

Sign Language

American Sign Language (ASL) is a visual language with its own syntax and grammar, and is the underlying pillar of deaf culture. When used in combination with English, sign language can help both hearing and deaf children to learn. Hearing and deaf people who socialize in the deaf community may need to know sign language.

Challenges of Learning Sign Language

Is learning sign language too hard? In my personal opinion and experience, it depends on what type of sign language you are trying to learn. If you are trying to learn sign language for communication purposes, it is not too hard. If you are trying to learn sign language as a language, it can be difficult.

I know from personal experience the difficulty of learning sign language as a language. For a short time, I was an employee of Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. As a new employee, I was required to take an American Sign Language class. I had a hard time in the class because no matter how hard I tried, my brain was too set in "thinking straight English" to be able to adjust to the different grammar challenges of American Sign Language.

About.com readers were asked if they thought learning sign language was too hard. Many responses were posted, and what follows is an edited sampling of reader responses to the blog post, "Is Learning Sign Language Too Hard?"

"Learning any new language comes with its challenges. One that comes to mind is: Learning a language that does not provide auditory information to the student who relies heavily on this stream of information is that much more challenging. Can it be done? Yes. Can one become fluent? Yes. Are all hearing parents the most effective and appropriate

language role model of ASL? Bo." - Lynn

"I am a hearing parent of a deaf child. I had limited experiences with deaf [ness] before my daughter was diagnosed. I was told to 'not embarrass yourself or the child by signing in public' and that she could learn to talk to get along in the hearing world. When she started creating baby signs to communicate, I gave in to sign language to be able to communicate with my child. I have since went back to college, got the degree