

September Bell Ringers

Back to ASL

20 BELL RINGERS · BEGINNER THROUGH LEVEL 5

Start class. Start signing.



MONTHLY FOCUS

Reconnect • Review • Communicate • Build Confidence • Think Visually

TEACHER NOTE

These Bell Ringers are designed for approximately 5–10 minutes. Use them in order, jump around, repeat favorites, or adapt them to what you're teaching. Make them yours.

HOW DIFFERENTIATION WORKS

Most activities include Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced, Advanced Plus, and Level 5 options. Some are intentionally marked **All Levels**. Teachers may move students up or down as appropriate.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

ASLdeafined provides the starting point. Teachers bring the professional judgment, current vocabulary, classroom needs, and creativity.

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1

Hands Up!

ALL LEVELS

Communicate three things about yourself to a partner using only visual communication/ASL. Your partner tells you what they understood. Then switch roles.

MAKE IT YOURS

Teacher chooses a topic: weekend, family, school, hobbies, summer, favorites, etc.

TEACHER NOTE

On Day 1, the goal is to get hands moving — not to test students.

2

Fingerspelling Detective

LEVELED

BEGINNER	Fingerspell your first name and three familiar words to a partner.
INTERMEDIATE	Fingerspell five familiar words. Your partner identifies them.
ADVANCED	Fingerspell five words within short signed sentences.
ADVANCED PLUS	Fingerspell names, places, or terms naturally within a brief conversation.
LEVEL 5	Incorporate fingerspelled words naturally into a spontaneous explanation. Partner identifies where fingerspelling enhanced the message.

MAKE IT YOURS

Use vocabulary from your current lesson.

3

Three Signs, One Message

LEVELED

BEGINNER	Teacher chooses 3 familiar signs. Use at least 2 to communicate an idea.
INTERMEDIATE	Use all 3 signs in a short ASL sentence.
ADVANCED	Connect all 3 naturally in a multi-sentence response.
ADVANCED PLUS	Create a short narrative incorporating all 3 without making them feel forced.
LEVEL 5	Create an impromptu response using all 3 while maintaining natural ASL discourse.

MAKE IT YOURS

Choose three completely unrelated signs for an extra challenge.

4

What Did You See?

LEVELED

BEGINNER	Partner signs 3 familiar signs. Identify them.
INTERMEDIATE	Partner signs a short sentence. Explain what you understood.
ADVANCED	Partner signs 2–3 connected sentences. Retell the main idea.
ADVANCED PLUS	Retell the message while preserving important details.
LEVEL 5	Summarize the message rather than reproducing it word-for-word.

MAKE IT YOURS

Use current vocabulary.

5

No Voice Challenge

ALL LEVELS

Without speaking, communicate: “I forgot something important at home.” Your partner must determine what happened. Then switch roles with a different message of your own creation.

TEACHER NOTE

Don’t immediately correct students. Let them negotiate meaning visually.

6

Tell Me About It

LEVELED

BEGINNER	Choose 3 recently learned signs and demonstrate them.
INTERMEDIATE	Use 3 recent signs in complete ASL thoughts.
ADVANCED	Create a short description incorporating 4 recent signs.
ADVANCED PLUS	Add appropriate NMS and spatial referencing.
LEVEL 5	Give a spontaneous response using recent vocabulary naturally rather than constructing around required signs.

MAKE IT YOURS

Teacher may select the vocabulary instead.

7

Fix My ASL

LEVELED

Teacher provides an intentionally awkward or incorrect example based on something students have learned.

BEGINNER	Identify one thing that needs changing.
INTERMEDIATE	Correct the sentence.
ADVANCED	Correct it and explain the ASL principle involved.
ADVANCED PLUS	Show two possible natural ways to express the intended meaning.
LEVEL 5	Discuss how context could change the most natural ASL construction.

MAKE IT YOURS

ASLdeafined deliberately does not provide the sentence. Use something your students are currently learning.

8

Sign Categories

LEVELED

Pick a category such as food, school, family, transportation, or emotions.

BEGINNER	Produce 5 signs.
INTERMEDIATE	Produce 8 signs.
ADVANCED	Produce signs and organize them into meaningful subcategories.
ADVANCED PLUS	Explain relationships among several items using ASL.
LEVEL 5	Create a spontaneous explanation or comparison within the category.

9

Question Me

LEVELED

BEGINNER	Ask your partner one familiar WH-question.
INTERMEDIATE	Ask 3 different questions.
ADVANCED	Continue the conversation by asking follow-up questions based on the answers.
ADVANCED PLUS	Maintain the exchange naturally without predetermined questions.
LEVEL 5	Carry a spontaneous ASL conversation where questions emerge naturally rather than feeling like an interview.

10

Teacher’s Choice

TEACHER CHOICE

Today ASLdeafined isn’t choosing the Bell Ringer. You are. Think about something your students struggled with recently. Turn it into a 5-minute review.

NEED AN IDEA?

Vocabulary

Fingerspelling

Numbers

Grammar

Receptive Skills

NMS

TEACHER NOTE

You know your students. Today’s Bell Ringer belongs to you.

11

Describe It — Don’t Name It

LEVELED

Choose an object, but do not sign or fingerspell its name.

BEGINNER	Use gestures, size, and shape.
INTERMEDIATE	Add descriptive signs.
ADVANCED	Incorporate classifiers/depiction when appropriate.
ADVANCED PLUS	Give increasingly specific visual information without revealing the answer.
LEVEL 5	Construct a natural visual description while strategically controlling information.

Partner guesses the object.

12

Memory Hands

LEVELED

Without looking at notes or ASLdefined:

BEGINNER	Recall 5 signs from your most recent lesson.
INTERMEDIATE	Recall 8.
ADVANCED	Recall 10 and use 3 in context.
ADVANCED PLUS	Organize recalled vocabulary by meaning or function.
LEVEL 5	Use recalled vocabulary naturally in a spontaneous explanation.

Then: check your memory.

13

What’s Different?

ALL LEVELS

Partner A creates a short visual description or arrangement. Partner B watches carefully. Partner A repeats it but changes one detail. What changed? Repeat and make the difference increasingly subtle.

TEACHER NOTE

Focus: visual attention — not vocabulary quantity.

14

Build It Bigger

LEVELED

BEGINNER	Sign one familiar concept. Add one detail.
INTERMEDIATE	Start with a simple sentence and add two details.
ADVANCED	Expand the message using time, location, people, or description.
ADVANCED PLUS	Add spatial relationships and appropriate NMS.
LEVEL 5	Develop the original thought into a cohesive short discourse while maintaining natural ASL.

15

Your Face Said WHAT?

LEVELED

Teacher provides an emotion or communicative intent such as surprised, annoyed, confused, excited, or doubtful.

BEGINNER	Communicate it without speaking.
INTERMEDIATE	Combine the expression with a familiar signed message.
ADVANCED	Show how changing NMS changes interpretation.
ADVANCED PLUS	Communicate two different meanings using similar manual signs but different NMS/context.
LEVEL 5	Demonstrate subtle pragmatic differences through NMS and signing style.

16

Student Challenge

STUDENT CHOICE

Students create today’s Bell Ringer. Working individually or with a partner, create a 5-minute ASL challenge for classmates. It must practice something you’ve already learned. Teacher chooses one — or saves several for later.

TEACHER NOTE

Keep the good ones. Your students are helping build your Bell Ringer collection.

17

Where Is It?

LEVELED

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|---------------|--|
| BEGINNER | Establish two people/objects in space and point to their locations. |
| INTERMEDIATE | Describe where several objects are located. |
| ADVANCED | Establish referents and maintain them consistently. |
| ADVANCED PLUS | Describe relationships/movement among multiple referents. |
| LEVEL 5 | Use signing space naturally throughout a spontaneous description or narrative. |

18

Sign It Another Way

LEVELED

Take one familiar idea.

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| BEGINNER | Show the idea using a sign, then communicate it visually without that sign. |
| INTERMEDIATE | Express the same basic message two ways. |
| ADVANCED | Compare two possible ASL constructions. |
| ADVANCED PLUS | Change the expression based on context or audience. |
| LEVEL 5 | Demonstrate how meaning, register, emphasis, or context affects linguistic choices. |

TEACHER NOTE

Big Idea: There isn’t always only one way to express an idea in ASL.

19

60-Second ASL

LEVELED

Teacher provides a topic.

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| BEGINNER | Communicate as much as possible for 20–30 seconds. |
| INTERMEDIATE | Sign for 30–45 seconds. |
| ADVANCED | Maintain a connected message for 60 seconds. |
| ADVANCED PLUS | Maintain organization, clarity, NMS, and appropriate transitions. |
| LEVEL 5 | Give a natural one-minute spontaneous response with minimal preparation. |

TEACHER NOTE

Fluency over perfection.

20

Show What You Know

LEVELED

No notes at first. Think about what you’ve learned recently.

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|---------------|--|
| BEGINNER | Show 5 things you can now sign. |
| INTERMEDIATE | Create 3 short messages demonstrating recent learning. |
| ADVANCED | Give a short signed summary of something you’ve learned. |
| ADVANCED PLUS | Demonstrate vocabulary and linguistic features you’ve strengthened. |
| LEVEL 5 | Reflect in ASL on one area of growth and one area you want to improve. |

TEACHER NOTE

Teacher Wrap-Up: Ask students, “What should we practice next?”

This resource intentionally balances four kinds of support.

GUIDING RULE

We do not create a Bell Ringer simply to fill a slot. Each activity should have a clear purpose and should feel meaningfully different from the others.

Which ones worked?

Notes for next September

