

# ASL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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## **What is ASL?**

*ASL is an acronym which means American Sign Language. Throughout the world there are different dialects of sign language, just like spoken languages. In America, we primarily use ASL which is based in the English language. Words are communicated through hand movements and gestures but communicating in ASL does not necessarily follow the same grammatical rules as spoken English.*

## **Who uses ASL?**

*While many who are deaf or hearing-impaired use ASL, there are a lot of other people who find this form of communication useful as well. ASL can be used by those who have language disorders or have physical limitations to using verbal language. It's also popularly used by adults with young children who are not using verbal language to fully communicate yet.*

## **Why should I teach ASL to my class?**

*Teaching ASL in your classroom will benefit each child's learning! Particularly those who may struggle with verbal communication. This could be from language delays/disorders or because a child is a dual-language learner. Even infants and toddlers can learn ASL signs so they can communicate with us before they begin using verbal language! ASL is fun and engaging for children to do, which makes it even easier for them to learn.*

# STEPS FOR TEACHING ASL IN THE CLASSROOM

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*Below are some simple steps and ideas you can use to begin teaching ASL in your classroom. Be considerate of the developmental level of the children you are trying to teach to. For younger students, such as infants and toddlers, shorter lessons are best. For preschoolers, lengthier lesson times or activities with ASL are likely to be more appropriate. With any age group, also make sure to incorporate ASL throughout the day when comminating the words you are learning. The more practice, the better!*

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**The easiest way** to introduce ASQ into the classroom is by incorporating the signs into your daily communications with the classroom. Include signs as you are speaking with children. For example, at mealtime when you are serving meals you could use corresponding signs while saying, “cup” and “more milk” and “all done”.

## **Other Tips Include:**

1. Consider the developmental level of your students and identify ASL words which can be helpful in communication. Some examples are:
  - a. Infants: Milk, Eat, Sleep, Hungry, Mom, Dad
  - b. Toddlers: Help, More, Sorry, All Done, Stop, Potty, Water
  - c. Preschool: Please, Emotions (Happy, Sad, Angry, etc.), Animals, Places
2. Consider the pacing for teaching new signs, based on the developmental level of the children. Look to them to indicate if pacing should be slowed down or sped up. If children seem frustrated take a break and try again later or the next day. Learning ASL should be fun and engaging!
3. Think of fun ways to teach ASL without relying on whole group times only.
  - a. At whole group time, use ASL in songs or stories. You can focus on 1-2 ASL signs at a time or do the entire song/story in ASL.
  - b. Use visuals to help teach new ASL words (ex: using a photo of a dog when teaching the sign for ‘dog’)
  - c. Use ASL during transitions, this is where children often spend a lot of time throughout the day. There is a lot of opportunity to practice ASL and doing so will also help keep children engaged and focused.
  - d. Use ASL to describe the world around you. Find natural moments of curiosity and use ASL in addition to your verbal communication as you explore together.
4. Offer specific praise to children who are using ASL in the classroom. When you see them using signs to communicate with peers or with you, let them know they’re doing it right. “You used signs to tell me you wanted more water, great job!”
5. Encourage families to use ASL at home too! Having the added practice at home will help children reinforce the signs they are learning even more. The family will likely appreciate the added communication too!