

LANG  
SKILLS



### **Deafinitely English:**

Online materials for teachers of English  
as a Foreign Language for Deaf, deaf and  
hard of hearing students

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# Unit 4

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**Strategies for Reading.**  
**Student's Booklet**



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## 1.1. INTRODUCTION

### What is this booklet about?

This booklet was created to help you work on your reading skills. The content is adapted to suit the educational needs of Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing (D/d/hh) students and it uses lots of culturally relevant examples.

This booklet contains:

- **short informative texts that will help you understand the topics;**
- **practical Activities for you to practise what was explained;**
- **handouts you will need to do some of the Activities.**

### Who is this booklet for?

The booklet was designed for D/d/hh university students who plan to study abroad and wish to improve their English before their visit. You can use it to improve your reading comprehension in English in general.

Your English should be about B1 or B2 level, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), to use these materials.

### How can this booklet help you?

**Reading** is more than just looking at symbols on paper, knowing what they mean, matching them to sounds, and building the words... If you are deaf, it isn't a lot of help to know what sounds the letters make, anyway. Reading is more than just letters: **words + meaning = understanding.**

If you are a university student, you may have a lot of reading to do. Teachers will give you the titles of things they want you to read: *whole* books, *chapters* of books, *articles* from journals, *research* reports, *class* notes, etc. Sometimes it seems there is not enough time to read everything they give you to do...


So you need **strategies and skills for reading.** This Booklet hopes to help you develop them.

Use this booklet to:

- **get to know some of the main reading strategies that will be useful to you;**
- **learn how making predictions can help you improve your reading;**
- **understand the role of skimming and scanning and learn how to apply these strategies;**
- **learn how to cope with unknown words;**
- **practise these strategies in a series of Activities whose contents are culturally relevant to Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing learners.**

## 1.2. INTRODUCTION TO READING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES



When you read at a higher level, you don't consciously recognise the letters A—Z and match them to sounds and words — when you are a fluent reader, you do this easily. You see **groups of letters** and put them together **without thinking about it**. You also read **groups of words** automatically, without thinking about what the individual words mean. You only stop and focus on words if you don't know them, and then you think about what they mean. 

The main strategies and skills we will look at now are the ones that will help you in the first stages of reading a text. Before we do that, take this short quiz:



### Activity 1

Take a quiz. What sort of reader are you?

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*Imagine your teacher says you need to read a book for the next class.*

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Do you: (pick one)

- a. start at page 1 and read right through every word to the end?
- b. read the last page and hope it helps?
- c. try to read page 1, panic at the difficult words, and give up?
- d. ignore it and hope nobody notices in class?
- e. look over the whole book quickly to find the bits you need?

- If you chose A you are very unusual, and you must have a lot of time to spare.
- If you chose B, you will miss a lot of information.
- Choosing C is a normal reaction, but it doesn't help you.
- Choosing D is risky — you can be sure the teacher will notice if you haven't read it!
- If you chose E, you are on your way to being a good reader.

## Useful strategies and techniques for reading

- **Predicting**
- **Skimming**
- **Scanning**
- **Tackling unknown words**
- **Reading in detail**

### Predicting

You do this before you start to read. Use the knowledge **you already have** — if the class or module is called American History, you know that the text will be about *history in America!* The title of the text should help: *Civil Rights in the 1960s* is quite clear. If you know what you are going to read about, it is easier to understand it.

The **title** will also tell you something about what's in it. Beware of titles, though: sometimes they have nothing to do with what's in the book! *Birds of America*, for example, is not a guide for birdwatchers visiting the United States: it's a novel. You may have to look at **more** than the title.

### Skimming

This means reading **very quickly**, just *dipping* into parts of the text to see what it says.

Skimming will help you find out:

- **if a text is worth reading, borrowing or even buying;**
- **what parts of a text you need to read and what parts you can pass by.**

You can skim-read a text by looking mainly at:

- **sub-headings (under the main title and at the top of sections);**
- **the 'abstract' or summary if there is one (this is short information at the start of the text);**
- **the first paragraph;**
- **the first, second and last sentences of the next paragraphs;**
- **the last paragraph;**
- **information about the writer can help, too.**

## Scanning

Again, you look quickly through a text or book, but this time you are looking for something. You know what you want to find, for example:

- **information about one subject (look for it in the **CONTENTS**, then go to the chapter);**
- **information about one thing (look for it in the **INDEX**, then go to the pages to find it);**
- **answers to questions the teacher asked, or you asked yourself;**
- **dates when things happened;**
- **numbers, statistics, etc.**

If you know what you want to find, then you can scan for that and not bother too much about the rest of the text. That saves time and makes you a more efficient reader. Don't waste time reading what you don't need.



## Reading in detail

After you have skimmed to see what it is about, and scanned for specific information, you can then concentrate more on understanding the main ideas. Read the whole chapter or article through to the end — don't stop if you don't understand, just move on, and then it may become clearer. Then read through again. You may need to read some paragraphs twice or three times, and at this stage you can tackle unknown words.

## Tackling unknown words

**If you see a word you don't understand**, try to guess from the context — the rest of the sentence, or the subject of the article, should help.

**If you can't guess**, use a dictionary, but be careful! Use the context to find the correct meaning. Many words have more than one meaning; make sure you find the correct one in that context.

## 1.3. MAKING PREDICTIONS



**Predicting** is a useful strategy because:

- it helps you to actively think ahead;
- it allows you to understand the text better;
- you can interact better with the text and be more motivated to learn what happens next.



Therefore, it is a valuable strategy to improve reading comprehension.

Think of what you already know about the topic.

Use information from the text, such as titles, headings or pictures, to guess what will happen.



### Activity 2

Read the first paragraph of two short stories.

#### 1 'Oh!..', by an anonymous author<sup>1</sup>

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*Once upon a time there was a little girl. Not alone, of course – it's easy to say, – but with family: Mom-dad, grandparents, dog Tuzik, cat Murka, rabbit Vasya, fish in the aquarium ... It's not that, though, but the fact that the girl was extraordinary. She was collecting her "oh..." That is, she wrote down in her notebook, as the educated girl is supposed to, every "oops". And so many "oops" have accumulated...*

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1/ (source: <https://www.shortstoryproject.com/storyf/282259/>)

- **Read the title. What do you think the story is about?**

**Hint:** The exclamation 'Oh!' can express different emotions. Use a dictionary to look it up.

- **What do you think will happen to the girl?**
- **Would you say this story is:**
  - funny?
  - serious?
  - dramatic?
  - sad?
  - a bit crazy?
  - ...?

## 2. 'Weather Station', by Jon Dyer<sup>2</sup>

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*There had been nothing to report for the past three weeks. Doctor Gustav Cronin took off his glasses and rubbed his eyes. It was a little after three in the morning and he had been staring at the monitor of the station's weather surveillance radar since his shift began four hours earlier. There had been no activity of particular interest. At first, he had thought the equipment was faulty, but after a series of stringent and in-depth checks by the station technician, Alice Becker, everything was found to be in perfect working order. Every monitoring station in the northern hemisphere had been reporting the usual activity except this one.*

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- **Take a look at the link and see the picture. How does it relate to the title?**
- **Read the title. What do you think the story is about?**
- **What is the main character's job?**
- **What do you think will happen next?**
- **Is the story going to have a happy ending?**

**Hint:** Feel free to browse more stories on this site.

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2/ (source: <https://www.shortstoryproject.com/storyf/304112/>)

## 1.4. PRACTISING SKIMMING



### Skimming is reading quickly to find out:

- What is the text about?
- What is in it?
- Is it useful to you?



You don't read every word on every page! You pick out the useful bits. Another word for skimming is **surveying**: you look over the whole thing quickly.

You can skim or survey...

- shelves full of books, to pick the right ones and leave the rest.
- boxes full of journals (academic magazines) to find the right ones.
- a whole book, to find the useful bits.
- a whole journal to find out about something.

### Skimming: looking at chapters or articles

A **chapter** is one part of a book. It is part of the whole book. It is probably linked to other chapters. Perhaps you don't need to read every chapter of a book!

An **article** is one piece of writing in a magazine or journal. It is complete in itself.

Take a chapter or an article, and try this method:

**Step 1.** Read the **title**.

**Step 2.** Quickly, read the **introduction**. It will tell you what to expect in this chapter or article.

**Step 3.** Look at the **sub-headings**. These tell you what is in each part of this chapter or article. You can see what is in the whole thing, and you will know if it is useful for you.

**Step 4.** Read the first sentence of each main paragraph, if the text is short enough to do so.

**Hint:** If the text is too long to read the first sentence of each paragraph, you can read a few chosen paragraphs.

**Step 5.** Then do the same with the **last paragraph**.

**Step 6.** Now, quickly read the **summary** or conclusion, if there is any. This gives you the best idea of what the writer is saying.

Not all chapters or articles have a summary or conclusion. A lot of books or articles that are academic, or university level, will have them. They are very useful.

Sometimes there are questions to “test yourself” at the end. They are useful too — if you can already answer them, *you don't need to read the chapter or article*. If you can't answer them, then read more deeply later. At least you will know what to look for.



### Activity 3

Choose a book from your library.

Answer these questions:

- **What is the *writer's name*? Is he or she a good and respected author (writer)?**
- **Look at the **date** when it was last published — is it too old?**
- **Pick out the **chapter headings** on the “**Contents**” page: they tell you what the book has in it — what does it say to you?**
- **Look over the **Index** to see if useful bits are there.**
- **Peek at the **Foreword** (if there is one) — sometimes it gives an outline of the whole book.**
- **Glance at the **Introduction** — it tells you what is in the book, and what it is about!**

**Hint:** Choose another book and repeat the process. Practice makes perfect!



### Activity 4

Go to your university's library. Choose a journal that fits your study interests.

- **What is the **title**? Does it suit your needs?**

**Hint:** If you are a student of Deaf Studies, then “*Knitting Monthly*” is not useful, but “*Deaf Worlds*” is.

- **Look at the **date**: Is it *before* or *after* the thing you want to know about?**

**Hint:** If you want to know more about the history of Deaf education in the United States in the early 20th century, then “American Sign Language: Acceptance at the University Level after 2000” is not a good option for you. Put it back in its box. However, the issue on “Deaf schools

in pre-Second World War America” might help, so borrow it.

- **Look at the table of contents** — you can quickly see if anything useful is in there.
- **Look at who wrote the articles** — different writers have different points of view.

**Hint:** Remember: you are just skimming the surface. You do not need to dive deeply into the book or journal. Leave the deep stuff for later, or you may drown in all that paper.

Remember: if you read the summary or conclusion before you have read the rest in deep detail, that is fine.

- **You are not cheating.**
- **You are not taking short-cuts.**
- **You are skimming, or skim-reading.**
- **You are reading skilfully.**

**Skimming** is not a *basic* reading skill, really. Basic reading is when you learn the letters, then build them into words, and then link that to meaning. You are beyond that.

**Skimming** is a further level reading skill, it is an *advanced* reading skill, and if you can do it, you are an advanced reader.

**Skimming** will save you a lot of time. It will allow you to find out what to read, and what to leave on the shelf. If you want to buy books, it will save you money, too.



## Activity 5

Take a look at **Handout A**.

Some parts of this interview were blocked out for you. **Use the remaining parts** (the title, the introduction, the interview questions and the first sentences of the person's answers) **to pick out the options you think are correct.**

- a. **It is an interview with a producer of a TV series about students studying at Gallaudet University.**
- b. **It is about Nyle DiMarco's best moments on the "Dancing with the Stars" show.**
- c. **It explains the idea behind making the TV series.**
- d. **It is about the educational system in the US.**
- e. **It is about relationships and love in the TV series.**
- f. **It is about the capital of the United States of America, Washington, D.C., and its Deaf population.**





## Activity 6

Now have a look at **Handout B**.

This time, the text is complete. Use the same strategy and, **very quickly, skim-read the article.**

Look at the following list and pick out the options you think are correct.

- **The blog post is about the lack of subtitled films in cinemas.**
- **It is criticizing the Equality Act 2010.**
- **It provides a tip on finding accessible subtitled shows.**
- **It is about the poor quality of live TV subtitles.**
- **It uses the “Britain’s Got Talent” show as an example of a good subtitling job.**
- **It is about a specific job experience that the writer had.**

**Hint:** Read through the first paragraph. Then read the first sentence of the following paragraphs. Finally, read through the last paragraph.



## Activity 7

Discuss your views:

- **Of the two texts (in Handout A and B), which one do you find easier to skim? Why?**
- **Did you find skimming easy or difficult? Do you think it will be useful to you? Why (or why not)?**

**If you have finished the skimming activities and you are happy with what you have done, go on to the next page: Scanning.**

## 1.5. PRACTISING SCANNING



### Scanning means looking for something.

When you scan a text, look through it quickly. Unlike skimming, you are not looking for **general** information. You are looking for specific information. You know what you want to find, you just need to find it.

**You need to look for details, but you don't need to read every word.**

- You scan every time you look through a **website** for names and contact details.
- You scan when you look through a **dictionary** for words.
- You scan when you look at an **index** to find a particular subject.

You scan when you read a piece of text:

- Look for the **title** to see if it is what you need.
- Look at the **writer's name** to see if you know it and know anything about the writer.
- Look at the **graph or diagram** for statistical information.
- Look for **keywords** to find the information you want.
- Pick out **paragraph headings** to find special information.
- Look for **dates**, too, if you need them.
- Sometimes the article has more **information about the writer** at the end. This may also be useful.

**This is scanning.** You know what you are looking for, and you set out to find it. You can ignore things you don't need, and focus on what you do need. Be careful, though, because you might miss some important information. So, it is better to scan first, then go back and read more deeply after you have found your key information.

## Text marking

Text marking is very helpful. As you read, you can:

- **highlight important keywords;**
- **underline important information;**
- **circle important data;**
- **number the paragraphs;**
- **create a system of margin notations, such as ? for unclear parts, things you don't understand and need to ask the teacher about, or E.G. to mark examples, etc.**

These tips will help you navigate through the text.

Students often use highlighters, but make sure you **do not overdo it**; otherwise, it will just be the same text, all in bright pink. You can use different colours, e.g., circle important dates in red, underline definitions in yellow, etc. But be reasonable. Ten different colours are really too much.

**Hint:** Keywords you underline are usually nouns, groups of nouns, verbs, etc., not articles (a, an, the) or prepositions (at, over, in etc.).

**Do you feel ready to have a try? Go to the Activity pages about scanning (Activity 8–10).**

You will need:

- **Handout B**
- **Handout C**
- **A4 loose-leaf lined paper (if you want to take notes)**
- **A good dictionary**
- **A highlighter pen will also be useful.**

**Tip:** Print out the texts if you can. If you can't, then copy them into a Word file so that you can use the different formatting options in MS Office (e.g., colouring parts of the text, highlighting bits of the text, crossing out or deleting the parts you don't need).



## Activity 8

Take a look at **Handout C**. Quickly, scan-read the article to find the answers to the following questions:

a. **Who's Nyle DiMarco?**

**Hint:** Look for this name in the text.

b. **Why did DiMarco want to make this TV series?**

**Hint:** Look at the interview questions – where would you expect the answer to be?

c. **How does DiMarco describe capital D deaf people?**

**Hint:** Look at the questions.

d. **What does DiMarco think about the idea of 'not being deaf enough' that one of the students was worried about?**

**Hint:** Look for the key phrase in the text.

e. **What questions does DiMarco say hearing people often had about deaf people when he was younger?**

**Hint:** Look for the key word 'hearing'.

f. **Di Marco tells a funny story about the name of the capital city of the USA. What's the joke?**

**Hint:** Look for the part of the text where Washington, D.C., is mentioned.



## Activity 9

Now look again at **Handout B**. Quickly, scan-read the article to find the answers to the following questions:

- a. Why does the blogger say she misses out on social life?
- b. Why did the school the blogger went to have to change the curriculum?
- c. Does the blogger find hearing loop systems helpful for her?
- d. What sort of modifications did the blogger like about a theatre performance she once assisted?
- e. What's the biggest problem with the "Britain's Got Talent" show, according to Deafie Blogger?
- f. How can you contact the blogger?



## Activity 10

Discuss your views:

- a. Of the two texts (in **Handout B and C**), which one do you think is easier to skim? Why?
- b. Did you find skimming easy or difficult? Do you think it will be useful to you? Why (or why not)?

## 1.6. TACKLING UNKNOWN WORDS



When you read, you usually see some words or phrases you do not know. You can sometimes find the meaning of an unknown word or phrase\* (\* means look at the bottom of the page) by:

1. **Guessing**
2. Using the **wider context** and relying on the subject that you are reading about— for example, if it is a geography book or article, there is a good chance it will be a word connected with geography!
3. Using the **immediate context**, and looking at the rest of the sentence.
4. Using a **dictionary** to look it up



If you use a dictionary, remember that many English words have more than one meaning — it depends on the context. Be careful!

**Complete Activities 11 and 12 to practise word guessing.**

You will need:

- **Handout D**
- **A good dictionary**
- **A highlighter pen will also be useful.**



## Activity 11

**Look at Handout D.** Find the words that are highlighted, and try to find the meaning using the strategies above.

The words are:

**showing, increased, release, otherwise, curriculum, grumbling, massive, stage, outstanding, accurate**

- Write down the words and their meanings in this context (use the text to guide you).**
- For each word, write a sentence of your own, using the word and proving that you understand the meaning. Make up your own sentences—don't copy the sentences from the text!**

**Hint:** Start with the first strategy, guessing. Then look at the wider and immediate context. If this doesn't work, look the word up in a dictionary.

Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	



## Activity 12

Imagine you need to answer the following question:

'Who's Nyle DiMarco?'

Applying the strategy discussed earlier, you scan-read the whole text and you learn that the information is contained in the following two paragraphs (underlined with a straight line):

---

*Nyle DiMarco didn't see much of his own experience on TV when he was growing up. "There has never been a show that really gives a deep dive into the deaf community or the deaf cultural experience," the actor, model and activist says.*

*DiMarco, 31, who has won "Dancing With the Stars" and "America's Next Top Model," sets out to change how deaf people are portrayed on TV as a producer of "Deaf U," Netflix's new reality series (now streaming). Set at Gallaudet University, a prestigious Washington, D.C., college for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, the series is no afterschool special, but rather a juicy, addictive series about a tight-knit community of students from different backgrounds.<sup>3</sup>*

---

If you want to answer the question 'Who is Nyle DiMarco?', do you need to know the exact meaning of these words (highlighted in the text in yellow)?

1. set
2. prestigious
3. juicy
4. addictive
5. tight-knit

**Hint:** You don't really need to understand every word in the text.

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<sup>3/</sup> Source: Lawler, Kelly. 2020. 'DWTS' champ Nyle DiMarco brings the romance and drama of deaf culture to Netflix in reality series 'Deaf U'. USA Today. Available at <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/tv/2020/10/12/deaf-u-nyle-dimarco-brings-deaf-culture-netflix-juicy-series/3594432001/>



- **The meaning of some words can be obvious from the context in which they are used.**
- **If the word is central to understanding some part, then it is important and you should look it up.**
- **It also depends on what kind of reading you are doing.**
  - If you are **reading to know what the text is about**, you don't need to know the definition of every word, so focus on the general idea.
  - If you are **reading for specific information**, you need to know the words that are linked to the answer you are looking for.
  - If you are **reading for detail**, then you actually need to know what each word means.
  - If you are **reading for pleasure**, just look up the words that are necessary for you to understand the main idea. Looking too many new words up can make the text look hard, seem less interesting, and the reading is very slow.



## Activity 13

Can you use a dictionary?

There are a lot of things a dictionary can tell you. If you would like to know more about them and learn some tips on using a dictionary for your English language studies, register in the e-learning course [Online English for International Mobilities](#).

**STUDY TIP no. 2:** How to use a dictionary effectively  
Click [here](#) to find out how to do it.

**Study tip practice:** [A dictionary game 1](#)

**Study tip practice:** [A dictionary game 2](#)

## 1.7. HANDOUT A

'DWTS'<sup>4</sup> champ Nyle DiMarco brings the romance and drama of deaf culture to Netflix in reality series 'Deaf U'

Nyle DiMarco didn't see much of his own experience on TV when he was growing up. "There has never been a show that really gives a deep dive into the deaf community or the deaf cultural experience," the actor, model and activist says.

DiMarco, 31, who has won "Dancing With the Stars" and "America's Next Top Model," sets out to change how deaf people are portrayed on TV as a producer of "Deaf U," Netflix's new reality series (now streaming). Set at Gallaudet University, a prestigious Washington, D.C., college for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, the series is no afterschool special, but rather a juicy, addictive series about a tight-knit community of students from different backgrounds.

[REDACTED]

Where did you get the idea for this series?

*Nyle DiMarco:* It goes all the way back to my college days when I was a student at Gallaudet University with my friends. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Some of the students featured have grown up in the deaf community, and some have never experienced that before they arrive at Gallaudet.

*DiMarco:* Yes. I remember when I was first introduced to the casting (department), everyone wanted to look for big D deaf people, which meant that they shared a very strong cultural deaf identity and had gone to deaf school. [REDACTED]

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<sup>4</sup>/ DWTS is an acronym for Dancing with the Stars, a widely popular dance competition TV show.

[REDACTED]

Two cast members, Daequan and Rodney, are Black men who don't come from the deaf community, and they talk about that a lot during the series. Were you looking for that experience specifically?

*DiMarco:* Once we really built the cast and I had a chance to meet with all of them, (some) were very unsure about it. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The romantic relationships on the show are so engaging, especially for anyone who really loves reality TV. Was it always going to be about romance or did it happen because the cast is made up of college kids who naturally are attracted to each other?

*DiMarco:* I always wanted a little bit of romance involved, but I wanted to make sure that we were also including LGBTQ+ representation because that's such a major part of our community. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The series brings out a side of the district D.C. you don't often see in political shows.

*DiMarco*: D.C. is an incredibly deaf-friendly city. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

<sup>5</sup>

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5/ Source: Lawler, Kelly. 2020. 'DWTS' champ Nyle DiMarco brings the romance and drama of deaf culture to Netflix in reality series 'Deaf U'. USA Today. Available at <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/tv/2020/10/12/deaf-u-nyle-dimarco-brings-deaf-culture-netflix-juicy-series/3594432001/>

## 1.8. HANDOUT B

### 'Subtitle Problems!' Deafie blogger

Being deaf has restrictions on our social lives! I can't tell you how many times my friends have said "let's go to see the new film at the cinema"... I can't, as they never have enough subtitled showings!

Normally, new films won't have a captioned showing until a week or two after the release date, so I miss out on a lot of social outings. The number of people who couldn't be bothered to wait for me is extremely frustrating! I wrote to the cinema ages ago about this. Although they said that they had increased the number of showings... it's still not enough for us deafies to go regularly, when we want to.

<http://www.yourlocalcinema.com/> is a brilliant website to find the subtitled or audio described cinema showings in your area. However, where I come from there's not a lot of variation, often more children's films than adult ones. D and I wanted to watch Fast and Furious 7 before he went home, but there were no showings until the day after he went! How typical. Did I mention, there were two of the same subtitled showings at different cinemas, at the same time but no other times? It's just not fair! We've now got to wait for the DVD release, but why should we wait?

"Public services need to make 'reasonable adjustments' otherwise it's classed as discrimination" – Equality Act 2010

So come on Odeon, Vue and Cineworld... You're losing out on deaf customers!

Non-subtitled films are still around... I studied Media at school and we had to watch specific films set by the exam board. Since I started the course, half of the films provided didn't have subtitles. The exam board were a right pain in the backside when it came to emailing them about requesting subtitled films. Because of this, they had to change the whole curriculum plan for me... I felt so bad, but like I said, 'reasonable adjustments' have to be made for deaf students!

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My family loved to go to the theatre, we haven't been much in the last few years. Anyway, I'm not a massive fan of theatre as I don't have a clue as to what's going on! How can I possibly lip-read sitting about 10 metres from the stage, looking down from the upstairs circle, when they're all flouncing around the stage? Impossible! They have a hearing loop system, unfortunately they never work for me...

A couple of years ago, I did work experience at a small theatre and I was assisting them with access arrangements for deaf people. It was such fun, the end performance result was outstanding! They had a captioned performance, done by a palantypist, which was so accurate and detailed. I'd love if there were more of these in the big theatre. There was an up close and personal Question and Answer session where the actors were sat close to the deaf audience and there was a sign language interpreter which made us all feel so welcome!

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<sup>6</sup>/ Source: Deafie Blogger. 2015. 'Subtitle Problems!'. May 20.  
Available at <https://deafieblogger.com/2015/05/20/44/#more-44>.

## 1.9. HANDOUT C

'DWTS'<sup>7</sup> champ Nyle DiMarco brings the romance and drama of deaf culture to Netflix in reality series 'Deaf U'

Nyle DiMarco didn't see much of his own experience on TV when he was growing up. "There has never been a show that really gives a deep dive into the deaf community or the deaf cultural experience," the actor, model and activist says.

DiMarco, 31, who has won "Dancing With the Stars" and "America's Next Top Model," sets out to change how deaf people are portrayed on TV as a producer of "Deaf U," Netflix's new reality series (now streaming). Set at Gallaudet University, a prestigious Washington, D.C., college for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, the series is no afterschool special, but rather a juicy, addictive series about a tight-knit community of students from different backgrounds.

Speaking to USA TODAY on a video chat with a translator, DiMarco explained why the series is so important, how he found his magnetic young stars and his own experiences at Gallaudet.

Where did you get the idea for this series?

*Nyle DiMarco:* It goes all the way back to my college days when I was a student at Gallaudet University with my friends. We often would talk about how badly we needed our own reality TV show about the Gallaudet experience. ... When we went out on spring break one year, there was a whole audience of hearing people who were really interested and wanted to learn more about our culture and essentially how to do the sign language. They always wanted to party with us.

Some of the students featured have grown up in the deaf community, and some have never experienced that before they arrive at Gallaudet.

*DiMarco:* Yes. I remember when I was first introduced to the casting (department), everyone wanted to look for big D deaf people, which meant that they shared a very strong cultural deaf identity and had gone to deaf school. Most capital D deaf people

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<sup>7/</sup> DWTS is an acronym for Dancing with the Stars, a widely popular dance competition TV show.

are very confident. They're very energetic, they have really interesting personalities compared to people who might identify as little "d" deaf, who aren't really a part of deaf culture. But I wanted to tell their story as well, and I wanted to see the comparisons. I wasn't by any means gauging whose experience was better. I wanted to really portray that there is no one right way to be deaf.

Two cast members, Daequan and Rodney, are Black men who don't come from the deaf community, and they talk about that a lot during the series. Were you looking for that experience specifically?

*DiMarco:* Once we really built the cast and I had a chance to meet with all of them, (some) were very unsure about it. They knew that it was going to be on Netflix, but they weren't sure if this was something that would really tell their story. ... They were worried that the show could potentially cause them some harm in the future. And then we had Daequan. Originally, he responded and said, "no, I'm not deaf enough." And when I asked him what that meant, "deaf enough," (Daequan) said, "well, you know, a lot of people would assume that you're deaf enough and that your story is a lot more important" (referring to DiMarco). But Daequan's story really was key.

The romantic relationships on the show are so engaging, especially for anyone who really loves reality TV. Was it always going to be about romance or did it happen because the cast is made up of college kids who naturally are attracted to each other?

*DiMarco:* I always wanted a little bit of romance involved, but I wanted to make sure that we were also including LGBTQ+ representation because that's such a major part of our community. Growing up, hearing people would always ask, "How do deaf people date? What does that even look like?" And I thought, all right, well, now is the time you're going to get (to see) it. We wanted to make sure that the show didn't come off (as a) public service announcement. We wanted to see people go through romantic relationships or friendships. We wanted to see that universal experience that hearing people also go through in college.



The series brings out a side of the district D.C. you don't often see in political shows.

DiMarco: D.C. is an incredibly deaf-friendly city. I always felt very normal and comfortable living there, because so many people had already met deaf people and had an experience with our community. There are a lot of people in D.C. who do know some sign language, and it feels like a city that deaf people kind of own. And funny enough, growing up in D.C., I always thought it stood for “deaf community.” The Washington Deaf Community just made sense.<sup>8</sup>

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8/ Source: Lawler, Kelly. 2020. 'DWTS' champ Nyle DiMarco brings the romance and drama of deaf culture to Netflix in reality series 'Deaf U'. USA Today. Available at <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/tv/2020/10/12/deaf-u-nyle-dimarco-brings-deaf-culture-netflix-juicy-series/3594432001/>

## 1.10. HANDOUT D

### 'Subtitle Problems!' Deafie blogger

Being deaf has restrictions on our social lives! I can't tell you how many times my friends have said "let's go to see the new film at the cinema"... I can't, as they never have enough subtitled showings!

Normally, new films won't have a captioned **showing** until a week or two after the release date, so I miss out on a lot of social outings. The number of people who couldn't be bothered to wait for me is extremely frustrating! I wrote to the cinema ages ago about this. Although they said that they had **increased** the number of showings... it's still not enough for us deafies to go regularly, when we want to.

<http://www.yourlocalcinema.com/> is a brilliant website to find the subtitled or audio described cinema showings in your area. However, where I come from there's not a lot of variation, often more children's films than adult ones. D and I wanted to watch Fast and Furious 7 before he went home, but there were no showings until the day after he went! How typical. Did I mention, there were two of the same subtitled showings at different cinemas, at the same time but no other times? It's just not fair! We've now got to wait for the DVD **release**, but why should we wait?

"Public services need to make 'reasonable adjustments' **otherwise** it's classed as discrimination" – Equality Act 2010

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