

American Sign Language (ASL) 1

World Languages
NCAA Approved

Grade(s) 9th - 12th, Duration 1 Year, 1 Credit
Elective Course

Course Overview

American Sign Language 1 is a beginning course designed to introduce students to the basics of ASL vocabulary, grammar, and fundamental signing, as well as reading and writing skills. Students will explore Deaf culture and the Deaf community by examining Deaf history, traditions, and current events. The course emphasizes the practical importance of ASL as a communication tool for everyday interactions and as a gateway to understanding cultural and linguistic diversity. Through immersive practice, students develop receptive and expressive skills, cultural awareness, and the confidence to communicate effectively in ASL.

Timeframe	Unit	Scope And Sequence
		Instructional Topics
10 Week(s)	Introduction to American Sign Language	1. History and Importance of ASL 2. Deaf Culture and Community 3. Basic ASL Grammar and Structure
10 Week(s)	Core Vocabulary and Expressive Skills	1. Alphabet and Numbers 2. Everyday Vocabulary 3. Expressive Sentence Practice
7 Week(s)	Receptive Skills and Conversational ASL	1. Understanding Signed Conversations 2. Classroom and Social Interaction
6 Week(s)	Reading and Writing in ASL	1. Introduction to Glossing ASL 2. Reading Comprehension of ASL Stories
7 Week(s)	College, Careers, and Real-World ASL Application	1. ASL in the Community and Workplace 2. College and Scholarship Preparation

Course Details

Unit: Introduction to American Sign Language

Duration: 10 Week(s)

Unit Description

This introductory unit immerses students in the fundamentals of American Sign Language (ASL) as both a visual and cultural language system. Students will explore the origins and evolution of ASL, tracing its historical development and the influences that shaped it into a fully recognized, complex language with its own unique grammar, syntax, and linguistic features distinct from English. Through interactive lessons and visual-gestural practice, students will begin to acquire foundational vocabulary and learn to use basic conversational structures while developing essential receptive and expressive signing skills. In addition to language study, the unit emphasizes understanding the values, norms, and traditions of Deaf culture, highlighting the significance of ASL as a central means of communication, identity, and empowerment within the Deaf community. By the end of the unit, students will appreciate ASL not only as a language but as a vital bridge to cultural connection, inclusion, and human expression.

Topic: History and Importance of ASL

Duration: 4 Week(s)

Topic Overview

This topic introduces students to the historical development of American Sign Language (ASL) and highlights its significance as a primary language of the Deaf community. Students will explore the origins of ASL, influential figures in its history, and key events that shaped its evolution. Emphasis is placed on understanding ASL as a legitimate, structured language with its own grammar and cultural context, as well as its ongoing role in promoting communication access, education, and community identity for Deaf individuals.

Learning Objectives

Summarize key events in Deaf history.

Description: *Students will research and identify significant milestones in Deaf history, including the establishment of schools for the Deaf, the development of ASL, and influential advocates and educators. By understanding these historical events, students gain insight into the social, educational, and political factors that shaped the Deaf community.*

Explain the significance of ASL in the Deaf community.

Description: *Students will analyze the role of ASL as more than a communication tool—it is a central element of Deaf culture, identity, and community cohesion. Activities may include discussion, reflection, and multimedia exploration to help students understand how ASL fosters connection, cultural continuity, and empowerment within the Deaf community.*

Priority Learning Objective = ★

Learning Objectives linked to Essential Standard = ⚙

Topic: Deaf Culture and Community

Duration: 3 Week(s)

Topic Overview

This topic introduces students to the social norms, values, traditions, and practices of the Deaf community. Students will explore how culture shapes communication, identity, and daily life, emphasizing the unique aspects of Deaf culture and its significance in creating a strong, supportive community. By understanding the perspectives and experiences of Deaf individuals, students develop cultural competence and respect for linguistic diversity.

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Learning Objectives

Describe cultural norms and values within the Deaf community.

Description: *Students will identify common customs, behaviors, and social expectations in the Deaf community, including ways of greeting, turn-taking in conversation, and the use of visual attention. Understanding these norms helps students navigate interactions respectfully and meaningfully within Deaf culture.*

Explain the role of community events and organizations in Deaf culture.

Description: *Students will examine the significance of events such as Deaflympics, Deaf clubs, and educational programs, as well as organizations that support Deaf advocacy and accessibility. Students will reflect on how these institutions foster social connection, identity, and empowerment within the community.*

Priority Learning Objective = ★

Learning Objectives linked to Essential Standard = ✚

Topic: Basic ASL Grammar and Structure

Duration: 3 Week(s)

Topic Overview

This topic introduces students to the foundational grammar and structural rules of American Sign Language (ASL). Unlike English, ASL has its own syntax, use of non-manual markers, and sentence structures that convey meaning visually rather than verbally. Students will learn how to construct simple sentences, ask questions, and use facial expressions and body language to support communication. Mastery of these foundational elements is essential for clear, accurate, and culturally appropriate signing.

Learning Objectives

Demonstrate understanding of ASL sentence structure.

Description: *Students will learn the basic word order commonly used in ASL (Topic-Comment, Subject-Verb-Object, etc.) and practice forming complete, meaningful sentences. Emphasis is placed on structuring sentences in a way that maintains clarity and coherence in visual communication.*

Use non-manual markers to convey meaning.

Description: *Students will identify and apply non-manual markers (such as facial expressions, head movements, and body shifts) that indicate questions, negation, emphasis, or tone. Understanding non-manual markers helps students convey nuanced meaning and enhances overall communication effectiveness.*

Construct simple ASL sentences and questions.

Description: *Students will practice forming declarative, interrogative, and negative sentences using correct grammar and visual cues. Exercises include signing sentences aloud, peer-to-peer practice, and teacher feedback to ensure accuracy and comprehension.*

Priority Learning Objective = ★

Learning Objectives linked to Essential Standard = ✚

Unit: Core Vocabulary and Expressive Skills

Duration: 10 Week(s)

Unit Description

This unit focuses on building the foundational communication skills and core vocabulary essential for engaging in everyday interactions using American Sign Language. Students will learn to produce and comprehend signs related to common topics such as personal introductions, family, school, emotions, and daily activities, while also developing fluency in facial expressions, body language, and spatial referencing—key grammatical features that convey tone and meaning in ASL. Emphasis is placed on expressive communication, enabling students to initiate, maintain, and conclude basic conversations with clarity and confidence. Through structured practice, peer dialogue, and interactive visual activities, students will strengthen their ability to convey simple ideas, ask and answer questions, and exchange information in natural, context-based settings. By the end of the unit, learners will demonstrate the ability to use ASL effectively in routine social exchanges, showing growing comfort with the rhythm, visual structure, and cultural etiquette of signed communication.

Topic: Alphabet and Numbers

Duration: 4 Week(s)

Topic Overview

This topic introduces students to the ASL manual alphabet and the number system, which are foundational components for communication in American Sign Language. Mastery of fingerspelling and numerical signs allows students to spell names, communicate basic information, and understand dates, addresses, and quantities. Students will practice both expressive (signing) and receptive (understanding) skills to ensure accurate communication in real-life contexts.

Learning Objectives

Accurately produce and recognize the ASL alphabet.

Description: *Students will learn to form and identify all letters of the ASL alphabet through drills, interactive activities, and practical application. This skill enables them to spell names, words, and other essential information, supporting literacy and communication within the Deaf community.*

Demonstrate understanding and use of ASL numbers (1–100).

Description: *Students will learn to sign and interpret numbers from 1 to 100, including strategies for combining digits in larger numbers. This skill allows students to communicate dates, quantities, and other numerical information accurately and efficiently.*

Apply the alphabet and numbers in functional communication.

Description: *Students will practice using fingerspelling and numbers in realistic scenarios such as introducing themselves, giving contact information, or discussing schedules. Activities may include partner exercises, spelling games, and interactive quizzes to reinforce comprehension and expressive ability.*

Priority Learning Objective = ★

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Topic: Everyday Vocabulary

Duration: 3 Week(s)

Topic Overview

This topic introduces students to essential ASL vocabulary for daily interactions, including greetings, emotions, family, school, hobbies, and basic conversational phrases. The focus is on building functional language skills that allow students to communicate effectively in everyday situations. Students will practice expressive (signing) and receptive (understanding) skills in authentic, meaningful contexts.

Learning Objectives

Use basic greetings and social expressions appropriately.

Description: *Students will learn to sign common greetings, farewells, and polite expressions in ASL. By practicing these phrases in context, students develop the ability to initiate and respond to everyday social interactions naturally and respectfully.*

Communicate emotions and personal information.

Description: *Students will learn vocabulary to express feelings, preferences, and personal details such as age, interests, and family members. Practice includes constructing simple sentences to share personal information and engage in conversation with peers.*

Apply vocabulary in contextually meaningful conversations.

Description: *Students will participate in role-playing and interactive activities that simulate real-life scenarios, such as introducing themselves, talking about hobbies, or discussing school routines. These exercises reinforce vocabulary retention and help students develop confidence in using ASL in authentic settings.*

Priority Learning Objective = ☆

Learning Objectives linked to Essential Standard = ✚

Topic: Expressive Sentence Practice

Duration: 3 Week(s)

Topic Overview

This topic focuses on developing students' ability to construct and sign meaningful sentences in ASL using learned vocabulary and grammar. Students practice combining words, sentence structures, and non-manual markers to communicate ideas clearly and effectively. The goal is to strengthen expressive skills, enabling students to participate in conversations, tell stories, and convey information accurately in a visual language format.

Learning Objectives

Construct simple declarative sentences in ASL.

Description: *Students will use learned vocabulary and ASL grammar to create clear and coherent statements. Practice includes forming sentences about personal experiences, school routines, and daily activities, with emphasis on correct word order and use of non-manual markers.*

Formulate questions and negative sentences in ASL.

Description: *Students will learn to create yes/no questions, WH-questions, and negative statements. Activities include practicing appropriate facial expressions, head movements, and body language to convey interrogative and negative meaning accurately.*

Apply expressive skills in conversational practice.

Description: *Students engage in peer-to-peer dialogues and role-playing exercises, using sentences they construct to communicate effectively. This reinforces fluency, encourages active participation, and allows for teacher feedback to refine accuracy and clarity.*

Priority Learning Objective = ☆

Learning Objectives linked to Essential Standard = ✚

Unit: Receptive Skills and Conversational ASL

Duration: 7 Week(s)

Unit Description

This unit emphasizes the development of receptive language skills—the ability to accurately perceive, interpret, and comprehend signed communication in real-world contexts. Students will focus on understanding the flow and structure of conversational ASL, including recognizing key vocabulary, grammatical features, non-manual markers, and spatial referencing that shape meaning in signed exchanges. Through guided practice, video analysis, and interactive classroom activities, learners will strengthen their ability to follow instructions, respond appropriately to questions, and interpret short narratives or dialogues in ASL. Particular attention is given to building visual attention, processing speed, and comprehension strategies that support effective communication in both classroom interactions and everyday social situations. By the end of the unit, students will demonstrate increased confidence and proficiency in understanding authentic signed messages, laying the groundwork for full participation in ASL conversations and continued language development.

Topic: Understanding Signed Conversations

Duration: 4 Week(s)

Topic Overview

This topic focuses on developing students' receptive skills in ASL, enabling them to understand and interpret signed conversations. Students will practice observing signs, facial expressions, body language, and other non-manual markers to comprehend messages accurately.

Emphasis is placed on building the ability to follow conversations, respond appropriately, and extract key information from both scripted and spontaneous dialogue.

Learning Objectives

Demonstrate comprehension of short signed dialogues.

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Description: *Students will view and interpret brief conversations between signers, identifying key information, main ideas, and specific details. Activities include video analysis, live signing demonstrations, and comprehension questions to reinforce understanding.*

Interpret questions and responses in signed communication.

Description: *Students will recognize different types of questions (yes/no, WH-questions) and appropriate responses in ASL conversations. Practice includes identifying non-manual markers and contextual cues to accurately determine the meaning and intent of signed exchanges.*

Apply receptive skills in interactive classroom activities.

Description: *Students participate in peer-to-peer exercises, such as role-playing and structured conversation activities, to practice real-time comprehension. This hands-on approach strengthens the ability to follow and respond appropriately in authentic ASL interactions.*

Priority Learning Objective = ★

Learning Objectives linked to Essential Standard = ✚

Topic: Classroom and Social Interaction

Duration: 3 Week(s)

Topic Overview

This topic emphasizes students' ability to actively participate in ASL-based classroom and social interactions. Students will practice using ASL to communicate effectively in real-life and academic settings, including giving and following directions, asking questions, sharing personal information, and collaborating with peers. The focus is on building fluency, conversational skills, and confidence in both structured and informal communication.

Learning Objectives

Objective: Engage in basic classroom conversations using ASL.

Description: *Students will practice signing and responding to common classroom interactions, such as asking for clarification, requesting materials, or participating in group activities. Emphasis is placed on clarity, appropriate facial expressions, and respectful turn-taking to support effective communication.*

Participate in social interactions with peers using ASL.

Description: *Students will practice using ASL to discuss personal experiences, hobbies, and daily activities. Role-playing and collaborative exercises provide opportunities to apply vocabulary and grammar in authentic social contexts, fostering confidence and fluency.*

Apply cultural norms in classroom and social settings.

Description: *Students will demonstrate awareness of Deaf cultural practices, such as maintaining eye contact, using visual attention, and respecting conversational etiquette. Integrating cultural understanding ensures communication is respectful, meaningful, and contextually appropriate.*

Priority Learning Objective = ★

Learning Objectives linked to Essential Standard = ✚

Unit: Reading and Writing in ASL

Duration: 6 Week(s)

Unit Description

This unit introduces students to the visual and written representation of American Sign Language concepts, emphasizing the connection between expressive signing and the ability to interpret and document ASL through visual and linguistic forms. Students will explore how ASL can be represented using glossing—a written convention that captures the structure, grammar, and meaning of signed communication—and will practice reading and interpreting ASL narratives, dialogues, and descriptions in this format. Through guided exercises, students will learn to analyze sign order, use appropriate notation for non-manual markers, and recognize how spatial organization, classifiers, and movement contribute to meaning. This unit also develops students' reading comprehension skills as they engage with visual texts such as sign videos, story sequences, and ASL-to-English translations. By the end of the unit, learners will demonstrate the ability to accurately document their own signing in written form and interpret the visual representation of ASL with growing linguistic awareness and cultural sensitivity.

Topic: Introduction to Glossing ASL

Duration: 3 Week(s)

Topic Overview

This topic introduces students to glossing, the written representation of American Sign Language (ASL) signs using English words. Glossing allows students to document ASL sentences, practice grammar, and analyze sentence structure while bridging the gap between visual signing and written language. Students will learn conventions for glossing, including capitalization, word order, and notation for non-manual markers.

Learning Objectives

Explain the purpose and conventions of ASL glossing.

Description: *Students will understand that glossing is a tool for documenting ASL, not a translation into English. They will learn the rules for capitalization, sign representation, and notation for non-manual markers, enabling accurate and consistent written documentation of signed communication.*

Write basic ASL sentences using gloss notation.

Description: *Students will practice converting simple signed sentences into written gloss, focusing on correct word order, grammar, and non-manual markers. This exercise reinforces understanding of ASL structure and strengthens both expressive and receptive skills.*

Analyze ASL sentences through glossing.

Description: *Students will examine and break down sentences to identify subjects, verbs, objects, and non-manual cues. This process develops analytical skills, deepens understanding of ASL grammar, and supports accurate signing in future interactions.*

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Topic: Reading Comprehension of ASL Stories

Duration: 3 Week(s)

Topic Overview

This topic focuses on developing students' ability to interpret and understand ASL narratives through visual media and glossing. Students will analyze signed stories, identify main ideas, details, and narrative structure, and summarize content using gloss notation. The goal is to strengthen receptive skills, reinforce grammar and vocabulary, and improve overall comprehension of ASL communication.

Learning Objectives

Identify main ideas and supporting details in ASL stories.

Description: *Students will watch or view ASL stories and use glossing to capture key points, characters, events, and details. This practice enhances their ability to extract meaning from signed narratives and reinforces critical thinking and observation skills.*

Summarize ASL stories using gloss notation.

Description: *Students will practice writing concise summaries of ASL stories in gloss, reflecting proper sentence structure, grammar, and non-manual markers. This activity strengthens comprehension while bridging visual language with written documentation.*

Analyze story structure and narrative techniques in ASL.

Description: *Students will explore how ASL storytellers use classifiers, role-shifting, facial expressions, and spatial referencing to convey meaning. Recognizing these techniques supports students' understanding of narrative flow and enhances their ability to interpret complex messages.*

Priority Learning Objective = ☆

Learning Objectives linked to Essential Standard = ✚

Unit: College, Careers, and Real-World ASL Application

Duration: 7 Week(s)

Unit Description

This unit emphasizes the practical applications of American Sign Language, highlighting how ASL proficiency can extend beyond the classroom into meaningful real-world contexts. Students will explore how signing skills can enhance communication and foster inclusion in everyday interactions with Deaf individuals, while also examining the role of ASL in professional, academic, and social settings. The unit introduces students to career pathways, volunteer opportunities, and scholarship programs where knowledge of ASL is an asset, illustrating how language skills can open doors in fields such as education, healthcare, social services, interpreting, and the arts. Through authentic projects, community engagement, and research activities, learners will apply their ASL knowledge in practical scenarios, develop strategies for effective communication, and reflect on the cultural and societal significance of connecting with the Deaf community. By the end of the unit, students will demonstrate an understanding of how ASL can be used as a tool for personal, academic, and professional growth, while fostering respect, empathy, and cultural awareness.

Topic: ASL in the Community and Workplace

Duration: 4 Week(s)

Topic Overview

This topic introduces students to the practical applications of ASL beyond the classroom, including communication in community settings, workplaces, and public services. Students will explore how ASL proficiency supports career opportunities, community engagement, and accessibility for Deaf individuals. Emphasis is placed on real-world contexts, professional etiquette, and understanding the societal value of ASL as a communication tool.

Learning Objectives

Identify real-world contexts where ASL is used.

Description: *Students will research and describe situations where ASL is utilized, such as educational programs, healthcare, public services, and social organizations. This helps students recognize the practical importance of ASL in everyday life and promotes awareness of accessibility needs.*

Explore career opportunities involving ASL.

Description: *Students will investigate professions that require ASL proficiency, including interpreters, educators, counselors, and service providers. Activities include researching job descriptions, requirements, and pathways to certification, helping students connect ASL learning to future career possibilities.*

Demonstrate appropriate ASL communication in community and workplace scenarios.

Description: *Through role-playing and simulations, students will practice effective, respectful communication in professional and community contexts. Emphasis is on using proper etiquette, clear signing, and cultural awareness to interact successfully with Deaf individuals in real-world settings.*

Priority Learning Objective = ☆

Learning Objectives linked to Essential Standard = ✚

Topic: College and Scholarship Preparation

Duration: 3 Week(s)

Topic Overview

This topic connects students' ASL learning to postsecondary opportunities by exploring college programs, scholarship options, and academic pathways related to ASL, Deaf Studies, and other fields that value bilingual or sign language skills. Students will learn how to research opportunities, evaluate eligibility criteria, and communicate findings, applying both ASL skills and academic research abilities in meaningful, real-world contexts.

Learning Objectives

Research colleges and programs that incorporate ASL or Deaf Studies.

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Description: *Students will identify postsecondary institutions offering ASL-related courses, degrees, or programs. They will evaluate program requirements and opportunities, gaining awareness of how ASL proficiency can influence educational pathways and career options.*

Identify scholarship opportunities related to ASL, Deaf Studies, or bilingual skills.

Description: *Students will investigate scholarship resources, criteria, and application processes. They will practice gathering information, analyzing eligibility, and documenting findings, connecting ASL skills to tangible academic benefits.*

Present research findings using ASL and/or written formats.

Description: *Students will share their research on colleges and scholarships with peers, demonstrating clear communication and organizational skills. This includes using ASL for oral presentations, glossing as needed, and written documentation to convey information accurately and professionally.*

Priority Learning Objective = ☆

Learning Objectives linked to Essential Standard = ⛶