
ACTIVITY COLLECTION

25 Ice Breakers for ASL Classes

Helping students build confidence through communication

Ice breakers do much more than help students learn each other's names. They reduce anxiety, build classroom community, encourage communication, and help students feel comfortable using American Sign Language.

Choose activities that match your students' age, experience, and comfort level.

The goal isn't perfection — it's participation.

The first two are written out in full, so you can see how an ice breaker is put together. The remaining twenty-three follow.

01 Silent Introductions

TIME

10–15 minutes

ASL SKILLS PRACTICED

Greetings, introductions, eye contact

PURPOSE

Help students introduce themselves using simple signs.

HOW TO PLAY

Students introduce themselves using signs such as MY NAME, NICE TO MEET YOU, and THANK YOU. Encourage eye contact and smiles.

PAUL'S TEACHING TIP

Keep introductions short and positive. Confidence grows with early success.

02 Find Someone Who...

TIME

15–20 minutes

ASL SKILLS PRACTICED

Questions, answers, fingerspelling

PURPOSE

Encourage students to communicate with multiple classmates.

HOW TO PLAY

Students receive a list of characteristics — likes pizza, has a pet, plays sports — and must find classmates who match each description using ASL.

The Full Collection

Twenty-three more to pull from. Mix them across the first weeks so students keep meeting new partners.

03 Human Bingo

Students complete a Bingo card by finding classmates who meet various descriptions.

04 Name Circle

Students sign their name while the class repeats it.

05 Partner Interviews

Students interview a partner, then introduce them to the class.

06 ASL Scavenger Hunt

Locate classroom objects or vocabulary cards using signed clues.

07 Guess My Favorite

Students sign clues about a favorite food, hobby, or animal while classmates guess.

08 Birthday Line-Up

Students silently arrange themselves by birthday month without speaking.

09 Alphabet Challenge

Groups race to fingerspell vocabulary accurately.

10 Speed Signing

Students rotate partners every minute for quick conversations.

11 This or That

Cats or dogs? Summer or winter? Pizza or tacos? Students respond in ASL and explain their choice.

12 Would You Rather?

Students answer fun “Would You Rather” questions using signs.

13 Two Truths and a Fib

Students sign two true statements and one made-up one. Classmates guess which isn't true.

14 Emoji Stories

Students receive an emoji sequence and create a short signed story.

15 Mystery Object

Students describe a hidden object while classmates guess.

16 Sign Charades

Students act out vocabulary while classmates identify the sign.

17 Partner Drawing

One student signs directions while the other draws. Excellent for receptive skills.

18 Silent Birthday Party

Students mingle and communicate without using their voices.

19 Common Interests

Students discover classmates who share hobbies and interests.

20 Classroom Quest

Teams complete simple signing challenges around the room.

21 ASL Selfie Challenge

Students create a signed introduction video to share with the teacher or class, if appropriate.

22 What's Different?

Partners observe each other. One changes something; the other identifies it using ASL.

23 Team Puzzle Challenge

Students solve a puzzle communicating only through signs and gestures.

24 Story Circle

Each student adds one signed sentence to build a class story.

25 My Goal This Year

Students share one goal for ASL this year and one thing they're excited to learn. An excellent ending to the first week.

Paul's Best Practice

Choose activities that encourage communication rather than competition. During the first week, your goal is to help every student feel successful and included.

Students who feel comfortable participating early are much more likely to remain engaged throughout the year.

Three Quick Wins

- ✓ Learn every student's name as quickly as possible.
- ✓ Mix partners often so students meet everyone in the class.
- ✓ End every activity with encouragement and positive feedback.

Reflection

After the first week of ice breakers, ask yourself:

Which activity helped my students smile, communicate, and feel most comfortable?

Those are the activities you'll want to use again.

Continue Exploring

Keep building on this with these Teacher Resources:

- ▶ [Reviewing Without Boring Students](#)
- ▶ [Building Classroom Community](#)
- ▶ [Building Deaf Culture from Day One](#)
- ▶ [Classroom Expectations](#)
- ▶ [Classroom Management Tips](#)

Helping students build relationships is one of the greatest gifts you can give them. When students feel connected, they become more confident communicators and more enthusiastic learners.

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