



Sign language relies on vision. To begin a conversation, you must first make eye contact with the person you want to sign to. Let's explore several culturally acceptable methods to do this.

The Wave: When at a distance, use huge waving gestures. If you are close by, a small flapping movement of the hand is usually enough.

The Stomp: You can also try stomping on the floor with one foot if you think the floor will cause enough vibration to get the deaf person's attention. This can be done with the wave to become "larger" visually in the person's peripheral vision.



The Touch: If waving fails and if you are near enough, tap the person's shoulder. It is acceptable in deaf culture to use this method even with strangers. Deaf community members are used to such contact.

Note: Two or three taps should be enough. Shoulders are the best places to tap until you know the person well. If you can get attention with a wave, there is no need to tap.

The Light: Flickering the light is another option. This is often used with large group settings but is acceptable at any time.



The Knock-Not: Hearing people tend to forget that deaf people cannot hear you knock on the door. When appropriate, you can slightly open the door and wave to get their attention. Be sensitive to not opening the door more than necessary and be sure to look away as to not invade privacy.



The Tag: If the person you want to sign to is at a distance, ask other people to pass on your wave or tap until you get this person's attention. Avoid using a fist/punch or pointer poke to get attention.