

GUIDEBOOK

for the

The Monica & Marisa Engel American Sign Language Video Collection



Looking for American Sign Language?
Look to Libraries with ASL Access!

“An ASL Access Collection”

www.aslaccess.org

***Donated to the
James V. Brown Library
in recognition of
Monica & Marisa Engel.***

Williamsport, Pennsylvania

January 2002

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Find The Video That Is Right For You!

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Basic ASL Lessons

The ASL Phrase Book video set

Very practical signs and sentences for everyday conversations

A Basic Course in ASL

This series gets right to the point with clear sign language instruction

A Beginning Course in ASL (Bravo ASL!)

16 lessons from a top-rated ASL series, with cultural notes and stories

Coffee Break Sign Lessons (1-5, 6-10)

Dr. Mike Tuccelli teaches signs with emphasis on conceptual accuracy

Conversational Sign Language

Ray Bearden teaches the manual alphabet and 90 sentences

The Face of ASL

Basic ASL grammar by Bienvenu and Colonomus

From Mime to Sign

Gil Eastman shows how mime can be a useful bridge to ASL skills

Learning American Sign Language

Fun, user-friendly book and video set by Humphries and Padden

Mouth Morphemes

Mouth-centered facial grammar in ASL, taught by Struxness

On Fire With Classifiers

Tuccelli shows how these signs are important to ASL grammar

Say It By Signing

Elaine Costello's video shows sign used in greetings, chatting & shopping

Say It With Sign!

Lively video from popular series

Sign ASL? Sure, You Can!

Easy overview of ASL grammar by Tuccelli

Sign Language Crash Course: I and II

With this set, learners get ASL, PSE and cultural tips

Signing Fiesta

These ASL lessons are translated in Spanish and English

Signing Naturally Videotext

Lentz, Mikos and Smith authored this text for use in ASL classes

ASL Lessons with a Focus on Infants and Toddlers

ASL Basics for Hearing Parents of Deaf Children

An excellent set, also useful for daycare workers

Sign Language Will Enhance Your Child's Intelligence

The value of early sign use. Basic signs and information

Sign With Me

Very clear communication techniques to use with infants/toddlers

Sign With Your Baby

Teaches parents how to teach sign to their hearing babies

Talking Hands

Babies and others learn 30 ASL signs from this live-action video

see also: **ASL Lessons, Songs, Programs & Stories for Children** and
Issues of Interest to Parents with Young Children

Issues of Interest to Parents with Young Children

Access for All: Integrating Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Hearing Preschoolers

Excellent guide for accessibility in early childhood programs

Cochlear Implants: Covering the Basics

Provides current information on this device

Language Says It All (Parts I and II)

Part I: Parents learn to communicate with children who have hearing loss

Part II: Parents learn to read to children with hearing loss

Mom and Dad, Your Deaf Child is OK ...

Interviews with parents and information from educators

Mr. Holland's Opus

A compelling drama featuring deaf characters

Passport Without A Country

Adults with Deaf parents talk about their experiences
(Australian sign, spoken English)

Read It Again and Again

David Schleper illustrates techniques for building literacy through shared reading

Reading to Deaf Children: Learning from Deaf Adults

Schleper outlines effective strategies used by deaf adults reading to deaf children

We Can Do Anything

Children who haven't let hearing loss keep them from living fully

see also: **ASL Lessons, Songs, Programs & Stories for Children**

ASL Lessons, Songs, Programs & Stories for Children

ASL Lessons:

A Beginning Course in ASL (Bravo ASL!)

Excellent for children, series of 16 videos

Songs and Programs presented in ASL:

David Parker - The Sign for Friends

Hearing children have fun learning signs with songs

Fantastic (From the set: A - H)

Entertainment for deaf and hard of hearing children ages 6 -10

Sing 'n' Sign for Fun!

Gaia and friends sing and sign upbeat, cheerful songs

Stories presented in ASL - "A Book A Day Series":

Animal Tracks

The Bravest Dog Ever, The True Story of Balto

Cats of Tiffany Street

Eek! There's a Mouse in the House

Everybody Cooks Rice

Grandfather's Journey

If The Dinosaurs Come Back

Is This a House for Hermit Crab?

Julius

Jumanji

Just A Dream

Kate Shelley and the Midnight Express

A Mother for Choco

My Buddy

My First American Friend

The Rat and the Tiger

A River Dream

A River Ran Wild

Sheep in a Shop

Super Cluck

ASL Lessons, Songs, Programs & Stories for Children

Stories presented in ASL – “A Book A Day Series” (continued):

Three Cheers for Tacky
Uncle Jed’s Barbershop
Watch Out, Ronald Morgan!
Who Put the Pepper in the Pot?
Will and Orv

Stories presented in ASL – Read With Me Series:

Sharing the Joy of Storytelling with Your Deaf Toddler
Where the Wild Things Are / More Bunny Trouble
How the Grinch Stole Christmas/
The Wolf’s Chicken Stew
The Mitten / King Bidgood’s in the Bathtub
The Rainbow Fish / Small Green Snake
If I Ran the Zoo by Dr. Seuss
The Very Busy Spider/
Owl Babies/Monster Can’t Sleep
Elizabeth and Larry
If You Give a Mouse a Cookie
The Mixed-Up Chameleon

Stories presented in ASL – Visual Storyreading Series (no audio):

The Lady and the Spider by Faith McNulty
Where’s Spot? by Eric Hill

Other Stories Presented in ASL:

American Sign Language Christmas Stories

Signed by Bobby Giles and Doris Wilding

American Sign Language Fairy Tales

I and II; five tales on each, with voice-over

ASL Lessons, Songs, Programs & Stories for Children

Deaf Children Signers and More Deaf Children Signers

Watch these children express themselves in sign

Fairy Tale Classics

Selected favorites from "Four For You" and "High Five!"

The Land Before Time (I - IV)

ASL translation by Linda Bove

Libros en Accion

Translating Spanish stories to ASL

Number Stories

Collection of 13 animal stories created and signed by Deaf children ages 4-14

Once Upon A Time (1-6)

Children's classics retold in ASL by Bahan & Marbury

1. The Little Mermaid
2. The Emperor's New Clothes
3. The Fisherman & His Wife and Hansel & Gretel
4. The Musicians of Bremen, Rapunzel and Sleeping Beauty
5. The Princess & The Pea and Inchelina
6. Cinderella and Rumpelstiltskin

Sign Me a Story

The Three Bears and Little Red Riding Hood told in ASL by Linda Bove

That's Sign, Folks!

Linda Bove translates cartoon classics

Visual Tales: The House That Jack Built

Billy Seago signs this rhyming poem

Intermediate to Advanced ASL Lessons

ASL Vocabulary (6B)

Sign Enhancers Practice Series

ASL Vocabulary, Affect & Structure (6C)

Sign Enhancers Practice Series

ASL Sentences (6D)

Sign Enhancers Practice Series

ASL Mini-Stories (6E)

Sign Enhancers Practice Series

ASL Stories (6F)

Sign Enhancers Practice Series

ASL Dialogues (6G)

Sign Enhancers Practice Series

ASL Funny Bones (6H)

Sign Enhancers Practice Series

Finger Flicks Intermediate I, Tape I

Eight lessons to improve fingerspelling skills

Fingerspelled Names and Introductions

Carol J. Patrie

Linguistics of American Sign Language

Clayton Valli

Number Signs for Everyone

Cinnie MacDougall

On Fire With Classifiers

Tuccelli

Sign ASL? Sure, You Can!

Tuccelli

also recommended: **All ASL literature, fiction & non-fiction videotapes and Reference Materials**

Sign Language Interpreting

The Art of Interpreting

User-friendly basic interpreting set

Developing Interpreting Skills: U.S. Post Office Safety Meeting

“You are there” interpreting a group meeting

Developing Interpreting Skills: Meeting With a Real Estate Agent

“You are there” interpreting a one-to-one meeting

Interpreter Model Series: English-ASL (Lectures)

Demonstrations of interpreting by two top interpreters

Interpreting in Various Settings

Massoud; voiced lectures, no captions

Intro to Interpreting

Massoud; excellent preparation for interested students

It’s Just a Phrase You’re Going Through

Mark Mitchum re: religious interpreting

Practical Demonstrations of Transliteration & Interpretation

PSE and ASL, follows Leo Dicker’s book, *Facilitating Manual Communication*

Technical Aspects of Interpreting

Lectures, voiced by Massoud

also recommended: **All ASL literature, fiction & non-fiction videotapes** and
Reference Materials

Classic Literature Translated in ASL

American Freedom Speeches

Bill of Rights, Pledge of Allegiance, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King . . .

Shakespeare Unmasked

Performed by Little Theatre of the Deaf

Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle

Compelling mystery story with the greatest sleuth of all times

Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: The Adventure of the Speckled Band

Compelling mystery story with the greatest sleuth of all times

Adventures of Sherlock Holmes: The Red Headed League

Compelling mystery story with the greatest sleuth of all times

Poetry and Artistic ASL

ASL Poetry: Selected Works of Clayton Valli

Poems, hidden meanings, and clues to understanding

From a Gator Ride to the Dentist Office & United States of ASL Poetry

People of all ages will enjoy these funny, fascinating and sometimes serious pieces by Peter Cook

Poetry in Motion

Original ASL poems by Clayton Valli, Patrick Graybill and Debbie Rennie

The Treasure

Original ASL poems by Ella Mae Lentz

Stories, Comedy and Drama

ABC Stories

A unique art form utilizing the letters of the manual alphabet

A-Z Stories: “Professions”

Collection of nine fascinating stories created and signed by Andrew Byrne

ASL Literature Series:

Bird of a Different Feather & For a Decent Living

A fable signed by Ben Bahan and a story signed by Sam Suppalla

The Bridge

An opera by William Moses in ASL with a universal theme

DEAFology 101 Comedy Show

This “class” is just for laughs

From a Gator Ride to the Dentist Office & United States of ASL Poetry

People of all ages will enjoy these funny, fascinating and sometimes serious pieces by Peter Cook

Gil Eastman

Founding member of the National Theatre of the Deaf performs “live”

Man of a Thousand Faces

Lon Chaney, a hearing child of deaf parents, became a legend in silent films

Mary Beth Miller

Founding member of the National Theatre of the Deaf performs “live”

Signing Treasures

Skits, jokes, stories, deaf folklore, and poetic works

Tales from the Green Books

Signed stories from a popular ASL instructional series

Telling Stories

A gestural play by William Moses. Deaf actors re-enact a common history of hard-won battles for freedom of expression.

Tomorrow Dad Will Still Be Deaf and Other Stories

Bonnie Kraft, daughter of Deaf parents

History of Deaf People and Sign Language

ADA: Access for Deaf Americans

Presented in ASL, with open captioning and voice-over

ASL Pah!

Deaf Students' Perspectives on Their Language

Deaf students describe the impact of ASL on their lives

Class of '52

Documentary on the history of Black deaf students at Kendall School in D.C.

Deaf Mosaic #611

Features "I Didn't Hear That Color" – a play; deaf World War II contributions

Deaf President Now (Deaf Mosaic #402)

1988 protest resulting in the appointment of Gallaudet University's first Deaf president, Dr. I. King Jordan

Impact of Deaf History on Our Lives

Jack Gannon speaks at the First International Conference on Deaf History

Laurent Clerc

A biography about America's first Deaf teacher

The L.A.C.D.

Los Angeles Club of the Deaf Story

National Association of the Deaf, 42nd Biennial Convention Highlights (July 4-10, 1994; Knoxville, Tennessee)

Glimpses of an exciting NAD convention (no audio)

The Preservation of American Sign Language

Archival films transferred to video

Telling Stories

This play by William Moses could be described as a type of "historical fiction."

Deaf actors re-enact a common history of hard-won battles for freedom of expression.

Biographies

An Interview with Bernard Bragg: The Man Behind the Mask

Based on the book *“Lessons in Laughter: The Autobiography of a Deaf Actor.”*
A fascinating biography of a Deaf man who worked with Marcel Marceau

Charles Krauel

A profile of a Deaf filmmaker

Deaf Mosaic #212

Features author Lou Ann Walker; features Alice L. Hagemeyer

Deaf Mosaic #404

Features a tribute to the late Dr. Andrew Foster – first Black Deaf graduate of Gallaudet and founder of more than 20 schools for the deaf in Africa

Howie Seago - Deaf Culture Autobiography

A popular Deaf actor tells how he got started on stage

Laurent Clerc

A biography about America’s first Deaf teacher

Moving Pictures, Moving Hands: The Ernest Marshall Story

This Deaf artistic pioneer filmed plays in ASL

A Tribute to Art Kruger (1911-1992)

The Deaf founder of the American Athletic Association of the Deaf (AAAD)

Religion and Inspiration

Genesis

Bible book translation signed in ASL by Bob Alcorn

God's Heroes

Stories signed in ASL by Bob Alcorn

God ... Who?

Children's program about God

Life of Christ

New Testament literature in ASL

Mark Mitchum: Forgiven

Inspiring performance signed in ASL

Mark Mitchum: Your Favorites

Classic Christian hymns signed in ASL

Special Me!

Deaf children "sing" in ASL about their Christian faith

A Taste of Heaven

Mark Mitchum's musical ASL interpretation

How to ...

Resources for Sign Instructors:

The ASLTA Evaluation & Certification System

Hope to become certified as an ASL teacher? Check this out

The Basics of Teaching ASL

This tape helps teachers of ASL organize their classes

Written Sign Language:

SignWriting:

1. Introduction to SignWriting
2. SignWriting Basics

History of SignWriting:

1. How Deaf Opinions Changed
2. How SignWriting Changed

Learn to Read ASL in SignWriting:

Goldilocks & The Three Bears transcribed;
intermediate and advanced storybooks

Deaf-Blind Communications:

Deaf-Blind Communication & Community:

Overview and Introduction

Describes the community

Getting Involved: A Conversation

Theresa Smith with two Deaf-Blind individuals and their interpreters

Leading Meetings:

Bummy's Basic Parliamentary Workshop

Teaches how to lead meetings

Health and Safety Issues

Alcoholics Anonymous in American Sign Language

Five volume set translating the Big Book

Anywhere to Anyone

Domestic violence in the Deaf community

Choosing a Healthy Lifestyle

Tells about good eating and exercise, and health habits

Cochlear Implants: Covering the Basics

Provides current information on this device

Fire Safety Starts With You

Basic safety practices, described in ASL with voice-over

I Can: Stories of Deaf and Hard of Hearing People in Recovery

Six Deaf and hard of hearing recovering addicts and alcoholics share their stories

It's Not Just Hearing AIDS: Deaf People & The Epidemic

Learn how not to get sick with AIDS, what to do if you have AIDS, and how to help someone with AIDS

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in ASL

Five volume set from Alcoholics Anonymous

Your Physical Exam

Explains the importance of a physical exam and what is involved

Reference Materials

Pursuit of ASL: Interesting Facts Using Classifiers

The signer explains 35 interesting topics, using ASL classifiers in natural ways (no audio)

Religious Signs Vocabulary

Provides religious sign vocabulary information

Video Dictionary of ASL Signs English - Spanish Edition

Provides a list of sign vocabulary, with English and Spanish captions

About The Monica & Marisa Engel ASL Video Collection

Melisa Engel is a mom with a mission.

"Hearing loss is my life," Melisa says. "I don't want another family to go through what we went through," she continues, referring to the struggle she and her twin daughters endured to identify and implement services for children with hearing loss.

Her fraternal twins, Monica and Marisa Engel, were born January 27, 1997 -- about four weeks early because of complications in Mrs. Engel's pregnancy. At ten months of age, Mrs. Engel noticed Marisa was not responding to sounds. The family pediatrician didn't believe there was a problem, but Mrs. Engel insisted something was wrong. Eight months later she found another doctor to provide hearing tests on the toddlers. Finally, when they were 18 months old, an audiologist confirmed both girls had moderate to severe hearing loss.

Further testing identified that both parents, Melisa and Michael, were carriers of the gene connexion 26, a recessive hereditary gene that causes hearing loss.

Since her twin daughters were diagnosed four years ago, Mrs. Engel has researched, lobbied for, and launched services to help her own children--and hundreds of others in Pennsylvania.

Mrs. Engel has testified before state leaders on hearing loss issues, and was instrumental in getting a Universal Newborn Hearing Screening program started -- first at the Williamsport Hospital, then at hospitals in North Central Pennsylvania, and soon at all hospitals in the Commonwealth that provide newborn care.

She also started and continues to work with a support group for parents of children with hearing loss, provides information sharing and support for other parents on the Internet, and she has worked with the Community Theatre League to provide ASL interpretation for the Sprouts children's performances.

Just in time for the twins' fifth birthday (on Sunday, January 27, 2002), Melisa Engel saw a video collection for the Deaf community dedicated in her daughters' honor.

The James V. Brown Library's new resource for the Deaf community was dedicated at a special Saturday night shadowed performance of *The Mousetrap*, at the Community Theatre League. The Engel Family was on stage prior to the performance to cut the ribbon on the ASL Access Collection. Representing the Brown Library was Jeffrey Swope, Youth Services Librarian, along with other library staff members.

Now found in the Youth Services Department of the Brown Library, the "Monica and Marisa Engel American Sign Language Video Collection," an ASL Access Collection, is one of only twelve in the United States - and the only library in Pennsylvania - with this special collection of signed videocassettes for children, adults, parents and professionals working with the Deaf community, or of interest to the Deaf and those who use ASL.

Over 200 videos, including dozens of lessons and demonstrations of how to sign, are now located in a special section of the Youth Services Department. In addition to instructional videos, the collection also has videos that address health, parenting and life skills issues: others that tell the history and biography of deaf people; translations of classic literature and children's stories; original ASL poetry, drama, stories and humor, and inspirational titles.

Mrs. Engel first learned about the ASL videos at a convention at Gallaudet University, the world's only university providing a liberal arts education for the deaf and hard of hearing. She picked up a brochure about the videos, brought it home, and placed it in her pile of "things to do."

In July, 2001, after testifying before state committee meetings on issues relating to the Deaf community, she found the brochure again and thought, it's time. She approached the library at first just asking for space to put the collection. Mrs. Engel says she was willing to write grant applications to pay for ASL Access, and she was ready to fight to obtain the videos.

Instead, she found the library willing to commit funding --and even more willing to make them accessible to the community. The collection was purchased with Library

Services and Technology Act Funds from the Commonwealth Libraries of Pennsylvania.

ASL Access, a non-profit, volunteer organization which places ASL video collections in libraries, has searched out ASL resources and developed a collection of over 200 ASL videos featuring top-notch teachers, artists, and spectacular sign presenters. This unique resource helps parents of deaf children communicate and effectively parent their child, offers those children classics of children's literature in a language they can understand, provides hearing adults and children with an opportunity to learn to communicate with deaf persons, and spotlights the people who have developed and kept alive this unique language and its visual literature.

And, all you need to bring the videos home is a library card!

In addition, any of the member Libraries of the North Central Library District served by the James V. Brown Library can borrow the videos through the Inter-library loan program.

According to the Pennsylvania Speech-Language Hearing Association, hearing loss is the nation's number one birth disorder, yet most babies in this country are not screened for it. Universal Newborn Hearing Screening is a painless test given to newborns before they leave the hospital to detect hearing loss. The new legislation that Mrs. Engel influenced is Pennsylvania Senate Bill 100 and House Bill 987, the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening and Intervention Program, was passed into law on November 19, 2001, and is scheduled to take effect across the state in 90 days - by the end of February 2002.

But Mrs. Engel's mission is not complete. Her most important goal is to stay in this area, place her daughters in public school, and have them receive their education here, and not in a special school for the deaf. To that end she is working with various agencies to get more ASL classes started, for families, friends and teachers to more easily communicate with the Deaf.



**Looking for American Sign Language?
Look to Libraries with ASL Access!**

American Sign Language (ASL) is a unique and complete language. Deaf and hearing people use ASL for everyday communication, access to information, education, and artistic expression. And now ASL is coming to public libraries!

**ASL Access partners with interested public libraries
– with your help – to put ASL videos on the shelves.**

**ASL Access raises funds to create collections of more than 200 ASL videos.
Qualified deaf and hearing volunteer reviewers help choose the videos.
ASL Access donates the collections to selected public libraries.**

ASL Instruction Videos

The large majority of deaf children have hearing parents. ASL Access Video Collections serve these families, as well as countless other learners of ASL, with dozens of teaching videos.

Deaf History Videos

Videos trace the history and describe traditions of the Deaf Community.

ASL Literature Videos

ASL poets paint the air. Storytellers entertain. Classic literature comes alive in ASL.

Informational Videos in ASL

With public libraries as a point of connection, deaf people all across America meet in virtual visits, using ASL to talk together like neighbors over a fence. Children swap funny stories.

Deaf parents offer advice. Deaf Ph.D.'s debate. ASL signers offer a hand up to those who learn best with ASL. Information becomes accessible through ASL.

**ASL Access Video Collections in public libraries open so many doors.
Communication. Literacy. Careers. New friendships. New directions.**

You can make a difference!

Support ASL Access today. See a new world tomorrow.

ASL Access is a volunteer, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit organization.

www.aslaccess.org • 4217 Adrienne Drive, Alexandria, VA 22309 • ASLAccess@aol.com

A financial statement is available upon written request from the Virginia State Office of Consumer Affairs.

People Are Talking About ASL Access

“I would like to express my support for this project. Being deaf myself, and involved in deaf education for over 25 years, I know well the great need to get sign language into the hands (so to speak) of deaf children and their parents as early as possible in the child's life. Early exposure, to the only language that a deaf person has full access to, is crucial for that person's educational, personal, and social development. And from a quarter century as a professional librarian, I know how well-suited public libraries are as community resources for this type of outreach, being located in all types of communities, large and small, urban and rural, serving all types of people . . .”

- Thomas Harrington, Reference & Instruction Librarian, Gallaudet University Library, Washington, DC

“Parents realize the importance of early language development. When (they decide) to provide visual communication to their young children they soon discover that sign language classes alone are not enough ... Project ASL Access will allow people to go to the library and help themselves to ASL videos, finding a rich repository of visual communication resources . . .”

-Sandy Harvey, Former Executive Director, American Society for Deaf Children

“I am a ‘book’ person, but above all I am a ‘language’ person, and language must be presented in a form which is complete and accessible - in the case of American Sign Language, this is video. ASL is not only the birthright of every person born deaf, but a beautiful and precious resource for us all. Anything that preserves and disseminates a powerful and expressive language such as ASL is a worthy project, and one we should all applaud.”

-Oliver Sacks, M.D., Author of “Seeing Voices”

“ASL Access’ campaign to donate ASL videotape collections to libraries across the United States is a significant humanitarian effort. Sensitivity and awareness from the general public of issues, needs, and cultural norms of the nation's deaf community will be greatly enhanced. Employment, education, and integration into the general mainstream will emerge more as meaningful and gainful factors for the deaf citizen’s opportunities to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. We congratulate ASL Access for its vision and commitment for this important project.”

-Claude L. Stout, Executive Director, Telecommunications for the Deaf, Inc. (TDI)

“It is a well known fact that the majority of deaf and hard of hearing children are born to hearing parents, and that many of these families also reside in small communities with limited exposure to American Sign Language (ASL) deaf and hard of hearing adult role models. Therefore, distribution of ASL-based videotapes and related materials through our nation's public library system is a wonderful way to ‘get the word out’ to the public.”

-Elizabeth Pollard, President, National Association of the Deaf

How To Communicate

by Christine Wixtrom

The Deaf American, Fall 1988

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1. **ESTABLISH POSITIVE COMMUNICATION GOALS:**
 - ◆ I want to “hear” and “see” you - to UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU SAY.
 - ◆ I want to SHARE MYSELF - my ideas and feelings - WITH YOU.
 - ◆ I want to GIVE AND RECEIVE CLEAR MESSAGES.
 - ◆ I want to ENJOY TALKING WITH YOU AS A UNIQUE INDIVIDUAL.
2. **RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO USE YOUR STYLE OF “COMMUNICATION” AS A SHIELD, A SWORD, OR A BANNER:**
 - ◆ Don’t talk without taking time to listen.
 - ◆ Don’t use “communication” to dominate and manipulate others, forcing them to use the method of communication, language, grammar or vocabulary choices that you prefer.
 - ◆ Don’t try to promote your preferred method of communication as The One True Way. (Instead, do demonstrate flexibility and tolerance by allowing each person to express and receive communication as he or she prefers.)
3. **SHOW CREATIVITY:**
 - ◆ If your first attempt to communicate fails, try another way!

MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR SUCCESSFUL SIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION

1. WILLING HANDS

You can do it! The main requirement is willingness, not manual dexterity, perfect hands or talent.

People who face all kinds of barriers have learned to sign, including those with arthritis, cerebral palsy, missing fingers, big or small hands. Just remember that it may take some time for you to learn to feel comfortable using hands, face, and body to talk.

2. AN EYE FOR UNDERSTANDING

If you demonstrate a positive attitude, you will have success. An attitude of respectful interest is far more important than fluency.

Most of us are not used to depending on our eyes to capture fleeting information. But “reading” sign language is a skill, like any other, that can be practiced and learned. Rather than striving to see every sign, relax and just try to get a general idea of what is being said. Don’t be afraid to ask for clarification.

3. AN OPEN MIND

Most importantly, keep an open mind about communication strategies. There are many ways to communicate. It doesn’t much matter HOW communication happens. Do whatever you can to “make it happen!”

What Is Sign Language?

by Christine Wixtrom

The Deaf American, Summer 1988 (Updated July 1998)

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That's a good question! There are many types of gestural communication, and sometimes the term "sign language" just doesn't make it clear which form is being discussed. Here are a few brief explanations to help clear up the confusion.

FINGERSPELLING, OR THE MANUAL ALPHABET

Fingerspelling is a method of representing the letters of the alphabet with the hand. Forming different shapes with your hand, you can spell out words such as: "H-O-W A-R-E Y-O-U?" Manual alphabets are not languages; they are visual codes for languages. The one-handed American Manual Alphabet is a code for English. (A two-handed manual alphabet is used in Europe.) There are different manual alphabets used to code different languages.

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE OR ASL

ASL is a visual-gestural language. ASL developed in a natural manner, as a means of clear visual communication used among deaf people. ASL was created by deaf people and belongs to their culture, Deaf Culture. Today, ASL is used by millions of Americans and Canadians of all ages. The units of ASL are composed of specific movements of the hands and arms, eyes, face, head and body posture. These movements, or gestures, represent concepts and serve as the "words" of the language. Precise syntactical rules and grammatical principles dictate proper ASL "word" (sign) order, tense indicators, intonation and other aspects of ASL language use. The grammar of ASL is completely different from (and unrelated to) the grammar of the English language. Linguistic research has shown, however, that ASL is as "rich" and "complete" as any spoken language.

MANUALLY CODED ENGLISH

(MCE may also be termed SSS, Sign Supported Speech, or SSE, Sign Supported English)

There are a number of signing systems that were artificially devised in order to teach English to deaf children. MCE systems use manual signs to represent English visually. Signs used in these systems may be taken from ASL, but these vocabulary units are used to represent English words (rather than to represent concepts, as they do in ASL). Some new signs are contrived (invented) for English words or word parts in these systems. All signs are used in English grammatical order. Thus, these forms of manual communication are not languages - they are systems. Using one of these manual systems along with spoken English is a method of communication called "simultaneous communication" (or "sim-com"). Some MCE systems: Seeing Essential English (SEE1), Signing Exact English (SEE2), Linguistics of Visual English (LOVE) and Signed English (Bornstein, et al.).

PIDGIN SIGN ENGLISH (PSE, or CONTACT SIGN)

When some ASL signs, some newer signs, some contrived signs and fingerspelling are used in flexible grammatical order, this is referred to as Pidgin Sign English. (Recent research has determined that "contact sign" is a more accurate term.) PSE is not a structured system, but a natural mix of two languages, ASL and English. One of the varieties within this category is Conceptually Accurate Signed English (CASE). Users of CASE will choose a sign on the basis of its meaning in ASL, rather than on the basis of its sound or spelling in English. The signs are used in English grammatical order, and may be accompanied by English mouth movements. (Note: Persons transferring someone else's spoken language into an English-like signed format are said to be transliterating. This is in contrast to the conveyance of a spoken English message into its equivalent in the language of ASL - or an ASL message into English - which is called interpreting.)

PANTOMIME

Pantomime is not "sign language." Pantomime is not a language at all. Pantomime includes motions, gestures and dramatics used to communicate. It is used in theatre, and between people who do not share a common language.

References:

1. *ASL: A Look At Its History, Structure, and Community*, by Charlotte Baker/Carol Padden
2. *Sign Language Interpreting: A Basic Resource Book*, by Sharon N. Solow
3. *ASL: Fact and Fancy*, by Harry Markowicz.

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