

How to be a Deaf Queer Ally: Tips for Hearing Queers

1. Acknowledge and own your hearing privilege.
2. Educate yourself about audism.
3. Learn American Sign Language (ASL).
4. Be an agent of social change rather than an agent of oppression.
5. Unlearn stereotypes and assumptions you may have about Deaf and Deaf Queer people. Not all Deaf people read lips, speak or don't speak, for example.
6. Be an advocate for accessibility. Inaccessibility is a form of oppression. It has been estimated that under 1% of all Queer events nationwide are currently accessible to the Deaf Queer community. If you attend an event that isn't accessible, speak with the organizers and encourage them to make their future events accessible. Take time to thank those who have made this commitment.
7. Learn how to effectively use ASL interpreters. Learn when it's okay and not okay to use non-certified interpreters. Also realize that interpreters are not "helpers" or "volunteers", they are highly skilled professionals who undergo many years of training and are required to continue this training to maintain their certification. They should be respected and paid for their time just like any other professional.
8. Don't judge a Deaf person by their English proficiency or writing ability. English is a second language for the majority of Deaf people. Most Deaf people will not judge you for your lack of ASL fluency or prose. They understand it's not your native language. Offer the same courtesy when it comes to *your* language.
9. Learn about the rich history of the Deaf Queer community which has often been excluded from both Deaf and Queer history books.

10. Keep an open mind. Just as there are many ways to be Queer, there are many ways to be Deaf. Not all Deaf Queers share the same views, values, or identify or communicate the same way.
11. Support local and national Deaf Queer organizations. Donate funds, become a member and volunteer your time.
12. Learn about and be respectful of Deaf Queer culture and space.
13. Take a Deaf culture class. There are many cultural differences between Deaf and hearing Queers.
14. If you're not a fluent signer, ask the Deaf person their preferred method of communicating with you. If you only know how to fingerspell, trying to have a conversation this way can be arduous for the Deaf person. They may prefer that you write or communicate in a different way.
15. Educate yourself and your community by inviting Deaf Queer speakers at your events.

Note: *Ally* is a verb and *allyship* is an ongoing, daily practice.

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