



SIGN LANGUAGE 'MUST KNOWS'

COMMON TERMS

ASL (American Sign Language) - the official visual and gesture-based language, having its own semantic and syntactic structure, used by deaf people in the U.S. and English-speaking parts of Canada.

NOTE: There are other official forms of Sign Language used in other countries and regions.

C.A.S.E. (Contextually Accurate Signed English) - A form of American Sign Language (ASL) often used by interpreters that uses ASL signs in spoken English word order.

Dominant/Non-dominant Hand - For every signer, the dominant hand will be the 'writing' hand and will be the primary hand used for signing. The opposite hand will be used only for signs requiring two hands or for emphasis.

Manual Alphabet - This is A-B-C's of American Sign Language used to spell out proper names or words where there is either no sign or the sign is unknown by the user.

NOTE: Each form of sign language may use its own form of manual alphabet. For Example, British Sign Language (BSL) used in Great Britain and Australia has a completely different manual alphabet and unique set of accompanying signs.

Rochester method - This form of signing uses only the manual alphabet and excludes the use of sign. Although not commonly used today, it was created to help and teach deaf learn proper English word order and spelling.

S.E.E. (Signing Exact English) - This form is usually reserved for legal or medical situations where exact translation of English to Sign is required to decrease the chance of meaning being lost through the interpreter.

SIM-COM (Simultaneous Communication) - This happens when a person is speaking in English and using the matching signs in ASL, usually for a mixed audience of hearing and deaf.

TOPIC-COMMENT - This is the core of ASL Grammar. Sentences start with the main idea, then signs clarify and fill in details so that the reader can understand from the beginning of the conversation where the signer is going and follow along.

5 PARAMETERS OF SIGNS

For each sign used in ASL, there are 5 key things that the signer must pay attention to when signing:

- 1. Hand Shape** - The shape that the hand and fingers needs to take to communicate the sign.
- 2. Palm Orientation** - The direction that the palm faces when making a sign—towards the signer, towards the reader, or other directions depending on meaning.
- 3. Location** - This is where the signs are formed—in front of the chest, near the forehead, etc.
- 4. Movement** - For some signs, the location of the hands will change from start to end.
- 5. Non-Manual Signals** - It is important to use the proper facial expressions, body signs and even the speed or size of the sign to convey meaning. In English, we rely on vocal tone and pitch. These are the same tools used by deaf to ask questions, show emphasis, and even make a joke.

