

WEEK ONE

The First Five Days

A roadmap for a successful first week of ASL

The first week of school lays the foundation for the entire year. Rather than trying to teach as much vocabulary as possible, focus on helping students feel comfortable, confident, and excited about learning American Sign Language.

This is one possible roadmap — not a script. Adapt these ideas to fit your teaching style, your students, and your schedule.

DAY 1 Welcome to ASL!

GOALS

- Build excitement about learning ASL.
- Help students feel welcome.
- Introduce yourself and your classroom.
- Get students signing right away.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- ☐ Greet students at the door.
- ☐ Student introductions.
- ☐ Explain what ASL is and introduce Deaf culture.
- ☐ Teach HELLO, THANK YOU, PLEASE, YES, NO, and MY NAME.
- ☐ End with a fun partner activity.

PAUL'S BEST PRACTICE

Students should leave your classroom thinking, "I can do this."

DAY 2 Building Communication

GOALS

- Continue building confidence.
- Encourage visual communication.
- Introduce classroom routines.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- ☐ Warm-up review from Day 1.
- ☐ Teach simple conversational signs.
- ☐ Introduce fingerspelling practice.
- ☐ Pair students for short conversations.
- ☐ Discuss eye contact and visual attention.

PAUL'S BEST PRACTICE

Celebrate effort more than perfection. Confidence grows when students know it is okay to make mistakes.

DAY 3 Learning Through Interaction

GOALS

- Increase student participation.
- Build classroom community.
- Reinforce previous learning.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- ☐ Review game.
- ☐ Partner interviews.
- ☐ Small-group signing activities.
- ☐ Introduce a simple Deaf Culture discussion.
- ☐ Reflection at the end of class.

PAUL'S BEST PRACTICE

The more students interact with one another, the faster they become comfortable signing.

DAY 4 Putting It All Together

GOALS

- Strengthen communication skills.
- Encourage independent participation.
- Continue building classroom expectations.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- ☐ Vocabulary stations.
- ☐ Partner challenges.
- ☐ Fingerspelling games.
- ☐ Mini review quiz.
- ☐ Celebrate student success.

PAUL'S BEST PRACTICE

Don't rush ahead. A strong foundation will save time later in the semester.

DAY 5 Celebrating the First Week

GOALS

- Review everything learned.
- Build excitement for next week.
- Reflect on accomplishments.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- ☐ ASL review games.
- ☐ Student reflections.
- ☐ Goal setting.
- ☐ Class celebration.
- ☐ Preview what's coming next.

PAUL'S BEST PRACTICE

Finish the week with enthusiasm. Students should leave excited about returning on Monday.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- ✗ Teaching too much vocabulary too quickly.
- ✗ Spending most of class talking instead of signing.
- ✗ Waiting too long before students communicate with one another.
- ✗ Correcting every small mistake.
- ✗ Forgetting to celebrate student progress.

Remember, your goal during the first week is not perfection. Your goal is to build confidence and create a classroom where students enjoy learning.

Three Quick Wins

- ✓ Get students signing every day.
- ✓ Include at least one interactive activity in every lesson.
- ✓ Celebrate progress, not perfection.

Reflection

At the end of the week, ask yourself:

If a student described my classroom after the first week, what would I hope they would say?

Their answer will often reflect the classroom culture you've created.

Continue Exploring

Build on your first week with these Teacher Resources:

- ▶ 25 Ice Breakers for ASL Classes
- ▶ Reviewing Without Boring Students
- ▶ Building Classroom Community
- ▶ Building Deaf Culture from Day One
- ▶ Classroom Expectations
- ▶ Classroom Management Tips

Teaching ASL is more than introducing vocabulary. It is helping students discover a new language, a rich culture, and a new way of communicating with the world.

Paul A. Fugate

PAUL A. FUGATE

Founder & CEO, ASLdeafined