

ASL Conjunctions

In American Sign Language (ASL), conjunctions are used to connect clauses, ideas, or events. They combine specific signs, facial expressions, and body movements to show relationships like cause, effect, contrast, or sequence.

1. Common ASL Conjunction Signs

- 1 WHY → can mean 'because' when paired with facial grammar.
- 2 HAPPEN → connects cause-and-effect ideas. Example: 'Rain, HAPPEN, game cancel.'
- 3 FRUSTRATE / HIT → shows something unexpected happened.
- 4 UNDERSTAND (with headshake) → used like 'but.'
- 5 WRONG → often means 'suddenly' or 'unexpectedly.'
- 6 FIND → connects a realization or discovery.

2. Non-Manual Signals (NMS)

- 1 Raised eyebrows = connecting two related ideas (if/then).
- 2 Headshake + shift = showing contrast (but).
- 3 Slight pause + body lean = separating clauses.

3. Placement in Sentences

ASL conjunctions often appear at the start of the second clause. Sometimes, just a pause or body shift acts as a conjunction.

4. Examples

- 1 ENGLISH: I couldn't go to the party because I was sick.
ASL: PARTY I GO CAN'T. WHY? SICK.
- 2 ENGLISH: I was driving, then suddenly my car stopped.
ASL: DRIVE. WRONG! CAR STOP.
- 3 ENGLISH: I studied hard, but I still failed.
ASL: STUDY HARD. UNDERSTAND-NOT, FAIL.

■ Key Takeaway:

In ASL, conjunctions are not just signs—they include timing, facial expressions, and body movement to connect ideas naturally.