

# **HANDS IN TOUCH**

**BY**  
**JAMES ANDREWS**  
**&**  
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**HANDS IN TOUCH**  
**IS A CURRICULUM FOR AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE. IT**  
**PROVIDES INSTRUCTION IN BASIC ASL VOCABULARY,**  
**GRAMMAR, AND CULTURE GEARED SPECIFICALLY FOR**  
**THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL.**



Hands In Touch

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The sign on the cover of this book (touching the fingertips of both middle fingers while the other fingers are extended) is the sign in ASL (American Sign Language) for “contact”. It is our hope that after completing this curriculum, you will have adequate knowledge of vocabulary and grammar in ASL to enable you to “contact” or “connect with” those in the Deaf community.

Most of the initial learning of the language will be demonstrated in class by your teacher. This text and accompanying video/DVD is designed to reinforce what you’ve learned in class along with providing you the extra practice that you need. Just like any other activity, the more you practice, the better you become. Think of when you first learned to tie your shoes or ride a bike. The process seemed complicated, difficult, and maybe even frustrating, but the more you did it, the easier it became. Now, you don’t even have to think about it, it just comes naturally. With ASL, the more you practice, the more fluent you will become, and the longer you will remember it. You will get out of this course what you put into it. You can learn enough to barely get by and receive a passing grade, or you can acquire a valuable language that you can use for the benefit of yourself and others and retain it for the rest of your life. The choice is yours.

The beginning of each lesson on the video/DVD is a demonstration of the vocabulary that you will have learned in class. It is designed as a tool to refresh your memory and provide a way to practice what you’ve learned. The exercises that follow are meant to be homework to provide practice and reinforcement. The exercises are divided into 3 levels: slow, moderate, and quick. You have the option to choose which level you feel most comfortable with or you may do all three for additional practice. You may find that you need to begin the first few lessons at the slow level, but as you learn and progress, we’re hoping that you will eventually work up to the quick level. You may also want to review previous lessons for extra reinforcement.

(Note to teachers: You may choose to have your students do 3 lessons at a time: the current lesson on slow, the previous lesson on moderate, and the lesson before that on quick)

On the vocabulary section of the video, you will notice that occasionally there are more than one sign for each word. Often in ASL, there are several variations for some signs. We’ve chosen to show you those variations. Your teacher may explain the most commonly used sign or even show you an altogether new variation.

ASL is a constantly changing language with “slang” terms that change with the times. Please try to be flexible, especially when you see signs that aren’t “exactly” like on the video or “exactly” as your teacher signs it. Just as a person speaking English from Brooklyn will sound different than someone from Texas or England, so there will be variations in ASL. It’s important that you observe others signing as much as possible. You will notice that the signs look slightly different on different hands, so please pay close attention when your classmates are signing, even if you don’t understand everything. This will help to improve your comprehension, and help you become accustomed to different people signing. Again, the more you watch, the better your comprehension will become. **IMPORTANT:** As a beginning sign language student, you will have a tendency to want to watch Deaf people in your community conversing in sign. **PLEASE DON’T!** Staring at a Deaf person’s conversation is considered rude. How would you like it if someone walked

up and began listening to a private conversation you were having with a friend? Do, however, try to become involved in the Deaf community and converse with a variety of Deaf people. The more individual interaction you have, the quicker you will pick-up the language.

As you do the lessons in this book, it's important to read ALL the notes that are in your text. The notes will further explain the grammar rules and help to clarify the lesson. There are questions at the end of each lesson that will help you to review what you've learned. You will notice that the **review section** contains questions, not just from that particular lesson, but from previous lessons as well. It's important that you not forget what you've learned. Constant review will help you to keep the information fresh in your mind. You will also notice that each lesson has a **practice section**. You will find that by signing everything in that section, it will help you to better understand and remember the information. Each lesson also includes a section on **culture**. As you become more fluent in ASL, we are hoping that you will also have more contact with the Deaf in your community. It's important to understand the rich culture of the Deaf in order to better communicate and understand them.

As you become more involved with ASL and the Deaf community, you will find that ASL is a very expressive language that incorporates the face and body as well as the hands. As you go through this book and video, notice the facial expressions and body languages that are used. We encourage you to attend Deaf plays and functions as much as possible. This will help to greatly increase your vocabulary and comprehension. ASL is a beautifully expressive and fun language that we are sure you will enjoy learning!

# MANUAL ALPHABET



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



H



I



J



K



L



M



N



O



P



Q



R



S



T



U



V



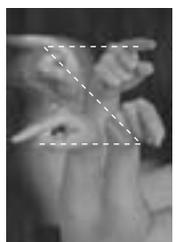
W



X



Y



Z

# NUMBERS



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10

## HAND SHAPES



Modified "8"



Flat "O"



Curved "2"



Bent "5"



Closed "5"



Curved "5"



I-Love-You

## **INTRODUCTION REVIEW**

1. What does ASL stand for?
2. Why is practicing important?
3. Why should you practice even though you already know it?
4. What is the purpose of the vocabulary section of the video/DVD?
5. Why are the homework exercises on the video/DVD divided into levels?
6. How many homework versions are there on the DVD?
7. Why are there sometimes more than one sign for a word?
8. Why is it important to watch your classmates when they are signing?  
(list 2 reasons)
9. Why shouldn't you stare at deaf people when they are signing to each other?
10. Why is it important to interact with different deaf people?
11. Why is it important to read ALL the notes in your text?
12. Why are there questions from previous lessons in the review section?
13. What is the purpose of the practice section?
14. Why is it important to learn about Deaf culture?
15. ASL uses the hands and what else?
16. How much time are you willing to commit to practicing ASL each day?  
(Remember, the amount of time you practice is in direct proportion to how well you will learn and retain the language.)

# **LESSON 1**

## **USE OF DOMINANT HAND**

Which hand do you use to write with? That is your dominant hand. (If you are right handed, your right is your dominant hand, if you are left-handed, your left hand would be your dominant hand.) In ASL, you always use your dominant hand to fingerspell or for any one-handed signs. For two-handed signs where one hand moves and the other is still, the dominant hand always does the moving. If you are ambidextrous (you use both right and left equally well), you must choose one or the other to be your dominant hand. Changing your dominant hand during a conversation is very distracting.

## **FINGERSPELLING**

Fingerspelling is simply spelling out English words on the hand using the manual alphabet. It is mainly used for proper nouns, such as the names of people, places, brand names, titles of books or movies, etc. As a beginning student, you may have a tendency to fingerspell words you don't know the sign for, since your vocabulary is limited. However, as you progress, try to use fingerspelling only as a last resort. Instead, try to use other signs, miming or gestures to convey your thoughts. Miming in ASL is used quite often, even when there are signs to convey the thought, simply because it makes things more interesting or it's quicker.

While you are learning to read the manual alphabet, you will have a tendency to say the name of the letter in your head. Try to avoid doing this. It may work on some of the smaller words, but as the words get longer, it will be too difficult. Instead, say the sound the letter makes as it is spelled out. Don't worry if you don't catch every letter. Begin to recognize certain letter combinations such as "-ing", "-ly", or "-tion". Begin to see these combinations, not as individual letters, but as a whole. Gradually, you will begin to recognize entire fingerspelled words as a whole, rather than individual letters.

As you learn and practice signing the manual alphabet, try to practice it by fingerspelling words rather than repeating the ABC's over and over. As you do this, you will become more accustomed to common letter combinations, and fingerspelling will become more fluid. Try to avoid bouncing your fingers or shooting them forward. This will only serve to make the person reading your fingerspelling dizzy. If you find you have trouble keeping your hand still as you fingerspell, try holding your wrist with the other hand until you can keep it still without doing that.

## **DOUBLE LETTERS**

The general rule for double letters such as "DD" or "EE" is that if it is a letter that touches (B, D, F, O, P, R, S, T) you simply touch it twice. If it is a non-touching letter (C, E, G, H, I, L, U, W) you simply slide it to the right for right-handers and left for left-handers. There are some letters which are done either way depending on the individual (A, K, M, N). The letters J, Q, V, X, & Y rarely appear doubled but follow the same rules. When there is a double "Z", it is most often made by curving the finger of a "V" hand while making the "Z" movement.

## **PLACEMENT**

The proper placement of your hand while fingerspelling is at a level even with your chin and near your face. This is important because facial expression is such an important part of ASL, so the person needs to see your face as well as your hand. Remember, the more you practice, the easier it will become.

**FACIAL EXPRESSION**

Facial expression is a vital part of ASL. Signing in ASL without using facial expression is like speaking without voice inflection. In fact, there is a lot of information that is portrayed only on the face. Take, for example, the sentence: "You have a dog." Read that sentence aloud while listening to your voice. Now read that same sentence as a question while listening for the difference in your voice inflection: "You have a dog?" In ASL you can't signal to your listener that you are asking a question by using voice inflection, so instead, we use facial expression. We will break down the appropriate facial expressions for certain types of questions. You may feel awkward at first, but it's best that you overemphasize and exaggerate facial expressions at first. Later, it will become more natural.

**QUESTIONS**

We will begin by discussing two different types of questions: 1) yes/no questions and 2) wh- questions. A yes/no question is any question that must be answered with a yes or no. A wh- question is a question that asks who, whose, what, where, when, which, why, how, or how many.

For yes/no questions, there are particular **non-manual grammatical signals** (facial expression, head position or movement, body shift, any signal that is not done on the hands) that must accompany the question. If you do not use the correct non-manual grammatical signals, your "listener" may think you are stating a fact rather than asking a question.

**For a y/n question you must:**

- 1. raise eyebrows**
- 2. head forward**
- 3. hold the last sign**

Your teacher will demonstrate this. Practice several times until it becomes natural. Alternate asking a question then stating it as a fact. Ask someone if they can tell which is a question and which is a statement by looking at your face.

For wh- questions, the facial expression is slightly different.

**For wh- questions you should:**

- 1. lower eyebrows**
- 2. head forward**
- 3. hold last sign**
- 4. purse lips slightly**

Practice this several times until you can do it without having to think about each part. Once you can perform this naturally, alternate signing a y/n question, a wh- question, and a statement. Remember, you may feel awkward at first because you're thinking about it. You probably already do this when you ask a question with your voice. You just never broke it down or thought about it before.

**CODED MARKERS**

ASL, in its written form, uses coded markers. Coded markers are generally used only in text books and for classroom situations. Deaf people do **not** write using coded markers, but it is a helpful way to **see** ASL structure in a written form. Coded markers vary from text to text. This text will utilize some of the more commonly used coded markers.

To indicate the non-manual grammatical signals that accompany a yes/no question, the question should be overlined and indicated “y/n”. **The underline shows where the facial expression(s) should be performed.**

Example: \_\_\_\_\_ y/n  
 ASL: You understand me?  
 ENG: Do you understand me?

For wh- questions, the same applies, only instead of marking it “y/n”, it should be marked “wh”.

Example: \_\_\_\_\_ wh  
 ASL: His name what?  
 ENG: What’s his name?

To write a **fingerspelled word** in ASL, simply **capitalize each letter and separate them with hyphens**. Example: S-T-E-V-E, S-U-E, etc.

**DIRECTIONAL SIGNS**

As you increase your vocabulary, you will discover that many signs are what we call “directional”. **Directional signs usually incorporate or move between the subject and object of the sentence.** The sign for “same” (“y” hand with palm facing down) is directional. This means that the sign moves between the two people or things that are the same. In future lessons, you will learn more directional signs. The sign for “same” can also mean “me too”.

**CULTURE****DIFFERENT FORMS OF SIGN LANGUAGE**

There are a variety of different signed languages. Besides ASL (American Sign Language), one of the most common is MCE which stands for Manually Coded English. In MCE, there is a sign for every English word, including prefixes and suffixes. It is signed using English word order. This method of signing, while making more sense to a hearing person, is difficult for a child born deaf who has no knowledge of English. ASL, on the other hand, is a very efficient and logical language. The goal in ASL is to convey your thought in as few signs as possible. This is why ASL utilizes a lot of facial expression, body shift, and gestures. ASL has its own word order and grammar rules. MCE is merely English conveyed through sign, ASL, however, is its own unique language.

## **PRACTICE**

1. As soon as you finish reading this, look at the objects around you and fingerspell what you see. (book, chair, boy, fingers, light, window, etc.) Pause slightly between words. Get in the habit of fingerspelling whenever you can. Anytime you're bored standing in line or waiting for class to start, simply fingerspell whatever you see around you. You will find the more you fingerspell, the more fluid your fingerspelling will become.
2. Find a partner and take turns fingerspelling words to each other while the other says the word that is fingerspelled.
3. Practice signing the following questions and statements, then create several of your own and sign them.

1. That book y/n? (Is that book yours?)
2. That book yours. (That book is yours.)
3. y/n You-same-she? (Are you the same as her?)
4. You-same-she y/n (You're the same as her.)
5. Your name wh what? (What's your name?)
6. wh Book whose? (Whose book is it?)

### LESSON 1 HOMEWORK

**MARK WHICH VERSION:**

- S(slow)
- M(moderate)
- Q(quick)

Choose the correct sentence that will be signed by indicating either A, B, or C.

1.     A. Whose book is that?  
       B. Whose pencil is that?  
       C. Whose paper is that?
  
2.     A. Does he/she understand you?  
       B. Do you understand me?  
       C. Do you understand him/her?
  
3.     A. The name of my magazine is TEEN.  
       B. The name of your magazine is PEOPLE.  
       C. The name of his newspaper is USA TODAY.
  
4.     A. His/Her table and your table are the same.  
       B. My chair and her chair are different.  
       C. His name and my name are the same.

Several sentences will be signed in ASL.  
Write what each sentence means in ENGLISH.

**VERSION S:**

5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

**VERSION M:**

5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

**VERSION Q:**

5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

For the next part, write the following sentences in ASL.:

**VERSION S:**

8. What's your name? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Is that your pencil? \_\_\_\_\_

10. You opened the book. \_\_\_\_\_

**VERSION M:**

8. What's his name? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Is that your paper? \_\_\_\_\_

10. She opened the book. \_\_\_\_\_

**VERSION Q:**

8. What's my name? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Is that your table? \_\_\_\_\_

10. I opened the book. \_\_\_\_\_

**REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Which hand do you fingerspell with?
2. How is fingerspelling double letters such as “DD” different than “CC”?
3. Where should you fingerspell in relation to your body?
4. What is a non-manual grammatical signal?
5. What 3 things must you do when asking a yes/no question?
6. What 4 things should you do when asking a wh- question?
7. What is the purpose of writing using coded markers?
8. What is the purpose of overlining in written ASL?
9. What does the coded marker look like for a yes/no question?
10. What is a directional sign?
11. What does MCE stand for?
12. How is MCE different from ASL?
13. What’s a good way to practice fingerspelling?
14. True or False: Staring at a Deaf person is a good way to help you learn more ASL.