

Purpose

A comprehensive collection of practical, everyday teaching strategies for ASL classrooms — covering classroom environment, lesson delivery, engagement, differentiation, management, communication, and assessment.

Setting Up the Classroom Environment

- Arrange seating in a semicircle or U-shape for clear sightlines
- Ensure consistent, glare-free lighting for visual communication
- Keep a clear, uncluttered signing space at the front of the room
- Post visual schedules, vocabulary walls, and routines where visible to all
- Minimize visual distractions near instructional areas

Planning & Delivering Lessons

- Open with a clear visual agenda or objective for the lesson
- Chunk instruction into short, focused segments
- Model new signs and skills before asking students to produce them
- Build in a quick review of prior vocabulary at the start of class
- Close each lesson with a quick recap or exit check

Engaging & Motivating Students

- Connect new vocabulary to students' interests and real life
- Use games, movement, and storytelling to reinforce signs
- Offer choice in activities or how students show their learning
- Celebrate effort and progress, not just correct answers
- Vary activity types to sustain attention across a lesson

Differentiating for All Learners

- Offer multiple ways to practice and demonstrate a skill
- Adjust pacing and wait time based on individual needs
- Provide tiered vocabulary lists (core vs. extension signs)
- Use flexible grouping — partners, small groups, and independent work
- Pair visual, hands-on, and repetition-based supports as needed

Classroom Management

- Establish clear, consistent visual signals for attention and transitions
- Set predictable routines for entering, transitions, and dismissal
- Use positive, specific feedback to reinforce expected behavior
- Address behavior privately and calmly rather than publicly
- Keep transitions short and clearly signaled in advance

Communication & Relationship-Building

- Learn and use each student's name sign correctly and consistently
- Check in individually with students throughout the week
- Communicate regularly with families and support staff
- Create space for student questions and feedback
- Model respectful, patient communication at all times

Assessment & Feedback

- Use a mix of formal and informal checks for understanding
- Give feedback that is specific, timely, and actionable
- Track progress over time, not just single-point performance
- Let students reflect on and set goals for their own growth
- Align assessments with IEP, 504, and individual accommodations

Things to Avoid

- Long, uninterrupted lecture-style instruction
- Inconsistent routines or unclear expectations
- One-size-fits-all instruction with no differentiation
- Public correction or comparison between students
- Waiting until a formal test to check understanding

Remember

Every student is unique. Use these strategies together with each student's IEP, Section 504 Plan, school policies, and professional judgment. The goal is not to lower expectations, but to provide meaningful access to learning.