

DAY ONE

The First Day of Class

Creating a positive first impression

Why the First Day Matters

The first day of school is not about teaching the most vocabulary. It is about creating excitement and helping students leave class thinking, “I can do this.” If students leave confident and smiling, you have already had a successful first day.

How the Day Unfolds

Nine moments that shape how your students feel walking out the door.

01 Before Students Arrive

Arrive early. Have ASLdeafined open and ready. Write a welcome message on the board, prepare student name tents, and greet the day with enthusiasm. Students notice the atmosphere the moment they enter.

02 Greeting Students

Stand at the classroom door, smile, make eye contact, and welcome each student. Even before they know any signs, they are beginning to understand that communication is visual and personal.

03 Should I Use My Voice?

There is no single right answer.

Some teachers use their voice on the first day while explaining expectations. Others begin reducing voice immediately. Whatever you choose, explain why — that ASL is a visual language, and that students will gradually become more comfortable communicating without speaking.

04 Introduce Yourself

Share who you are, why you love ASL, how long you have been signing, and why you are excited about the year ahead. Students connect with people more than presentations.

05 Learn About Your Students

Their answers will shape how you teach this group all year. Ask:

- Why did you enroll in this class?
- What do you hope to learn?
- Have you ever met a Deaf person?
- What excites you about this year?
- Have you signed before?
- What worries you about this year?

06 Get Students Signing Quickly

Within the first ten minutes, get students communicating with a few simple signs. Early success builds confidence:

HELLO

THANK YOU

PLEASE

YES

NO

MY NAME

07 Talk About Deaf Culture

Explain that ASL is a complete language and that Deaf culture is an important part of the learning experience. Help students understand they are learning a language, not simply memorizing vocabulary.

08 Using ASLdeafined

Give students a brief tour of the platform. Show them where lessons are located, how to watch videos, practice skills, and complete assignments. Keep the overview simple.

09 End on a High Note

Celebrate the day's accomplishments, play a quick review activity, and leave students excited to return tomorrow.

Paul's Best Practice

The first day is not about how much you teach. It is about how your students feel when they leave.

If they believe they can learn ASL, you have laid the foundation for a successful year.

Three Quick Wins

- ✓ Greet every student at the door.
- ✓ Get students signing within the first ten minutes.
- ✓ End class with encouragement and excitement for tomorrow.

Reflection

At the end of the first day, ask yourself:

Did my students leave feeling confident enough to come back tomorrow excited to learn more?

Continue Exploring

Keep the momentum going with these Teacher Resources:

- ▶ The First Five Days
- ▶ 25 Ice Breakers for ASL Classes
- ▶ Reviewing Without Boring Students
- ▶ Building Classroom Community
- ▶ Building Deaf Culture from Day One