

## *MA 1 Notes*

### **Fingerspelling**

Consider frngerspelling to be like your **handwriting**. Being clear is vital to being understood, be **confident** enough not to worry, whether each letter is exactly right, and be able to spell words quickly instead of breaking them down **letter** by **letter**. Everybody has their own fingerspelling **style**, just as you have your own style of handwriting. It takes **time** and **practice** to become an excellent fingerspeller! Fortunately **fingerspelling** is generally used in specific instances :

1. first, last, and middle **names**;
2. names of **places** (cities, states, stores);
3. **titles** of movies and books;
4. certain **foods**;
5. for **clarification** when one sign has several meanings;
6. **technical** terms

Fingerspelling should **NOT** look like a typewriter, **moving** with each new letter. There are exceptions, but the general rule is, do **NOT** **move** your hand! If a word uses double letters, moving the hand may be needed.

### **Fingerspelling Dos & Don'ts**

- Don,t jerk, **bounce**, or **move** your hand.
- Keep your **elbow** down, close to your **side**.
- HoId your hand to the **side** of your chest, **not** in front of your face

### **What if I make a mistake while fingerspelling?**

First, do **not** wave your hands to "erase" what you spelled! Simply **shake** your **head** and begin spelling the **entire** word again. If you become **confused** when someone is fingerspelling to you, spell the **letters** that you did understand and ask for the remainder. This is better than asking a signer to spell the word several times until you understand it.

### **Deaf vs deaf** p. 3

“What is the difference between deaf and Deaf?” When deaf is **not capitalized**, it describes one’s **hearing** status. When **capitalized**, Deaf describes those individuals who are proud to be deaf and consider themselves members of the Deaf **culture**. They use American Sign Language as their preferred means of **communication**.

**Pointing** is a logical feature of a signed, non-spoken language. It is **not** considered **rude** or **impolite**. If a person or object is not visible, point to an **empty space** and continue signing. Using the index finger to point is called **deixis**

### **Why do I have to point twice?** p. 9

Pointing back to yourself or the person you’re talking about shows **completion** of a train of thought. This allows somebody else to begin signing without interrupting you. Using **deixis** at the end of a sentence is called a **closing signal**. Closing signals are especially important when asking **questions** using the Question Maker (page 15) or the WH-Face (page 42). Remember to use a **closing signal** when: Making a statement or comment about **yourself** or **somebody** else or **asking** a question.

### **Eyes on ASL #3** p 10

**There is no such thing as a one-word answer or reply in American Sign Language.** When responding to a question or statement, one-word replies are **incomplete**.

### **Deaf Culture Minute** p. 10

Introductions in the Deaf community tend to include both first and last **names**. Often, new acquaintances know **relatives** or have **friends** in common. Many Deaf people have stories about meeting a friend of a friend in other cities, states, and even **countries!** How is this similar or different from your own community?

### **Introductions** p 11

Introductions in the Deaf community vary depending on whether one is **hearing** or Deaf. If you are Deaf, **background** information like where one goes or went to school is exchanged. If you are hearing, then you will be introduced as a **hearing** person who knows or is learning American Sign Language. This exchange of information allows everybody to understand where he or she is coming from and **reduces** cultural **misunderstandings**. It is culturally **appropriate** to shake hands when meeting new people or greeting friends. Like many hearing people, Deaf friends often **hug** each other when saying

hello and good-bye.

### **Accent Step** p. 12

When fingerspelling your complete name, you do **not** need to sign last name between the first and last name. Just **pause** briefly and continue on!

### **Interacting with Deaf People** p. 14

As a student of American Sign Language, learn how to **interact** with the Deaf community by becoming familiar with Deaf **cultural** behaviors that **differ** from the way you are used to doing things as a hearing person. One cultural behavior you've already learned is that it is considered rude to break **eye contact** when signing with Deaf people, which for most hearing people is often difficult. Think of how often you turn your head in direction of sound and you can realize it will be a **challenge** to break this habit!

### **Getting Attention**

Getting the **attention** of a Deaf person is different from the way you interact with **hearing** people. Many hearing people tend to **work** harder than necessary to gain a Deaf individual's **attention** by wildly swinging their hands in the air, stomping on the floor, or flashing overhead lights in a strobe-like pattern. None of this is necessary! Gently **tapping** the Deaf person's **shoulder** or **slightly** waving a hand in his or her direction until you are noticed is the most **effective** and **considerate** way to get attention.

### **Voices**

Using your **voice** to talk to another hearing individual **instead** of signing when a Deaf person is near is considered **rude**. Develop the habit of always **signing** when you know a Deaf person is in the same room with you. This way, **everybody** has equal access to what is being communicated. If you must speak to a hearing person who doesn't know ASL, then tell your Deaf friend or teacher that first, before speaking. You may be surprised to learn that most Deaf people **know** when hearing people are talking, even if someone is whispering. How so? Remember, Deaf people rely on their **vision** far more than hearing people do! Your teacher may remind you to turn **off** voice if you're being rude in class.

### **Question Marker**

Raising your **eyebrows** forms the **Question-Maker**, an expression that shows you are asking a

**question**. Keep the eyebrows **raised** until you've completed signing the question. In the example, notice the only difference between a question and a comment is the **facial expression**. The signs themselves remain the same.

### **Accents** 16

Do you “**talk**” silently while signing? Some hearing people do this out of **habit**, and others think it helps Deaf people lipread. Only about **30%** of the English language can be **lipread**. Deaf people lipread English, not American Sign Language, so don't mix the two. Sometimes a Deaf person will “talk” silently to **help** hearing people **understand** what is being signed, but don't with those who understand ASL. You will learn the role the lips have as part of the **non-manual signals** used in ASL. In the meantime, do **NOT** pronounce the English translation on your lips while signing!

### **Accent Step** p. 17

When you use deixis, look **towards** the area you're pointing to. This is called **eye gaze** and helps “hold” that location for the person or thing you're signing about.

### **How do Deaf People Learn?** p. 22

Approximately **10 percent** of Deaf people have Deaf **parents** and grow up in families where American Sign Language is used daily. When these two populations came together at schools for the deaf, those who did not know sign language, learned from the Deaf children with Deaf parents. Often, the use of sign language was **forbidden** at schools for the deaf but the desire for a **natural, visual** language could not be suppressed. Many Deaf people can share stories of only being allowed to sign when class was not in session.

In the 1960s, **ASL** gained recognition as a **unique** language **different** from English. In the 1970s, schools for the Deaf began using **ASL** to teach their students and sign language classes for hearing people mushroomed across the United States. By the 1980s, the Deaf community was considered a **cultural minority** rather than a group of **disabled** persons, an important change based largely on the successful Deaf President Now movement at **Gallaudet** University, the world's only university for the Deaf. At the same time, Deaf accomplishments in the arts, film, and television brought wider **exposure** to the Deaf community. By the 1990s, American Sign Language became the **fastest** growing language offered as a second or **foreign** language,

The best way to learn any language, including ASL, is to **immerse** yourself in the **community** where the language is used. Make Deaf **friends** and **attend** Deaf sporting, theatrical, and social events when invited. You will quickly realize there is a **different** “Deaf World” to learn about and participate in, provided you make the **effort** to sign. As a student learning ASL, it is up to you to learn the **language** and **culture** of the Deaf community. You can do this by being **open-minded**, **practicing**, and taking an interest in the Deaf community.

### **American Sign Language** p. 23

As a student studying American Sign Language, the following principles will help prepare you to learn this **challenging visual** language. The most fundamental and essential point is to **recognize** and **accept** that American Sign Language is **not English**. ASL has its own **grammar**, structure, and nuances that are designed for the **eye**, not for the ear, unlike spoken languages. Remember that ASL makes **visual** sense and was developed to serve the language needs of a community of people who do not **hear**.

- One **word** in English can have **many** separate signs in ASL, depending on the **concept**. For example, the word “get” and “got” in the following sentences each uses a different sign.
- try **not** to translate word for word or sign by sign. Try to **visualize** the concept instead. Likewise, don’t worry about not knowing specific signs for the particular English phrase you have in mind; try to **communicate** your concept by pointing, **miming**, and using other signs you know rather than fingerspelling the unknown term.
- Do **NOT** fall into the habit of “talking silently” or **whispering** while you sign. You will learn how ASL uses the lips as part of its **grammar**. Using ASL signs while talking or “mouthing” English is not ASL.
- As a beginning signer, you will naturally want to keep your eyes on the hands of the person who is signing. With exposure and practice you will learn to watch the signer’s hands, **face**, and eyes nearly simultaneously. ASL is not only comprised of signs but also includes specific **mouth movements** and head shakes and nods. **Eye contact** informs the signer that you’re paying attention!

### **Where Are All The Little Words?** P 24

This question is often asked by beginning American Sign Language students. It is part of a much bigger question: Is ASL like **English**, except that it’s signed instead of spoken? The answer is **no, not at all**. Just as Japanese, Spanish, and Latin are not English, neither is **ASL**. All languages have **different** ways of putting words together into **correct** sentences. If you translate an English sentence word for word into any other language, or use ASL signs in English word order, the results **don’t** make

sense. The **grammar** and **syntax** (the **order** in which words are put together) of ASL is **different** from English. ASL does **not** need separate “little” words because these words are already **included** in each sign.

Because ASL is a “**real**” and **separate** language different from English, it is important that you learn how to use the language **properly**. This means **respecting** the language for how it is **structured**, instead of wondering why it isn’t like your own spoken language!

### **Facial Expressions & Non-Manual Signals** p 23

One noticeable **difference** between American Sign Language and English is the use of **facial expressions** and **non-manual signals**. **Non-manual signals** (abbreviated NMS) are the various parts to a sign that are not signed on the hands. For example, ASL **adverbs** are made by the **eyes** and **eyebrows**, and ASL **adjectives** use the **mouth**, **tongue**, and **lips**. One important group of NMS are **facial expressions**, which convey your tone of “voice” while you sign. Your **facial expressions** should match the meaning and content of what you’re signing so if you’re signing I am happy, then look happy!

**Changing** a facial expression **modifies** the meaning of the sign, even if the sign itself doesn’t change. Unlike English which uses separate words to describe related meanings, ASL uses related **facial expressions** with the **base meaning** of a sign.

### **Accent Step** p 27

It is **normal** to feel awkward or uncomfortable making facial expressions at first, but with **practice** you will become more **confident** and skilled. Without them you can **NOT** sign questions, show interest, or carry on a satisfying **conversation**. Think of learning facial expressions as a fun challenge!

### **Non-Manual Signals** p 28

You have already begun using two important non-manual signals when you sign **yes** or **no**. These signs must be paired with two NMS called the **head nod** and the **head shake**. Use these non-manual signals when using **yes** or **no** or when you affirm or negate sentences. Gently **nod** or **shake** your head while signing your sentence instead of wildly exaggerating your head movement!