

# How is a Sign Language Interpreter Different from a Signer?

Sign language interpreters and signers function in different settings, using language at a different pace with different content. Signers usually are present in natural, conversational settings, covering day-to-day topics such as chatting with friends who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Signers have control of their own intent, content, pace and message. Interpreters, on the other hand, work in situations where they can't control the content of the message, but are trained to accurately convey another person's message. The interpreter operates in an environment where terminology is much more advanced and unpredictable. The interpreter must keep up with the speaker, without knowing in advance what will be said. They must render the message faithfully, always conveying the content and the spirit of the speaker, using the language most readily understood by the person(s) they serve.

Often, people who have learned some sign language are incorrectly used as interpreters. A person who knows only conversational sign language does not possess the expertise required to perform effectively in the role of an interpreter.

*Reference: Standard Practice Paper; [www.rid.org](http://www.rid.org)*

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and the Hard of Hearing (DSDHH)***

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