

Understanding Signer's Perspective in ASL

Signer's Perspective is a foundational concept in American Sign Language (ASL). It means that when a signer describes the position or direction of something, they do so from their own physical point of view-not the viewer's. This is essential for accuracy and clarity in ASL communication.

Key Principles:

- Signers describe spatial relationships from their own body position.
- Left and right are based on the signer's left and right, not the viewer's.
- Viewers are expected to mentally rotate the scene to match the signer's perspective.

Example: English vs. ASL

Imagine this setup:

You are facing the class. A table is to your left and a chair is to your right.

- English description: "The table is on your right, and the chair is on your left."
- ASL description: "TABLE LEFT, CHAIR RIGHT." (From the signer's point of view)

Common Mistake:

Beginners often reverse the spatial references and describe scenes from the viewer's perspective.

This can lead to confusion, especially in storytelling, describing locations, or using classifiers.

Tips for Teaching Signer's Perspective:

- Use mirrors so students can observe their own signing.
- Record students signing and play it back for discussion.
- Practice setting up scenes using real objects or classifiers in space.
- Reinforce the idea that the viewer must interpret from the signer's viewpoint.