

# Linguistic Comparison Charts: English vs. ASL Structure

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Use these charts to help students compare and contrast grammar, syntax, and structure between English and American Sign Language.

Concept	English Structure	ASL Structure
Word Order	English: Subject-Verb-Object (SVO)	ASL: Topic-Comment (OSV or other variations)
Pronouns	English: Uses vocal pronouns (he, she, it)	ASL: Uses pointing (indexing) for subjects and objects
Verb Tense	English: Past, Present, Future via verb conjugation	ASL: Time indicators at beginning of sentence (e.g., YESTERDAY, TOMORROW)
Articles	English: Uses articles (a, an, the)	ASL: No articles used
To Be Verbs	English: Uses 'am, is, are, was, were'	ASL: Omitted (subject and predicate shown via context)
Negation	English: Adds 'not' or negative contractions	ASL: Uses head shake, 'NOT' sign, or negation through facial expression
WH- Questions	English: WH-word at beginning (What are you doing?)	ASL: WH-word typically at end (YOU DO WHAT?)
Yes/No Questions	English: Intonation rise at end of question	ASL: Raised eyebrows, head tilt, and hold at end
Conjunctions	English: Uses 'and', 'but', 'because'	ASL: Uses body shift, facial expression, or specific signs (e.g., FINISH, WHY)
Adjectives	English: Often placed before nouns (a red ball)	ASL: Often placed after nouns (BALL RED)