

Do's and Dont's for Learning Auslan

DO:

- relax and have fun!
- try to be flexible
- leave any inhibitions at home (you need to become comfortable with using your body, especially making facial expressions, you will need to touch your body and face for many signs)
- take risks (you'll probably make a few mistakes but that's okay)
- make eye contact when communicating
- get ready to coordinate visual, spatial and motor skills
- aim for fluid movement so your signs will flow
- copy the teacher (but don't 'mirror' them)
- use your memory to remember signs and where you have located objects in your 'signing space'
- keep your signs within the 'signing space' in front of your body.

DON'T:

- assume
- be patronising (you are no better than a deaf person just because you can hear)
- exaggerate lip movements
- imitate the sounds deaf people make
- hide your eyes or look away when communicating
- ask other students when you can't remember a sign (it's better to ask the teacher)
- disagree with the teacher or correct their signing (you may have learnt a different sign or a variation of a sign from someone else - consider this to be part of the rich diversity of Auslan).

Do's and Dont's for Communicating with Deaf People

DO:

- get the deaf person's attention first (touch them on the shoulder, flash the lights or stamp on the floor) - if they're not looking at you then they're not 'listening' to you
- ask how they would prefer to communicate (lip-reading, body movements, gesturing, signing, with an interpreter, writing etc.)
- position yourself slightly further away than normal speaking distance so all gestures can be seen in the visual field (Note: if the person is hearing impaired rather than deaf, position yourself at a normal speaking distance)
- maintain eye contact
- remain at the same eye level if possible
- use visual cues
- use simple language and gestures
- speak clearly, normally and at a normal rate (for the benefit of hard of hearing people you can speak slightly louder than normal)
- check you've been understood
- try rephrasing or communicating in a different way if not understood
- reduce background noise (hard of hearing only)
- have good lighting without light shining into their eyes.

DON'T:

- assume
- be patronising (remember our attitude can be their greatest challenge)
- chew, eat or cover your mouth or face while talking
- shout or exaggerate lip movements
- repeat the same thing over and over again
- speak directly into their ear
- hide your eyes with sunglasses.