

## **The Various Forms of Sign Language**

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American Sign Language is a language in and of itself just as English, Spanish, and French are their own languages. While ASL does incorporate English words, it gives a unique grammatical structure to the English language. In English it is typical that the action verbs or adjectives will be seen in the middle of the sentence, whereas in ASL these parts of speech are the last to be signed (ASL Rochelle 2017). Oftentimes, people have difficulty learning ASL because the grammatical structure is basically the reverse of English which is cause for confusion. However, ASL is *not* proper English so it is acceptable that the sentence structures do not resemble each other (R.D 2018). When using ASL it is very important that the meaning of the word gets translated, not just the word itself, this is why nonverbals are crucial to proper ASL communication (ASL Rochelle 2017). Learning ASL grammar is a very important part of properly communicating with the Deaf community. If ASL sentence structure is not perfected then it is not ASL, it becomes PSE or SEE.

Commonly taught to school aged children and used among church interpreters, PSE is the most widely known method of signing in the United States. For those who are not born into a deaf family, PSE is often used in place of ASL because it is a good middle ground for the hearing and Deaf community (R.D 2018). Pidgin Signed English, also known as Contact Signing, combines ASL signs while keeping the English grammatical structure (Berke 2019). However, unlike SEE there are no articles or tense endings on words which allows for quicker signing (The Stews 2014). Nonverbals are still implemented in PSE in order to correctly communicate the contexts of sentences.

The least accepted form of sign language is SEE or Signed Exact English which uses combinations of ASL signs, modified ASL signs, or unique English signs. Keeping the grammatical structure of English and including articles and word endings, SEE is most widely used for deaf students who are being taught the English language. Initialized signs are only used in SEE and are typically used when adding clarity to nouns such as car and hat. In ASL most words have one sign and are fingerspelled if specificity is needed. SEE also places more emphasis on mouthing English words as you sign them, which makes it the longest of the methods to use (Miller 2010). Because SEE is just English on your hands, it is least accepted by the Deaf community (Sings of Life ASL 2013). SEE uses the least facial expression because it has the most amount of words and meaning can be gathered from the exact wording of a sentence (ASL That 2016). The length of time it takes to sign in each of these versions can be seen in the example that: “I am going upstairs to my room” takes 1.8 seconds in ASL, 2.8 in PSE and 4.3 in SEE (DeafEducation 2019). While there are many positive qualities about each of these methods of communication, ASL is the only one that has been approved as its own language and it is the most acceptable and respected to use among the Deaf community.

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