

ASL Development Checklist

Stage 1

- Begin to use simple handshapes (e.g., B, C, O, A, S, 1, 5).
- Begins to use simple movements (e.g., straight forward, up down).
- Begins to use simple single-sign vocabulary.
- Begins to combine signs into simple two-sign sentences.
- Uses classifiers (Object) (E.g., 2h CL: O-pole).
- Negation – headshake alone or headshake with negative sign

headshake headshake
NO CAN'T

- Questions used include Yes/No and What, Where

wh—q (frown) Yes/No—q (eyebrows raised)
WHERE MINE

- Indexes (points to) present objects and people.
- Storytelling is not always clear—copying actions and facial expressions.

Stage 2

- Tries to use complex handshape, but often simplifies (substitutes simple handshapes) (e.g., WATER with 5 handshape replacing the w handshape)
- Uses simple movements (straight forward, up down).
- Use of verb modification
WALK—stroll; WALK—quickly; WALK—for a long time
- Three- or four-sign sentences.
- Classifiers: Object + Movement (e.g., CL:3—car driving forward).
- Negation—headshake with non-negative sign

headshake
ME WANT MILK

- Questions used include Yes/No and What, Where, Why

whq (frown)
GO HOME WHY

- Storytelling (different roles, body shift, facial expression)
 - Substitutes present objects to talk about object and people not present.
 - Character identification and shifts not always clear.

Stage 3

- Begins to use complex handshapes (e. g., X, Y, T, R, 3)
- Begins to use complex movements (e.g. wiggly movement)
- Begins to use verb modifications to indicate number and distribution (e.g., FALL, singular; FALL, plural; FALL, random)
- Begins to use noun modification to indicate intensity, size, and quality of objects (e.g., bowl—big)
- Questions used include Yes/No and What, Where, Why, For-For, Who

Sentence structures:

- Begins to use Topicalization IX (my) ROOM, PAINT TOMORROW
_____t
- Begins to use rhetorical questions (e.g., TURTLE RUN, WHO WIN, TURTLE)
_____rhet (raised eyebrows)

Storytelling

- Inconsistent use of points in space to represent nonpresent objects/people.
- Role-play through body shifts, eye gaze, and facial expression.

Stage 4

- Consistent use of complex handshapes and movements (e.g., fingerspelling short words and names).
- Use of noun modification to indicate the spatial arrangement of objects (e.g., TREE++ in a row; TREE++ in a cluster).
- Use of bracketing to indicate “wh” questions

_____wh (frown)
WHERE GO WHERE

Sentence structures:

- Topicalization (topic continuation)
- Rhetorical questions
- Conditionals (IF or SUPPOSE)

_____cond. (brow raised)
IF—SUPPOSE RAIN, GAME CANCEL

- Appropriate use of full abstract referencing for objects/people not present.
- Storytelling (character identification, role-play, role shifts) is clear and consistent.

From Language Learning in Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing: Multiple Pathways, Easterbrooks, and Baker,

ASL SCALE OF DEVELOPMENT

	Beginning	Early Intermediate	Intermediate	Early Advanced	Advanced
Progression of Academic and Social Language Development	<p>The student is observant of language being modeled in the environment. She/he can imitate actions and facial expressions.</p> <p>Can use gesture to communicate or can physically demonstrate behaviors (e.g., show the action of falling by pretending to fall.)</p> <p>Can use facial expressions to clarify meaning (e.g., head nods and smiling).</p> <p>Is beginning to maintain eye contact with adults or peers, but is not consistent.</p> <p>Recognizes some signs as representing objects in immediate environment.</p>	<p>The student demonstrates more confidence using ASL but still prefers to converse one-on-one with peers or teacher.</p> <p>Will inquire about meaning of signs or words that are not understood.</p> <p>Can use basic ASL to communicate needs and share feelings. Can use gestures when words are not readily available.</p> <p>Can retell, ask and answer simple questions, and summarize.</p> <p>Eye gaze is longer and more purposeful.</p>	<p>The student is increasingly confident speaking in front of group or participating in class discussions.</p> <p>Can discuss academic ideas such as main points of a story or a science or history project.</p> <p>Able to analyze, explain, describe and define using content-related vocabulary.</p> <p>More use of eye gaze when following conversational turns.</p>	<p>The student is much more comfortable and confident in sharing ideas or information in front of the class.</p> <p>More fluent in following the conversation of two or more people. Can respond to questions with details.</p> <p>Consistently comprehends general meanings, and demonstrates understanding of nuances and implied meanings expressed by body language, facial expressions or words.</p> <p>Starts to engage in ASL sign play by manipulating signs within ASL lexicon rules or other kinds of inventive sign play (e.g., can create slang or jokes).</p>	<p>Can carry a conversation or classroom discussion without difficulty.</p> <p>Code switches to match the ASL skills of other deaf students, teacher, or hearing people.</p> <p>Able to decipher general and implied meaning including idiomatic, figurative language</p> <p>Able to adapt language to formal and casual registers depending on audience and purpose.</p> <p>Has no difficulty with academic language of the classroom. Able to discuss and understand abstract ideas.</p>
Questions	<p>Expresses what she/he wants by shaking his/her head, and sometimes responding to questions and simple commands with “yes” or “no”.</p>	<p>Uses appropriate facial expressions with eyebrows when asking wh- or yes/no questions Can respond to simple “wh-” questions (e.g., who, what, where, why).</p>	<p>Asks and responds to more type of questions that include signing (e.g., FOR-FOR?”, “HOW?”, WHEN?” or “WHICH?” using appropriate facial expressions.</p>	<p>Asks bracketed questions, i.e., starting and ending a question with wh-question.</p>	<p>Able to ask any questions fluently and properly.</p>
Syntax	<p>Uses simple or basic single word signs and use sometimes combination of two to three signs to make a sentence or phrase based on needs or wants. (e.g., MY NAME (fs), HE PLAY, ME HUNGRY EAT).</p>	<p>Start to use ASL sentence structure including different combinations of subject, verb, object and location (e.g., LSOV-home (?), MOM JUICE DRINK).</p>	<p>Begins to use more complex sentence structures such as rhetorical questions and topicalization (e.g., MY FAVORITE SUBJECT? SCIENCE. DRESS RED) but not always in correct word order or facial expression.</p>	<p>Uses conditionals, facial adverbials (if—then statements), rhetorical comment (e.g., WHY? I LIKE IT.), and topicalization with consistent accuracy.</p> <p>Able to uses topic continuation (i.e., holding the topic on one hand and continuing to sign the comment on other hand).</p>	<p>Able to do all the sentence structures mentioned on the left with ease.</p>
Verbs	<p>Uses plain verbs consistently. (e.g., DRINK, TASTE, PLAY, UNDERSTAND).</p> <p>Uses noun-verb pairs (e.g., DOOR/CLOSE-DOOR, AIRPLANE/FLY).</p>	<p>Demonstrates emerging use of subject-verb agreement (e.g., directional: I-BEAT-HIM, CALL-HER, GIVE-ME); geographical: (e.g.,FLY-TO, MOVE-THERE); reciprocal: (e.g., KISS, AGREE).</p>	<p>Capable of using spatial subject-verb agreement (e.g., YOU-GIVE-ME, HE-ASKS-HER).</p> <p>Shows verb inflection for temporal aspect (e.g., READ, READ-QUICKLY, READ-A-LONG-TIME).</p>	<p>Continues to show development of intensity (COMFORTABLE, SERIOUS, LONG TIME), manner, (TIPTOE/STOMPS) and temporal aspects in including number and distribution with verbs (e.g., ASK; ASK AGAIN; ASK MANY PEOPLE AT DIFFERENT TIMES; ASK A GROUP OF PEOPLE).</p>	<p>Uses verb with wide register depending on situation.</p>

Classifiers	Demonstrates emerging use of classifiers to describe basic objects (e.g., DCL:C- ball, or DCL:B- box).	Uses instrument classifiers (e.g., PULL-OUT; ZIP-UP; TURN-ON-TV). Uses more locative classifier to show relationship with other objects (e.g., LCL: 1- pencil, on desk LCL: B). Starts to use classifier manner of verb (e.g., “3” car move up and down, person “1” walking by).	Uses descriptive classifiers to describe nouns, including color, size, shape, and quality (e.g., hairstyle, body type, size, texture).	Continues to use descriptive classifiers to show intensity for noun-size, shape, texture, and quality (e.g., LIGHT, BRIGHT; ROAD, BUMPY). Show number and location through plural spatial classifiers (e.g., two people walking, people seated in a circle; line of people; books in row).	Uses classifiers with ease- without being conscious about it.
Pronoun	Use of index finger to point at self, people, objects or places in present environment (gestural/ nonlinguistic).	Uses both personal and possessive pronouns with HS “1” or “5” (linguistic).	Uses reflective pronouns with HS- “A” (yourself, myself, himself).	Can analyze and/or compare and contrast two items/person/stories (using appropriate placement in space).	Can describe a situation involving more than two items/person/stories
Formal Expressive Skills (Storytelling or Presentation)	While storytelling or talking, can talk about what is in the immediate environment. Can point to pictures or talk about events that happened in the here and now. Copies actions or facial expressions of others.	During storytelling or retelling a story, uses a little or no role shifting and placements of characters. Tends to place characters in the same place. No clear sequence of time. Can talk about past and things that are not present, but still needs to act it out or use objects to demonstrate past events.	Begins to place points in space for characters. Exhibits role play, but body shifting, eye-gaze and facial expressions aren’t consistent. Also, doesn’t always use the time sequence accurately. Can talk about past and things that are not present without acting it out (e.g., actually falling to the ground).	Use of role play, role shift, grammatical facial expressions, and eye gaze are more consistent. Able to talk abstractly about people or things that aren’t present. Can use referencing more accurately. More consistently able to sequence objects, give step-by-step instructions or clearly explain the order of events.	Character placement (spatial referencing) and identification are clear. The signer takes on various characters’ perspectives.
Fingerspelled Words	Responds to her/his fingerspelled name and can use name signs and signs of others.	Demonstrates emergent use of fully fingerspelled words including short words, name of person or place. Uses fingerspelled English words to ask for a sign translation.	Includes fingerspelled words in conversation, but may not always understand fingerspelled words. Increasingly will fingerspell English words for sign translation.	Understands fingerspelled words and fingerspells fluently.	Fingerspelled words become lexical signs. (i.e. “what” “back” “ok” “early”)
Cultural Behavior	Starts to respond to attention-getting techniques (e.g., tapping on shoulder, waving a hand in his/her field of vision, flashing lights).	Can appropriately get others’ attention and readily responds to attention-getting methods (e.g., tapping on shoulder, stomping on floor, or waving hands). Begins to seek out and enjoy ASL literary forms (e.g., ASL storytelling and ABC stories).	More appropriate use of attention-getting techniques (e.g., asking someone to tap another person because they are beyond his/her reach). Begins to express his/her own literary forms (e.g., ASL storytelling or ABC stories).	More sensitive to communication needs of others (e.g., moving so others can see, giving full attention, and making appropriate responses to indicate understanding). Continues to enjoy and express literary forms.	Can re-cap or summarize for someone if he/she has missed something because they were absent or out of visual field. Capable of explaining in different ways if not understood at first.

ASL STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT
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3 to 12 months

- Begins to notice signing
- First sign may emerge from 10 to 12 months
- Babbles with hands
- Imitates facial expressions
- Points to people, objects and places but not at self

12 to 18 months

- Uses at least 10 signs
- Begins to use points as pronouns
- Acquires new signs but does not mark with inflections

18 to 24 months

- Signs reflect basic handshapes with simple movements (straight forward, up, or down)
- Early signs not always produced according to adult conventional forms
- Combines 2 or 3 signs including points
- Begins to distinguish and use non-manual markers (facial grammar)

2 to 3 years

- Sign order used to show semantic relations
- Begins to use classifiers to represent objects (with little or no movement); types limited by the handshapes child can produce
- Begins to use varied inflected verb forms (directional/agreement, dual, temporal aspect)
- Attempts more complex signs but substitutes basic handshapes for the complex handshapes
- Begins to use non-manual markers (raised/squinted eyebrows) for YES/NO and WH-questions
- Demonstrates negation with headshake or sign "NO"
- Begins to use possessive (your, mine) and plural (US-TWO, YOU-THREE) pronouns
- Refers to things around them during conversations and storytelling; may copy the actions and facial expressions of others in a story

3 to 4 years

- Begins to mark distinctions between noun-verb pairs (FLY/AIRPLANE)
- Uses classifiers to show objects and movements of these objects
- Begins to make modifications to verb signs to show the manner and amount of time involved in an activity (temporal aspect) by

changing the movement of the sign and/or adding facial expressions

- All “real world” pronouns (pointing at objects and people in the immediate environment) used correctly
- Tells stories through use of objects or role-playing; may not always show clearly who is speaking or doing something

4 to 5 years

- More complex handshapes and movement (wiggling fingers, twisting wrists) used accurately
- Begins to use noun modifications to show different meaning (e.g. repeating the noun to show plural)
- Simple sentences still used but complex sentences including topicalization and rhetorical questions emerging
- Begins to set up points in space to establish location for people and objects not present in the environment
- Role-playing used more frequently with characters clearly identified but skills to show changes in roles such as body shifts, eye gaze and facial expression not used consistently

5 to 6 years

- Clear and consistent use of complex handshapes and movement
- Fingerspelling used more
- Use of complex sentences including relative clauses and conditionals continuing to expand
- Use of verb modifications to show intensity, manner, number and distribution continuing to expand
- Use of abstract referencing to talk about people and things not in the present environment
- Storytelling becomes more “adult like”; makes frequent self corrections
- Takes on a variety of roles during conversation and storytelling; changes in roles indicated through facial expression, body shifts and eye gaze shown clearly and consistently

References:

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Newport, Elissa L. and Meier, Richard p.; *The Acquisition of American Sign Language*, NIH/NSF Research Grants, 1986

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Figure 8

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

Rubrics for Assessment of American Sign Language

The following rubrics suggest samples of standards and criteria for assessing the expressive and receptive language skills of students who are learning American Sign Language. These rubrics are *not inclusive* of the comprehensive expressive and receptive language skills that students will need to gain a fluency in American Sign Language, but rather they suggest a general framework for assessment.

Figure 8A: Rubric for Assessment of American Sign Language Expressive Skills

	4 Excellent	3 Very Good	2 Satisfactory	1 In Progress
Formation: Handshape Palm Orientation Movement Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent use of correct signs • Clear, easily understood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-corrects; few mistakes made • Easily understood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some errors, but is understandable • Errors are usually not corrected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent incorrect formation of signs • Very difficult to understand signs
Space Referents: Motion/Location of Verbs (includes eye gaze, body shifting, and choice of signs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive use of setting up points in space to refer to objects and people • Good eye contact • Lively, enthusiastic, uses expressiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently sets up points in space to refer to objects and people; makes some errors • Maintains some eye contact • Some use of expressive behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited use of setting up points in space to refer to objects and people; sometimes makes errors • Limited eye contact • Limited use of expressive behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty with setting up points in space to refer to objects and people • Difficulty with maintaining eye contact • Lacks expressive behaviors when signing
Story Grammar—Use of Non-Manual Markers: Yes/No Questions "Wh—" Questions Location Negation Contrastive Structure (referents, time, intensity, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses good facial expressions correctly and consistently • Uses intensifiers (dramatic use of facial expressions and signs) to match information conveyed • Uses all non-manual markers appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate use of facial expressions when signing • Inconsistent use of intensifiers • Inconsistent use of non-manual markers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some appropriate use of facial expressions • Limited use of intensifiers • Limited use of non-manual markers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks facial expressions when signing • Difficulty using intensifiers • Difficulty using non-manual markers
Fluency/Accuracy: Smoothness and Fluency of Signs Conceptually Accurate Ideas/Messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates with fluency and confidence • Signs conceptually accurate ideas/messages consistently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smooth flow of signs with confidence most of the time • Signs conceptually accurate ideas/messages the majority of the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hesitates and self-corrects when signing • Signs conceptually accurate ideas/messages on a limited basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jerky hand movements and choppy use of signs • Unable to sign conceptually accurate ideas/messages

Figure 8 (continued)

SAMPLE ASSESSMENT RUBRICS**Rubrics for Assessment of American Sign Language****Figure 8B: Rubric for Assessment of American Sign Language Receptive Skills**

	4 Excellent	3 Very Good	2 Satisfactory	1 In Progress
Basic Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands all signed vocabulary words Does not need repetition of signed vocabulary words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands most signed vocabulary words Rarely requires repetition of signed vocabulary words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited understanding of signed vocabulary words Requires some repetition of signed vocabulary words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very limited understanding of signed vocabulary words Requires frequent repetition of signed vocabulary words
Fingerspelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands all fingerspelled words Does not need any repetition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands most fingerspelled words Rarely requires repetition of fingerspelled words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited understanding of fingerspelled words Requires some repetition of fingerspelled words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very limited understanding of fingerspelled words Requires frequent repetition of fingerspelled words
Simple ASL Sentences and Simple ASL Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands all simple ASL sentences Understands all simple ASL questions Does not need any repetition of sentences/questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands most simple ASL sentences Understands most simple ASL questions Needs some repetition of sentences/questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited understanding of simple ASL sentences Limited understanding of simple ASL questions Often needs sentences/questions repeated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very limited understanding of simple ASL sentences Very limited understanding of simple ASL questions Requires frequent repetition of sentences/questions
Complex ASL Sentences and Complex ASL Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands all complex ASL sentences Understands all complex ASL questions Does not need any repetition of sentences/questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands most complex ASL sentences Understands most complex ASL questions Needs some repetition of sentences/questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited understanding of complex ASL sentences Limited understanding of complex ASL questions Often needs sentences/questions repeated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Very limited understanding of complex ASL sentences Very limited understanding of complex ASL questions Requires frequent repetition of sentences/questions
Non-Manual Markers: Yes/No Questions "Wh—" Questions Location Negation Contrastive Structure (referents, time, intensity, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands all non-manual markers Responds appropriately to non-manual behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands most non-manual markers Responds appropriately to most non-manual behaviors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understands some non-manual markers; asks for clarification of some non-manual behaviors Responds appropriately to some non-manual markers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited understanding of non-manual markers; frequently needs non-manual markers clarified or explained Responds inappropriately to non-manual markers

Checklist of Emerging ASL Skills

Available in: Easterbrooks, S & Baker, S. **Language Learning In Children Who Are Deaf And Hard Of Hearing: Multiple Pathways.** (2002) Allyn and Bacon, Boston, Mass.

This checklist provides a series of indicators to judge whether a deaf child has components of ASL in his or her communication system. The evaluator should not judge a child's skills based on English ability. The focus should be on ASL.

The checklist should be filled out by at least three different evaluators who are familiar with the child and who are proficient in ASL.

ASL Development Observation Record

Available through: ASL Resource Teacher, Early Childhood Education Program, California School for the Deaf, Fremont (CSDF), 39350 Gallaudet Drive, Fremont, CA 94538 (510) 794-2536

This tool was developed by the Early Childhood Education program at the CSDF to document the ASL language development of deaf children from the time they entered the program to Kindergarten. The goal of the observation record is to identify the language strengths and needs of each child and to document the progress made over the time spent in the Early Childhood Education program. This record also serves as a guide for teachers in assessing their role as language models and how they use language with the children.

The American Sign Language Proficiency Assessment (ASL-PA)

Available by contacting: Dr. Sam Supalla, Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and School Psychology, College of Education, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721 (520) 621-9466 (TTY) E-mail: ssupalla@u.arizona.edu

The ASL-PA globally assesses the expressive ASL skills of children ages 6-12 years of age. Items/target features are based on ASL acquisition studies. Language samples are elicited from varied discourse contexts. There are no sample norms presently available.

Test of American Sign Language (TASL)

Available by contacting: Dr. Philip Prinz, Department of Special Education and Communicative Disorders, San Francisco State University (415) 338-7655 [begin_of_the_skype_highlighting\(415\)338-7655end_of_the_skype_highlighting](mailto:begin_of_the_skype_highlighting(415)338-7655end_of_the_skype_highlighting) E-mail: pm@sfsu.edu

The TASL consists of two production measures (Classifier Production Test, and Sign Narrative) and four comprehension measures (Story Comprehension, Classifier Comprehension Test, Time Marker Test, and Map Marker Test). It is designed to be used with deaf students ages 8-15 years.

The MacArthur Communicative Development Inventory for American Sign Language, <http://www.signlang-assessment.info/eng/ASL-CDI-eng/asl-cdi-eng.html>