

Roadmap to ASL Fluency

Year 1 – Foundations

- Focus: Survival skills & basic communication
- Learn fingerspelling (A–Z, names, simple words)
- Vocabulary for everyday life (family, school, colors, food, emotions, numbers)
- Basic ASL grammar: WH-questions, yes/no questions, subject-verb-object order
- Practice short conversations: greetings, introductions, simple questions
- Goal: Hold a 2–3 minute conversation with basic vocabulary

Year 2 – Building Blocks

- Focus: Expanding vocabulary & grammar understanding
- Classifiers introduction (person, vehicle, object classifiers)
- Role-shifting for dialogue (he-said, she-said storytelling)
- Non-manual markers for tone & grammar (facial expressions, head movement)
- More complex vocabulary: time, travel, weather, hobbies, daily routines
- Goal: Carry a 5–10 minute conversation comfortably, understand slow natural signing

Year 3 – Conversational Fluency

- Focus: Expressing abstract ideas and opinions
- Expand use of classifiers for descriptions and storytelling
- Master time indicators and aspect (habitual, ongoing, completed actions)
- Learn Deaf cultural norms (eye gaze, turn-taking, valued behaviors in conversations)
- Engage in community events regularly
- Goal: Discuss personal opinions, tell short stories, and follow most everyday conversations

Year 4 – Advanced Communication

- Focus: Nuance & complexity in ASL
- Use advanced classifiers in narratives (e.g., describing sports, science, or technology)
- Engage in debates, persuasion, and abstract conversations
- Interpret idiomatic expressions and Deaf humor
- Start to “think in ASL” rather than translating from English
- Goal: Discuss complex topics (politics, art, culture, philosophy) in ASL with natural flow

Year 5 – Fluency & Cultural Integration

- Focus: Full participation in Deaf community
- Achieve near-native comprehension of fast, natural signing
- Master regional variations, slang, and Deaf cultural references
- Use ASL for professional and academic purposes (lectures, presentations, interpreting basics)
- Goal: Converse effortlessly with Deaf people on any topic, adapt to different signing styles, and be accepted as a skilled ASL user in the community