



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 and unique to other countries and regions.

C.A.S.E. (Contextually Accurate Signed English) - A form of American Sign Language (ASL) often used by interpreters that borrows signs from ASL but uses spoken English word order. Another name for this is called Pidgin (pronounced Pigeon).

Dominant/Non-dominant Hand - For every signer, the DOMINANT HAND will be the 'writing' hand and is the primary hand used in signing. The opposite hand is the NON-DOMINANT HAND used for 2-handed signs.

Fingerspell - Using the ASL Manual Alphabet (see below) to spell out words or names either to clarify or because there is no associated sign.

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 signs.

M.C.E. (Manually Coded English) - This borrows ASL signs and alphabet but stays with strict English word order. (Similar to CASE and SEE listed here.)

Rochester method - This form of signing uses ONLY the manual alphabet and excludes the use of sign. 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. This is usually used for medical, legal or for international translation to avoid any misunderstandings from the exact spoken words.

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.

SHOULDER SHIFT (also known as ROLE SHIFT) - In ASL, location and use of space is critical to separate ideas and thoughts from each other. Shifting slightly from one side to another keeps these ideas clear.

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 (ex. - towards the signer, towards the reader, facing upward, etc.)
- 3. Location** - This is where the signs are formed (ex. - in front of the chest, near the forehead, etc.)
- 4. Movement** - For some signs, the location of the hands will change from sign start to end.
- 5. Non-Manual Signals** - ASL relies heavily on accompanying facial expressions, body movements, and even speed or size of the signs to convey meaning. These are the same as changing vocal tone, pitch, and volume in spoken language, and are required to clarify meaning, ask questions, show emphasis, and even tell a joke or story.

