

April Bell Ringers

Tell It Visually

Don't just tell me. Let me SEE it.

20 BELL RINGERS · BEGINNER THROUGH LEVEL 5

Start class. Start signing.



MONTHLY FOCUS

Visual Storytelling • Creativity • Depiction • Role Shift • Perspective • Sequencing • NMS • Imagination • Expressive Fluency

TEACHER NOTE

April moves from learning how ASL works to using it creatively. Students are asked to show, imagine, depict, shift perspective, build stories, and create visual meaning. Teachers provide the structure while students increasingly contribute the content. Use these activities, adapt them, repeat them, and 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 a strong starting point while leaving space for teacher judgment, student contribution, and classroom creativity.

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1

What Happened Here?

LEVELED

Teacher gives a simple scene:

THE SCENE

"A chair is knocked over. Papers are everywhere. The door is open. What happened?"

BEGINNER	Identify 2–3 things you see.
INTERMEDIATE	Give a possible explanation.
ADVANCED	Create a short story explaining the scene.
ADVANCED PLUS	Incorporate depiction, space, and role shift.
LEVEL 5	Create a cohesive visual narrative that leads naturally to the scene.

MAKE IT YOURS

Teacher invents the mystery scene.

2

Three Signs → One Story

LEVELED

Teacher provides three unrelated signs, such as:

TODAY’S THREE

DOG SCHOOL PIZZA

BEGINNER	Create 3 connected thoughts.
INTERMEDIATE	Make a short sequence.
ADVANCED	Create a beginning, middle, and end.
ADVANCED PLUS	Incorporate visual transitions and role shift.
LEVEL 5	Create a spontaneous cohesive narrative where the three concepts feel natural.

MAKE IT YOURS

Choose your own three signs.

3

Show Me the Size!

ALL LEVELS

Choose an object. Show it as tiny – small – normal – huge – ENORMOUS. Don’t simply tell the class its size — show the difference visually. Then try thin/thick, light/heavy, or slow/fast.

TEACHER NOTE

Big Idea: Signing space, movement, and NMS carry meaning.

4

April Showers

LEVELED

IMAGINE

"You’re caught outside when it suddenly starts pouring rain."

BEGINNER	Show 3 actions.
INTERMEDIATE	Describe what happens.
ADVANCED	Create a short visual story.
ADVANCED PLUS	Use depiction and perspective.
LEVEL 5	Create a cinematic scene using movement, environment, reactions, and perspective.

MAKE IT YOURS

Use a thunderstorm, windstorm, or other unexpected weather.

5

Freeze Frame

ALL LEVELS

Teacher or student creates a frozen pose. The class decides: what is happening? Students create different explanations for the exact same pose.

TEACHER NOTE

Big Idea: Context changes meaning.

6

Character Walk

LEVELED

SHOW HOW THIS PERSON ENTERS A ROOM

Very tired person

Excited child

Nervous student

Angry customer

Person trying not to be noticed

BEGINNER	Use body movement and face.
INTERMEDIATE	Add actions.
ADVANCED	Establish a character.
ADVANCED PLUS	Maintain characterization.
LEVEL 5	Create a nuanced character without explicitly labeling the emotion.

TEACHER NOTE

Your body tells us who the person is.

7

Before & After

LEVELED

Teacher gives an event:

THE EVENT

"The vase broke."

What happened before? What happened after?

BEGINNER	One event before and after.
INTERMEDIATE	Sequence three events.
ADVANCED	Create a short narrative.
ADVANCED PLUS	Add role shift and depiction.
LEVEL 5	Create a cohesive visual story with cause and effect.

8

The Invisible Object

ALL LEVELS

Pretend you're holding an object that isn't really there. Show its size, shape, weight, texture, and how you handle it. Partners guess the object. Then switch.

TEACHER NOTE

Challenge: Once you've established its size and location, keep it consistent.

9

Change the Ending

LEVELED

Teacher provides a familiar or simple story and stops before the ending.

BEGINNER	Add one event.
INTERMEDIATE	Add 2–3 events.
ADVANCED	Create a logical ending.
ADVANCED PLUS	Create an unexpected ending using visual storytelling.
LEVEL 5	Create an ending that changes the audience’s interpretation of the story.

10

Teacher’s Choice

TEACHER CHOICE

April checkpoint: what expressive skill does your class need more practice with? Give them five minutes.

POSSIBLE TARGETS

Depiction

Role shift

NMS

Story sequencing

Signing space

Characterization

TEACHER NOTE

No new activity necessary.

11

One Event — Two Perspectives

LEVELED

SCENARIO

“Two people bump into each other in a hallway.”

Tell it from Person A’s perspective. Now Person B’s.

BEGINNER	Establish the two people.
INTERMEDIATE	Show each reaction.
ADVANCED	Use role shift.
ADVANCED PLUS	Show differences in perspective.
LEVEL 5	Retell the same event so the audience understands how each person experienced it differently.

12

Sound Without Sound

ALL LEVELS

Don’t focus on translating a sound word. Focus on this: what visually happens because of it?

HOW WOULD YOU SHOW

A door slamming

Something exploding

A phone vibrating

Thunder

Something crashing

TEACHER NOTE

A visual-thinking challenge.

13

Five-Second Story

LEVELED

Tell a complete story fast.

BEGINNER	3 connected signs or concepts.
INTERMEDIATE	10 seconds.
ADVANCED	15 seconds.
ADVANCED PLUS	20 seconds with beginning, middle, and end.
LEVEL 5	Tell the shortest possible story that still feels complete.

TEACHER NOTE

Ask: what information was essential?

14

Zoom In

LEVELED

Describe a scene. Then zoom in on one tiny detail.

EXAMPLE

"Park → playground → child → hand → tiny bug crawling on finger."

BEGINNER	Move from big to small.
INTERMEDIATE	Add visual details.
ADVANCED	Use space effectively.
ADVANCED PLUS	Shift visual perspective.
LEVEL 5	Create a cinematic perspective change smoothly.

15

Make Me Guess

ALL LEVELS

Describe or show it without signing it or fingerspelling it. Partners guess.

CHOOSE ONE

Activity

Job

Animal

Place

Object

TEACHER NOTE

Rule: Don't just list related vocabulary. Create meaning visually.

16

Student Story Challenge

STUDENT CHOICE

Students create today's Bell Ringer. **April requirement:** it must make classmates show something visually. Teacher chooses one.

POSSIBLE FORMS

Depiction

Role shift

Visual description

Perspective

Characterization

Storytelling

17

Slow Motion

LEVELED

Take a simple action, such as dropping a glass. Now show it in slow motion.

BEGINNER	Show the action clearly.
INTERMEDIATE	Add reaction.
ADVANCED	Use depiction.
ADVANCED PLUS	Shift perspective between object and person.
LEVEL 5	Create a detailed cinematic slow-motion sequence.

Then do it fast. How does the visual information change?

18

Picture This

LEVELED

Teacher describes or displays a simple scene. Students recreate it in ASL.

BEGINNER	Identify key objects.
INTERMEDIATE	Establish locations.
ADVANCED	Describe relationships and movement.
ADVANCED PLUS	Create visual depth and perspective.
LEVEL 5	Produce a cohesive visual representation that allows the audience to “see” the scene.

MAKE IT YOURS

Use any picture that fits your class or current unit.

19

60-Second Story

LEVELED

PROMPT

“I knew something was wrong when...”

BEGINNER	20 seconds.
INTERMEDIATE	30–45 seconds.
ADVANCED	60 seconds.
ADVANCED PLUS	60 seconds using depiction, role shift, and NMS.
LEVEL 5	Spontaneous visual narrative with natural pacing and audience engagement.

MAKE IT YOURS

Make it funny, mysterious, surprising, embarrassing, or completely fictional.

20

Let Me SEE It

MONTHLY REFLECTION

FINISH THE THOUGHT

“One thing that makes ASL visually powerful is...”

BEGINNER	Identify one feature.
INTERMEDIATE	Give an example.
ADVANCED	Explain how it adds meaning.
ADVANCED PLUS	Demonstrate the feature in context.
LEVEL 5	Reflect on how visual storytelling differs from simply producing vocabulary.

TEACHER NOTE

Teacher Wrap-Up: Ask, “What can you *show* in ASL that would be difficult to explain with words alone?”

April’s Big Idea

March asked students to notice how ASL works. April asks them to use it.

Students combine vocabulary, grammar, NMS, space, depiction, role shift, perspective, and receptive skills to create visual meaning.

INCREASING INDEPENDENCE

WHAT APRIL ASKS OF THE TEACHER

Pick three signs	Invent a mystery scene
Grab a picture	Choose the skill your class needs
Let students create a challenge	

LESS PREP, NOT LESS STRUCTURE

Many April activities deliberately give teachers less to prepare. ASLdeafined provides the structure without turning the classroom into a script.

GUIDING IDEA

Don’t just tell me. Let me **SEE** it.

Which ones worked? Notes for next April