

I'm glad you are here. You **can** learn ASL!

Learning American Sign Language is fun and can open the door to a new world of friends and interesting people.

ASL is a living *language*. It is a visual-gestural (eyes/hands/face/body) language used by members of the Deaf Community throughout North America, much of Canada, and many other places too. (But not everywhere.)

ASL is not English on the hands. It uses a different grammar system. Some people confuse ASL with "Signed English". Much of the vocabulary is different. They are two separate ways of communicating. Some people who think they are signing ASL are actually using Signed English.

Unless you are a young child growing up in a "Deaf household" chances are you are going to have to put some serious work into learning this language.

I assure you it will be worth it. Let me make a few quick suggestions and point out a few things:

1. While taking this course, during your everyday life, you should constantly be striving to *think* in ASL.

2. Signs vary from region to region. No two Deaf people sign exactly alike. While in this course focus on learning the signs that your instructor uses. That doesn't mean the signs you learned from your "friend" are wrong, it just means that there is variety out there and you are choosing to add to your vocabulary the signs that your instructor prefers. He or she is the one

giving grades.

3. As with any living language, ASL changes over time to meet the needs of the people who use it. Stay flexible.

4. Seek out Deaf people to converse with:

"Learning to sign without interacting with Deaf people, is like learning to swim without water."
-Bill Vicars

Technically it might be possible to learn to swim without getting in the water, (but it is much more fun to get wet). And you can learn ASL (to some degree) without spending time in the Deaf community, (this website is *working proof*). But, still, you ought to strive to meet and interact with Deaf people.

5. Work hard and have a good time.

Dear ASL Hero

Written by Administrator

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