

ASSESSMENT ALTERNATIVES

ADHD Resource Series — Guide 4

Purpose

Writing-based tests can undercount what a student with ADHD truly knows, since they add extra demands around attention, organization, and stamina. This guide offers alternative ways to assess ASL skill that reduce those barriers.

Why Consider Alternatives?

Written assessments require sustained attention, organization, and working memory — exactly the areas ADHD affects most. A student may fully understand or produce a sign correctly but struggle to demonstrate that on a written test. Alternative formats separate the skill being measured (ASL knowledge) from unrelated barriers (writing stamina, sitting still, staying organized on paper).

Assessment Formats

- **Point** — student points to or selects the correct picture, sign, or answer instead of writing it
- **Match** — student matches pictures, vocabulary, or concepts through a hands-on matching activity
- **Teacher observation** — assess based on informal observation of participation and skill during regular instruction
- **One-on-one** — assess individually in a quiet, low-distraction setting instead of a timed group test
- **Video** — student records a video response demonstrating a sign, sentence, or skill
- **Partner** — assess through a structured, signed exchange with a partner

When to Use Each Format

- **Point / Match** — best for checking vocabulary recognition and receptive understanding
- **Teacher observation** — best for ongoing, low-pressure progress monitoring
- **One-on-one** — best when a student needs reduced distractions or extra support
- **Video** — best for expressive skills, without the pressure of a live audience
- **Partner** — best for assessing conversational or interactive signing skill

Implementation Tips

- Let the skill being measured guide the format, not convenience
- Keep instructions short, visual, and consistent across formats
- Break longer assessments into shorter, spaced-out checkpoints
- Use the same rubric or criteria regardless of format used

Things to Avoid

- Defaulting to written tests as the only "real" measure of learning
- Long, timed assessments with no breaks
- Assuming a low written score reflects a lack of ASL skill
- Changing formats without practice or warning beforehand

Remember

The goal of assessment is to find out what a student truly knows. Choose the format that removes barriers instead of adding new ones.