**DEAF CULTURE:**

There are many important aspects of Deaf culture, here are a few highlights:

**Test your Knowledge: Deaf Culture Quiz**

**DEAF CULTURE QUIZ**(This quiz and its answers have been modified and adapted based on the deaf culture quiz found at <http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-layout/culture11.htm>)

True or False:  
  
1. \_\_\_\_\_American Sign Language, like our spoken English, is originally from Britain.   
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_The Deaf community has its own culture.  
  
3. \_\_\_\_\_Deaf people, as a whole, are good lip readers.  
  
4\_\_\_\_\_If I don't know sign language, mouthing words to a deaf person is the best way to communicate.  
  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ The words "Signer" and "Interpreter" mean the same thing and can be used interchangeably.  
  
6.\_\_\_\_\_Deaf people, because they can't hear, are better readers than hearing people.  
  
7.\_\_\_\_\_Hearing aids correct a person's hearing.  
  
8.\_\_\_\_\_American Sign Language is a complete language with its own grammar.  
  
9.\_\_\_\_\_Deaf people are required to have a special license to drive.  
  
10. \_\_\_\_\_ 90 % of deaf and hard of hearing children have deaf parents.  
  
11. \_\_\_\_\_If a deaf person is having difficulty understanding you, talking louder helps.

12.\_\_\_\_\_ If you don't know how to sign, using an interpreter is the best way to ensure communication with a deaf person who signs.  
  
13. \_\_\_\_\_Most deaf people can read or write English as well as their hearing peers.  
  
14. \_\_\_\_\_For many deaf people, ASL is considered their first language, and English their second language.  
  
15. \_\_\_\_\_When using an interpreter, it is appropriate to look at and speak directly to the deaf person.

**Select the best answer:**

16. When watching a person sign, it is best to focus on the signer's:  
A.  Hands  
B:  Chest area  
C:  Face and facial expression  
D:  All of the above, simultaneously  
  
17. If your path is blocked by two signers having a conversation with each other, you should:  
A.  Wait until they stop signing before you pass through.  
B:  Bend down as you walk to avoid passing their signing space.  
C:  Give up and go back.  
D:  Go ahead and walk through quickly.  
  
18. Historically, deaf people have faced job discrimination in the following:  
A.  Obtaining employment.  
B:  Being offered job-related training opportunities.  
C:  Receiving equal access to information on the job.  
D:  Being given career advancement opportunities.  
E:  Receiving promotions to supervisory and managerial levels.  
F:  All of the above.

**DEAF CULTURE QUIZ: ANSWERS**

1. Q: American Sign Language, like our spoken English, is originally from Britain.   
A:  False. American Sign Language was originally brought to the United States by Laurent Clerc, and is most closely related to French Sign Language (FSL). See Deaf History for more information.   
  
2. Q: The Deaf community has its own culture.  
A:  True.  But that culture is also influenced by the larger culture in which the Deaf community is embedded.

3. Q: Deaf people, as a whole, are good lip readers.  
A:  False  
In general, lip-reading is not very effective as a means of communicating for Deaf people.  It is very difficult, and sometimes impossible, for someone with no hearing to be able to mimic and recognize the patterns produced by spoken language .  Many hard-of-hearing, however, combine lip-reading with use of their residual hearing to help them effectively understand what is being said.    
  
4. Q: If I don't know sign language, mouthing words to a deaf person is the best way to communicate.  
A:  False  
Writing is generally the best way to communicate.  Sometimes simple eye contact and pointing works well if asking for an item to be passed or picked up. EX: “Please pass the ketchup.” Using hand motions can communicate this clearly. But what if you are just trying to say "thank you?"  It is more effective to mouth the words "thank you" in response to a Deaf person holding the door open for you than it is to whip out a pad and pen and write the words "thank you."  But the effectiveness of mouthing only applies to certain very common phrases in high context situations.  The moment you enter into a low context situation or use unfamiliar phrases it becomes very difficult to understand mouthed words.

5. Q: The words "Signer" and "Interpreter" mean the same thing and can be used interchangeably.  
A: False.  
You can be a signer without knowing how to interpret.    
  
6. Q: Deaf people, because they can't hear, are better readers than hearing people.  
A: False.  
The average reading level of Deaf people is much lower than that of Hearing people.  When learning to read, how often were you told, “sound it out”? That does not work for someone who has never heard. Also, most deaf children have hearing parents who are just learning how to communicate with their child. The constant access to language that Hearing people have during infancy helps facilitate learning. The earlier deaf children are given full access to language, including sign language, the better their chances of developing fluent English skills.

7. Q: Hearing aids correct a person's hearing.  
A:  False.  
If you are blind, turning on the light doesn't make you see.  
If you are deaf, increasing volume of sound doesn't make you hear.  
However, if you are hard-of-hearing and not completely deaf, modern hearing aids can be very effective in helping bring your hearing up to levels that are considered normal. Cochlear implants are an option for some individuals and can greatly increase access to sound. However, being able to interpret that sound into coherent English depends on many aspects of language development. Having a visual mode of communication, like ASL, can greatly increase understanding for many Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals.

8. Q: American Sign Language is a complete language with its own grammar.  
A: True  
  
9. Q: Deaf people are allowed to drive.  
A: True.  But is it true for all countries throughout the world?   
  
10. Q: 90 % of deaf and hard of hearing children have deaf parents.  
A:  False.  Just the opposite.  Approximately 90% of deaf kids have hearing parents.  
  
11. Q: If a deaf person is having difficulty understanding you, talking louder helps.  
A: False.  But talking a little louder helps out hard-of-hearing folks.   
  
12. Q: If you don't know how to sign, using an interpreter is the best way to ensure communication with a deaf person who signs.   
A:  True and false. Depending on language level and subject depth, it is better to use a qualified interpreter in most instances. However, written English can prevent any misunderstandings that might arise from inaccurate interpretation. When no interpreter is available, **making an effort to communicate** with a deaf person one-on-one, using any means necessary, **is crucial** to building relationships and to preventing isolation. Be willing to write things down, this helps a lot.

13. Q: Most deaf people can read or write English as well as their hearing peers.  
A: False. English can be described as their second language and writing often reflects this. Consistent tutoring and language mentoring from parents, teachers, and interpreters can help bridge this language gap.  
  
14. Q: For many deaf people, ASL is considered their first language, and English their second language.  
A: True.  
  
15. Q: When using an interpreter, it is appropriate to look at and speak directly to the deaf person.  
A: True.    
But it is awkward if you "never" look at the interpreter and "stare" at the Deaf person.  Just remember that you are talking WITH the deaf person THROUGH the interpreter.  
  
Select the best answer:  
  
18. Q: When watching a person sign, it is best to focus on the signer's:  
A.  Hands  
B:  Chest area  
C:  Facial expression  
D:  All of the above, simultaneously

Answer:  C.  
The word "focus" precludes being able to look at all of those areas simultaneously.  In general you focus on the person's face and let your peripheral vision catch the rest.  If you are a sign language student just starting out, you might want to occasionally focus on the hands to catch the fine details of how a particular sign is being made, but you don't want to appear as if you are tracking a fly buzzing around. Out in the world you want to be making eye contact and seeing what people's expressions are indicating.  
  
19. Q: If your path is blocked by two signers having a conversation with each other, you should:  
A.  Wait until they stop signing before you pass through.  
B:  Bend down as you walk to avoid passing their signing space.  
C:  Give up and go back.  
D:  Go ahead and walk through quickly.  
  
Answer:  D.   
Though waiting or saying, “ excuse me” before you walk through may seem appropriate, this is **not** the case. It is much easier to just keep walking at a steady pace, the conversation can be easily tracked and shifted the moment you walk by--thus not missing any information or having to slow down the conversation. Standing in between the conversation, however, is fairly annoying and happens surprisingly often.   
  
  
20. Q: Historically, deaf people have faced job discrimination in the following:  
A.  Obtaining employment.  
B:  Being offered job-related training opportunities.  
C:  Receiving equal access to information on the job.  
D:  Being given career advancement opportunities.  
E:  Receiving promotions to supervisory and managerial levels.  
F:  All of the above.

Answer:  F

Yes, there are ADA (Americans With Disabilities Act) laws prohibiting discrimination, but many businesses and individuals still need to be educated in this area. DAC (Disability Action Center) is a local organization that can help with these issues. Advocating for oneself in the right way is key to preventing discrimination.

***Note:***

Most questions and their answers are taken from Bill Vicar’s website: <http://www.lifeprint.com/asl101/pages-layout/culture11.htm>

Many comments and questions have been added by Sarah Campbell, Interpreter for the Deaf for the Moscow School District.

**Definitions**

**Deaf vs.deaf**

Pronounced, “big D deaf” the capitalization of Deaf is not a typo; it refers to those who are culturally Deaf and support the values and ideals of the Deaf community. It may be surprising to note that one can be culturally Deaf without being auditorily deaf. This would be true of CODAs (children of Deaf adults) and some hearing individuals who have immersed themselves in the Deaf community. To be considered culturally Deaf, supporting ASL is key. The lower case “deaf” simply refers to the inability to hear.

**Hard-of-hearing (hh)**

Hard-of-hearing refers to individuals whose hearing loss is not profound or complete. At times, this can also be a cultural association. People with hearing loss who feel in between the Deaf and hearing worlds can prefer to call themselves hard-of-hearing.

**Late-deafened Adult**

Late –deafened adult refers to someone who has lost their hearing after the formative language years. This can be a teenager or an older individual. Often they learn sign language out of necessity.

**Hearing impaired**

It is good to remove this word from your vocabulary while among the Deaf community. The connotation of this word and its possible ASL signs refer to something being broken and needing fixed. As a whole, Deaf people do not see themselves this way. Being Deaf is part of their identity and is something to be proud of, not fixed. Using this word to describe a Deaf person is generally offensive.

**Coda/ Soda**

Besides being fun to say, these acronyms refer to Children of Deaf Adults and Siblings of Deaf Adults. These terms are generally reserved for those who are fluent in their understanding of American Sign Language as a result of being raised with its use.

**Hearing World**

In the Deaf community, people who can hear are generally referred to as “hearing”. Like many of these terms, it can have cultural implications. “The hearing world” can include those who have no understanding of deafness or cultural sensitivity toward Deaf people.

**Audism**

This is a popular term for the discrimination Deaf individuals continue to face. Most often, it stems from a lack of awareness and understanding on the part of the hearing person, not a direct intent to harm.

**ASL/PSE/SEE**

This can be referred to as the spectrum of ASL. All signing in the United States falls somewhere on this Spectrum.

SEE

ASL

PSE

(Contact Sign)

ASL: American Sign Language is at one end of the spectrum and means the signing follows Time/Place/Topic/Comment sentence structure and is filled with grammatical facial markers and intense use of conceptual space. In simplest terms, it paints a visual picture of information with descriptive signing. It is a language distinctly separate from English; to fully understand this rich language takes years of study.

PSE stands for Pidgin Signed English and is a mesh of English word order and ASL signs. It may even include some Signed English, depending on the ‘speaker’. This is most often used when a group of signers with various skill levels are interacting, thus the nickname, “contact sign”. It is often very useful in education settings where it is important the deaf children learn specific English vocabulary along with the key concepts.

SEE, Signing Exact English, is a system that was developed in the 1970s to try and teach deaf children written English. It is very different from ASL and has very little consideration for conceptual accuracy. The goal is to show English, with all its word endings and conjunctions, on the hands. This form of signing is rarely used for conversation because it is a very slow and awkward delivery; often the overall message is lost in all the little words.

The star indicates where most people in the Northwest prefer to sign. Many regions of the United States, especially those with greater populations of Deaf and hard-of-hearing, are much more ASL.

**Oralism**

This is the education of deaf children through the use of speech, lip-reading, and mimicking the mouth movements of English, instead of using sign language. Historically, this form of education prohibited the use of sign language.

**Total Communication**

Total Communication: using all means available to teach and reach the deaf child. This can be ASL, fingerspelling, lip-reading, speech, helpful auditory devices, natural gestures, etc. Advocates of Total Communication often prefer to sign in PSE because it allows for English to be mouthed on the lips as the signs are expressed.

**Residential School/ School for the Deaf**

In the past, many deaf children were sent to residential schools, now known as Schools for the Deaf, to receive education. This created a hub for Deaf culture to develop as greater numbers of deaf children were able to interact together. In America, each state has their own School for the Deaf, though attendance has been dropping in recent years due to mainstreaming.

**Mainstreaming**

Placing children with various disabilities into regular education classrooms is known as mainstreaming. This has greatly impacted the deaf community as more children are able to stay at their local school with the simple accommodation of interpreting services.

**Deaf Clubs**

Deaf Clubs are active in most metropolitan areas and provide opportunities for the signing community to interact. These clubs are open to the public and are usually very welcoming to ASL students. Activities for the deaf clubs may include bowling nights, coffee chats, Signing Santa (very popular Christmas party in Spokane), and much more. The closest club available is the LC Valley Deaf Club in Lewiston. They can be found on Facebook; however, meetings are currently sporadic and turnout is low. Attending an event in Coeur D'Alene or Spokane would probably be more beneficial. These events allow for great interaction with people of various signing abilities and education backgrounds.

**FOR UPCOMING EVENTS IN AND AROUND SPOKANE/ COEUR D'ALENE CHECK OUT:** http://spokaneasl.com/

**History**

William G. Vicars, Ed.D.  
Jan 1, 2001

**A BRIEF ASL History Lesson**:

In the early 1800's, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, a hearing minister and a graduate of Yale University met and became friends with a young deaf girl named Alice. Gallaudet took an interest in teaching the girl and succeeded at teaching her a few words. The girl's father Dr. Mason Cogswell, encouraged Gallaudet to become involved with the establishment of a school for the Deaf.

So, in 1815 Gallaudet headed for Europe in search of methods for teaching the deaf. He approached a number of program directors, (the Braidwood schools, the London Asylum, etc.), but none of them were willing to share their techniques with Gallaudet.

Fortunately while in England Gallaudet met up with the director of a Paris school for the deaf, a man by the name of Sicard.

Sicard was there with two of his deaf pupils, Jean Massieu and **Laurent Clerc** who were also teachers at the school in Paris. They were in England giving demonstrations on how to teach the deaf by using sign language. The Paris school, which had been founded by the Abbe Charles Michel de L'Epee in 1771, was using French Sign Language in combination with a set methodically developed signs.

Gallaudet persuaded Clerc to return with him to the States and in 1817 the first American school for the deaf was established in the city of Hartford, Connecticut.

Over time, the signs used at that school, plus the signs that were already being used by Deaf people in America evolved into what we now know as American Sign Language.

It is important to note that sign language was being used here in America before Gallaudet and Clerc set up the school.  One example (that you might want to research more) took place in Martha's Vineyard.  At one time many Deaf people lived there and all or almost all of the townsfolk knew how to sign whether or not they were deaf!

* TIP FOR AVID LEARNERS: SEARCH: *DEAF HISTORY* ONLINE FOR MORE DEAF HISTORY BOOKS AND WEBSITES

**Values and beliefs**

**Deaf pride**

Deaf Pride is the idea that being Deaf is not just a disability; it is part of one’s identity and is something to be proud of. Some have described it as, “embracing Deafness”, meaning to take pride in the culture, the language, and the community of people who are deaf.

<http://www.ldpride.net/deafpride.htm> Article, “What is Deaf Pride?” by ***Mark Drolsbaugh*.**

**Embracing and promoting ASL**

Self-explanatory. The visual language of ASL, and the sign language of other countries, is key to creating camaraderie among deaf individuals. Members of the Deaf community enjoy teaching and exposing the hearing world to the beauty and necessity of this language.

**Sense of community**

There is a strong sense of community among ‘deafies’ (yes, this is a culturally accepted term☺). Adults with the disability often want to support and encourage families with deaf children, so the next generation can be spared some of the hardships they themselves faced. When deaf adults meet others who can sign, especially in rural areas, there is an immediate connection. No one likes to feel alone; when someone learns the language and can communicate effectively, it breaks the isolation many rural deaf experience. When a deaf person meets someone with the same disability, there is an even stronger bond. Many have described it like being part of a family.

**Cultural norms:**

**Blunt behavior**

Be aware that most deaf people are very blunt and direct. It is common to receive observations on weight gain or loss or other visual features. This is not meant to be insulting. In ASL there is a need for message clarity, therefore things are expressed in a very direct way to prevent confusion. So as not to be offended, it is good to know this while interacting with the Deaf community.

**Eye contact and Eye gaze**

Eye contact is crucial to communication with a deaf/hh person, regardless of whether or not they use sign language. Without eye contact, there is no conversation. In our ‘hearing’ culture, it can be unnerving sometimes to have direct eye contact while talking to people. This is something that must be overcome to ensure good communication skills.

Eye gaze is very useful in ASL and can stand in place of many words, signed or spoken. To refer to someone or something you can simply use your eye gaze and a slight nod to indicate words like “it, they, over there, them, that one,” etc. Mastering this technique can take years of practice, though it is natural for most deaf/hh individuals.

**Personal space**

Different cultures have different comfort levels for personal contact. Americans as a whole are fairly space conscious, though when having a private or intimate conversations, that space bubble decreases. Because of the need to see all of the signs and gestures during communication, the need for personal space is larger for Deaf people. This space is so large, it is often easy for a third party to pass between a signed conversation, even a private one.

**Introductions**

Typical questions when first meeting a Deaf person:

Deaf to Deaf

-Are you deaf or hearing? (this question is when in a mixed group of skilled signers)

-Where did you go to school?

-Public school or deaf school?

-Are you the only deaf person in your family?

-Do your parents sign?

-Where were you raised? (This question can lead into discussion of rural versus big city deaf life. Typically places like California or New York/East Coast are viewed as ideal places with large numbers of Deaf people.)

Deaf to hearing

-Are you deaf or hearing? (This question is when in a mixed group of skilled signers.)

-Where did you learn sign? Why did you want to learn?

-Was your teacher Deaf or hearing?

- How long have you been studying ASL?

**"Deaf time"**

Deaf people are Event oriented, while most of American culture is Time oriented. This means that the event or opportunity to get together is more important that the time of arrival or departure. Typically this means arriving 15-30 minutes late. If conversations are flowing and people are enjoying themselves, simple meetings can continue for hours.

**Proper techniques to get someone’s attention**

-Tapping the shoulder is common to get an individual’s attention.

-Flickering the lights can be good for a large group.

-Stomping the floor or tapping a table can create vibrations and direct attention. (Only good if not painfully obvious or annoying).

-Waving a hand (or a foot) gently in the signer’s peripheral vision will catch their attention for further communication

**Language**

Sign Language is not universal. Each developed nation has their own unique sign language. American Sign Language (ASL) is the official language of the Deaf in the United States, much of Canada, and many other parts of the world. ASL is not English; it has its own grammar, syntax, and facial cues based on visual concepts. There is not one individual ASL sign for each English word. Like any other foreign language, interpretations can vary. One English word may require several signs to convey its meaning; conversely, one ASL sign can require an entire English paragraph to explain.

As it is a living language, signs and their meaning are constantly changing and progressing to reflect the surrounding culture and society. Language creates culture, as many anthropologists have discovered. The history of American Sign Language, the shared experiences of Deaf individuals, and the values promoted by this culture are all passed down through the living language of ASL. Each sign has a concept behind it, a reason the individual signer has chosen that particular sign. For example, in the Deaf community the traditional sign used for "public school" can literally be translated, "hearing school". Signing "public school" in this way communicates how many members of the Deaf community have felt while attending public school. Thankfully, this popular choice of sign has been changing as more and more Deaf people are attending public school and are enjoying their experience, without feeling isolated. This can be attributed to hearing peers being willing to learn the language, to teachers using eye contact and cultural awareness, and to parents encouraging their children to engage in positive social interactions. This is just one example of how sign language can communicate the shared experiences and individual thoughts of a Deaf person.

The best way to learn ASL is by taking an American Sign Language class from a qualified teacher, and then by practicing everyday to perfect that language. Currently, a free ASL class is provided after school in the Moscow School District. Contact Sarah Campbell at [campbells@msd281.org](mailto:campbells@msd281.org) or at (509) 863-2292 for more information about this class. You can also contact Disability Action Center to find a list of classes available in our area. When attending a class in person is not feasible, there are great resources online. My favorite online teacher is Bill Vicars. You can access his videos on YouTube or at [www.asluniversity.com](http://www.asluniversity.com).

* **For teaching little ones sign, check out “Signing Time” on YouTube** for free videos or on their website: [www.signingtime.com](http://www.signingtime.com)

**Importance of Storytelling to aide young readers**

**ASL STORYTELLING**

**(**Key Concepts derived from ASL Workshop taught by Thomas K. Holcomb, Ph.D. Professor of Deaf Studies at Ohione College, Fremont California.)

Please note that these ideas are most helpful when teaching deaf/hh children **who use sign,** though some ideas may still apply to teaching deaf children who prefer Oralism.

**WHEN TELLING A CHILDREN’S STORY:**

* ASL storytelling should be like an English essay—with the topic of the story and the thesis leading the narration. This is difficult to do while singing simultaneously, but try to summarize the main ideas of the story, or the purpose, before continuing. So much of a deaf/hh child’s day is guess work and assumption, one area that can lessen their stress is straightforward communication. Tell them what the story is about and why it is being told, whenever possible.
* Add transition words to clarify the message and show key points. Signs like “ALLDONE, PUT ASIDE, PAUSE, NOW STORY, MOVING ON”, will help distinguish main ideas.
* Do not continue with the story until the child provides visual feedback showing they are engaged and listening (eyebrows up, head nod waiting for a response). Throughout the story, check in with them to make sure they are still ‘listening’. In this way, the story is more like a conversation than a one-sided lecture.
* Sandwich: fingerspell-sign-f.s. don’t worry about correct spelling, kids just need to get used to the idea that the signs, the pictures, and the English vocabulary are all related.
* When ‘reading’ to deaf children, expand! Sign the story like a movie, then show the English words, then the picture/visual.
* Learn to sign perspectively in ASL; transition near and far to show all aspects of the story. The more we add, the more likely something will be remembered.
* Show different characters in a story through placement of body, shoulders, position and adaptations of signs
* **To show rhythm and rhyme** for preschoolers, signs can be shown with alternating hands, picture signs, and similar words/concepts shown in the book’s picture. Ex. FLOWER, FLOWER FLOWER, CL:5 UP HILL. OR “RED FISH BLUE FISH GOLD FISH…” with alternating hands for Dr. Seuss.
* Remember: if Deaf/hh children have no access to signs AND the visuals in the book, it can result in a failure to develop English literacy. This is one reason why many deaf students hate reading. Make the stories come alive by signing them, and show them the words and the pictures that communicate these ideas.
* While expanding, kids may start to ask, “Where is that in the story, I don’t see that?” This is great; it proves that they are making a connection with the pictures and the written language. This promotes and facilitates their personal reading.
* Remember: when teaching vocabulary to youngsters, be expressive! Show ***ALL*** signs, synonyms, movements, pictures and classifiers that represent the English word.

**CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF STORYTELLING:**

* Share life stories and lessons with your kids. This gives them access to world knowledge and important life information. For example, if you are turning 50, share the cultural significance and implications that go with that. If someone says they are getting a divorce, and the child asks why, don’t simply dismiss their question. Help them understand the reasons people may separate. These are life lessons that deaf children often miss out on by not being able to eavesdrop.
* Sign all interactions between ourselves and other individuals when possible. The child needs to see examples of typical adult interaction and conversation; this gives them access to everyday life.
* Provide access to the local Deaf community whenever possible. This can help them take pride in their identity and not feel isolated or pitied.
* Share Deaf heritage stories, common ASL jokes, poetry, and the history of ASL with kiddos.

**PRACTICE HINTS for IMPROVING ASL STORYTELLING:**

* Videotape oneself telling easy children’s stories using the book’s pictures and print as a general guideline, elaborate on details. Look for realistic facial expressions and natural body language to complete the picture.
* Practice using only facial expression to convey message while listening to a story.
* Watch a skilled native signer online and copy their story: facial expression, body language--everything. Learn good habits by mimicking.

**RESOURCES:**

<https://www.youtube.com/user/CSDECEASL> California school for the deaf videos

[www.aslstorytelling.org](http://www.aslstorytelling.org) more ASL resources and story examples, and young signer videos

<https://texasdeafed.org> ASL resources and story examples, and young signer videos

**Helpful Communication Tips for Parents and Educators**

* **Make eye contact a priority**
* **Teach deaf children to be brave and interact with hearing** peers in a variety of settings. As they get older and learn to write, keeping a pen and paper handy is a great way to start conversations when other children do not know sign.
* **Teaching kids a variety of games** is a good way to encourage peer interaction. Many card games and board games do not require spoken English to play and can be a great stepping stone for relationships.
* **Keep the closed-captioning on while watching T.V. together**. This provides children with immediate access to written language and helps early language learners connect the actions and concepts being seen with their written equivalents.
* **When possible, sign while talking within eyesight of any deaf individual.** This is polite in Deaf culture so deaf adults can join in the spoken conversation. For children with hearing loss, it is critical they see examples of typical adult interaction and conversation; this gives them access to everyday life and to common “world knowledge”.

 **When writing back and forth, keep your word choices simple and sentences short.** As the child learns English and uses more complex sentences and vocabulary, you may do the same. The same principles apply when meeting another member of the Deaf community. Take your cue from the individual and remember that English is a second language for them.

 **Do not shout.** If a child is deaf, your voice will not be heard clearly, no matter how loud it is. If they are hard-of-hearing, be gentle when raising your voice to be heard, it is easy to sound angry and frustrated when trying to talk. Also, slow down your speech consistently so they can track the language. Avoid idiomatic expressions and lots of ‘little words’.

* Be patient, try and understand each other. A pet peeve of many deaf/hh people is constant “oh, never mind” answers.

 **Use pantomime, body language, facial expression.** Patience and kindness will also aid communication.

**While interacting with the larger Deaf community, remember:**

 **If using an interpreter, speak directly to the deaf person.** When the interpreter voices what the deaf person signs, look at the deaf person, not the interpreter.

 **Don’t be afraid to make mistakes.** Most deaf people are very comfortable communicating with hearing people. Most will appreciate any attempt to communicate, even if you use the wrong sign.

 **A computer or ipad can be a useful communication tool.** Enlarge the font so it is easy to read. If speech is not understood, type and allow them to read the computer screen.

**Famous Deaf People, “the sky is the limit”**

**Other children who benefit from using American Sign Language**

* **Children with various speech limitations** have used sign language as an effective way to communicate. Those with Autism, Cerebral Palsy,
* **Hearing children and babies**! It is increasingly popular to teach infants under one year old simple signs to communicate their needs, since it is well known that children can understand speech before they are able to vocalize. This can cut down frustration levels when the babies accurately communicate their wants, and it is super cute! See video:

**Great Videos and T.V. shows featuring Deaf Culture**

* **ABC FAMILY: SWITCHED AT BIRTH** Each episode tackles a different aspect of Deaf culture throughout the plot. The first two seasons are the best. While this can be a great learning resource and is a hit with teenagers, it also depicts loose morality, so use good judgment when watching with little ones.

# THE HAMMER (2010) This movie is based on the life of the first deaf NCAA Wrestling Champion and UFC Fighter Matt "The Hammer" Hamill.  Also see Matt’s interview on YouTube: “DEAF Inc's Spotlight Interview: Matt Hamill” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Arl0ZMIAixA>

* **Through Deaf Eyes (2007)** PBS documentary exploring Deaf culture

**Deaf Tech Accommodations**

* **Video Relay Service (VRS)**

**Local resources:**

* **FOR UPCOMING EVENTS IN AND AROUND SPOKANE/ COEUR D'ALENE CHECK OUT:** <http://spokaneasl.com/>
* **Disability Action Center NW, INC (FACEBOOK PAGE) OR** [**www.dacnw.org**](http://www.dacnw.org)

DAC Phone:

208.883.0523  
800.475.0070 Toll-Free

Physical Address:

505 N. Main St.  
Moscow ID, 83843

Hours:

Mon thru Fri: 8:30am - 4:30pm

DAC is a local advocacy group for people with various disabilities. Krista Kramer is the main contact for those with hearing disabilities looking for local assistance. For Assistance Contact: <http://dacnw.org/staff/krista-kramer> or call Disability Action Center.

**Testimonials**