# Tips for teaching a British Sign Language user

## Creating teaching materials

* Provide lecture slides in advance to the sign language interpreter (SLI) and student so that they can come with questions if need be
* For seminars/discussions, try to provide talking points in advance
* Consider how assignments might be adjusted to ensure focus is not on written or audio elements where possible – discuss with Student Support and Wellbeing if unsure
* Try to ensure slides do not have too much text – the BSL user will be looking mainly at the interpreter so they may miss things on the slide if it’s too wordy
* Avoid jargon and abbreviations, unless you have given the full definition
* Allow plenty of time when using visual aids as it will not be possible for the deaf person to study visual aids, and to lipread or watch the SLI at the same time
* Try to find visual ways to explain something. Perhaps a video or demonstration

## Working with the user

* Book meetings well in advance (at least a week to 10 days) so that an interpreter can be booked. The Accessible Information team ([digitalaccess@kent.ac.uk](mailto:digitalaccess@kent.ac.uk)) can book this for you
* Always look at the BSL user when you are speaking to them, not the SLI
* Do not ask the SLI to not interpret something or tell the BSL user that a misunderstood comment “doesn’t matter” – this can be very frustrating for the BSL user as they feel left out
* For group work, initially allocate groups yourself rather than allowing students to pick their own partners/groups. BSL users are likely to be left out as people may be nervous of communication at first. Until rapport is established, allocate them yourself

## Delivery

* The deaf person should be seated where she/he can see both you and the SLI easily and clearly. This might be at the far left or far right of the front row, so that they can see the SLI, the screen and you without flicking their head back and forth. Ideally, the student should have his/her back to windows or strong light sources
* Check the positioning of any equipment that is being used, such as overhead or digital projector, so that it can be seen clearly by all
* Ensure that lighting is good enough for the SLI to be seen
* For longer sessions (over one hour), provide a brief break for both the student and SLI
* Avoid walking around the room too much, as this may be distracting for the student who will be trying to concentrate on the SLI
* Speak at your normal pace
* Be prepared to explain something more fully, if the SLI has indicated that the student has not understood
* Check comprehension with the whole class, don’t just ask the BSL user
* Deaf students need time to process questions or comments in English, so do allow for a short time delay in their responses. This is especially important if they are using a SLI or a notetaker

## Communication

* BSL users will have SLIs for all learning related activities (teaching, meetings, guest lectures etc)
* If an interpreter is not present when expected, contact the Accessible Information team ([digitalaccess@kent.ac.uk](mailto:digitalaccess@kent.ac.uk)) as soon as possible
* If an interpreter is not available (eg. an ad hoc meeting) you can use [SignLive](https://signlive.co.uk/), a video remote interpretation service. The University has an account and will pay for any minutes used. The BSL user should have their own account that they can open, or you can use the University’s log in in some cases. Contact the Accessible Information team ([digitalaccess@kent.ac.uk](mailto:digitalaccess@kent.ac.uk)) for details