

# ASL STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Early Childhood Education Department

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## 3 to 12 months

- Begins to notice signing
- First sign may emerge from 10 to 12 months
- Babbles with hands
- Imitates facial expressions
- Points to people, objects and places but not at self

## 12 to 18 months

- Uses at least 10 signs
- Begins to use points as pronouns
- Acquires new signs but does not mark with inflections

## 18 to 24 months

- Signs reflect basic handshapes with simple movements (straight forward, up, or down)
- Early signs not always produced according to adult conventional forms
- Combines 2 or 3 signs including points
- Begins to distinguish and use non-manual markers (facial grammar)

## 2 to 3 years

- Sign order used to show semantic relations
- Begins to use classifiers to represent objects (with little or no movement); types limited by the handshapes child can produce
- Begins to use varied inflected verb forms (directional/agreement, dual, temporal aspect)
- Attempts more complex signs but substitutes basic handshapes for the complex handshapes
- Begins to use non-manual markers (raised/squinted eyebrows) for YES/NO and WH-questions
- Demonstrates negation with headshake or sign "NO"
- Begins to use possessive (your, mine) and plural (US-TWO, YOU-THREE) pronouns
- Refers to things around them during conversations and storytelling; may copy the actions and facial expressions of others in a story

## 3 to 4 years

- Begins to mark distinctions between noun-verb pairs (FLY/AIRPLANE)
- Uses classifiers to show objects and movements of these objects
- Begins to make modifications to verb signs to show the manner and amount of time involved in an activity (temporal aspect) by changing the movement of the sign and/or adding facial expressions

- All “real world” pronouns (pointing at objects and people in the immediate environment) used correctly
- Tells stories through use of objects or role-playing; may not always show clearly who is speaking or doing something

#### 4 to 5 years

- More complex handshapes and movement (wiggling fingers, twisting wrists) used accurately
- Begins to use noun modifications to show different meaning (e.g. repeating the noun to show plural)
- Simple sentences still used but complex sentences including topicalization and rhetorical questions emerging
- Begins to set up points in space to establish location for people and objects not present in the environment
- Role-playing used more frequently with characters clearly identified but skills to show changes in roles such as body shifts, eye gaze and facial expression not used consistently

#### 5 to 6 years

- Clear and consistent use of complex handshapes and movement
- Fingerspelling used more
- Use of complex sentences including relative clauses and conditionals continuing to expand
- Use of verb modifications to show intensity, manner, number and distribution continuing to expand
- Use of abstract referencing to talk about people and things not in the present environment
- Storytelling becomes more “adult like”; makes frequent self corrections
- Takes on a variety of roles during conversation and storytelling; changes in roles indicated through facial expression, body shifts and eye gaze shown clearly and consistently

#### References:

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