to say that the difference between classroom learning and distance learning is "The sage on the stage" versus "the guide on the side." Instead of being an authority figure, beyond challenge, the instructor becomes a resource. the teacher's role changes from that of being an instructor to becoming a mentor, and students do more than learn a disciplines content; they learn how to learn.

#### **5. Modularize Your Material**

Sitting in class through an hour-long lecture stretches most students' attention span. Listening to an hour-long audio or watching an hour-long video requires more concentration when there may be interruptions from family or even the phone. Instructional designers, whether talking of a face-to-face class or a virtual class strongly recommend that the content be broken into smaller, logical segments of 2-3 pages in length or 4-5 minutes long. If you build in opportunities for interaction at those breaks, it will help students engage both with the content and with each other.

In live presentations, teachers frequently go over material 2-3 times from different angles to help students understand and remember it. If the online content is asynchronous, and modularized, the repetition can be omitted because students can readily proceed at their individual pace and repeat a module 2 or 3 times. If the student has been interrupted because he or she does not have a controlled environment, the student doesn't lose the material as it can be repeated.

#### **6. Use of Multimedia and Images**

Different learners learn differently. Some are visual learners; some understand auditory information well; some benefit from text. By providing a variety of experiences, all learners benefit. Even if you can find ways to present the same or similar content in different modes, you will benefit a wider audience. Similarly, some content is better adapted to text; some to pictures; some to audio or video. The point is to select the communication mode for its usefulness in communication content rather than selecting it to impress the students with your technical skills.

While people do have different preferred learning and interacting modes, some have disabilities which necessitates their learning by one mode or another. Besides accommodating different learning styles, you may be making the course content



















- ❖ Keep lines of sight free for deaf individuals to have visual access to information. In class, the interpreter will position himself or herself in direct line with you, the student, and any visual aids.
- ❖ Speak naturally at a reasonable pace to help facilitate an effective interpretive process.
- ❖ The interpreter may request clarification from you or the student to insure accuracy of the communication conveyed.
- ❖ Encourage all students to wait until the teacher recognizes them before speaking or signing. The interpreter can only convey one message at a time. Repeat or paraphrase questions and comments made during class.
- ❖ Look directly at the person with whom you are communicating, not the interpreter. Use of third-party phrases such as, “Ask her” or “Tell him” can compromise the relationship between the instructor and student(s).
- ❖ Avoid talking while students are focused on written class work. Students who are deaf require time to process visual aids and materials before returning their attention to the interpreter.
- ❖ Students cannot read and watch the interpreter at the same time. Avoid talking while students are focused on written work or overhead projections/multimedia presentations.
- ❖ Receiving information visually without breaks can be tiring and cause eye fatigue. Plan strategic breaks so both students and interpreters can get a rest from the rigors of interpreting.
- ❖ Classes longer than one hour often require a team of interpreters.
  - Typically any class over one hour will require a team of two interpreters who will take turns interpreting usually 20-30 minute intervals.
  - Interpreter in the support position is still processing and monitoring the information being presented.
  - Captioned films and videotapes allow the students direct visual access to the information. The student cannot attend to both the interpreter and the constant stream of visual media at the same time.
  - As mentioned under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), publicly funded institutions must give “primary consideration” to the communication preferences of individuals with disabilities.
  - Information regarding captioned classroom media can be found at <http://www.pepnet.org/sites/default/files/61PEPNet%20Tipsheet%20-%20Captioning.pdf>
- ❖ It is difficult to take notes while watching a sign language interpreter; therefore, a notetaker would be a reasonable accommodation in these instances. The interpreter should not be utilized as a notetaker as they are focused on the interpreting process.
- ❖ If the test has either an oral or written format (essay, multiple choice, or in the blank), the student may prefer to have the interpreter interpret questions into sign language.

<http://www.pepnet.org/sites/default/files/75PEPNet%20Tipsheet%20-%20Interpreting.pdf>