

numbering in american sign language

number signs for everyone

Understanding Numbering in American Sign Language: Number Signs for Everyone

Numbering in American Sign Language (ASL) is a fundamental aspect of communication that serves as a bridge between the deaf and hearing communities. ASL is a rich, visual language with its own grammar and syntax, and numbers play a crucial role in everyday conversations. This article aims to provide an overview of how numbers are represented in ASL, the significance of numbering, and tips for mastering number signs.

The Basics of ASL Number Signs

In ASL, number signs are represented by specific handshapes and movements. Numbering can be categorized into two main types: cardinal numbers (which indicate quantity) and ordinal numbers (which indicate position or order).

1. **Cardinal Numbers:** These are the numbers used for counting (e.g., one, two, three).
2. **Ordinal Numbers:** These describe rank or position (e.g., first, second, third).

Understanding the distinction between these types is essential for effective communication in ASL.

Cardinal Numbers in ASL

ASL cardinal numbers from one to ten have distinct handshapes. Below is a list of the signs for each number:

1. **One:** Raise your index finger.
2. **Two:** Raise your index and middle fingers (similar to a peace sign).
3. **Three:** Raise your index, middle, and ring fingers.
4. **Four:** Raise all four fingers, keeping the thumb folded down.
5. **Five:** Open your hand with all fingers extended.
6. **Six:** Touch the thumb to the palm while extending the pinky finger.
7. **Seven:** Touch the thumb to the palm and extend the ring finger.

8. **Eight:** Touch the thumb to the palm and extend the middle finger.
9. **Nine:** Touch the thumb to the palm and extend the index finger.
10. **Ten:** Make a fist and extend the thumb, pointing upwards.

Cardinal Numbers Beyond Ten

For numbers beyond ten, ASL uses a combination of the signs for one through ten with specific handshapes. Here's how to express numbers from eleven to twenty:

- Eleven: Tap the index finger of your dominant hand on the palm of your non-dominant hand.
- Twelve: Tap the index and middle fingers on the palm of the non-dominant hand.
- Thirteen to Nineteen: Start with the number three to nine sign and then add a "ten" sign by tapping the palm of your non-dominant hand with the dominant hand.
- Twenty: Use both hands in a "two" handshape and then move them away from each other.

For numbers in the thirties, forties, and so on, the sign for the tens (like "30," "40," etc.) is usually followed by the sign for the corresponding unit (1-9).

Ordinal Numbers in ASL

Ordinal numbers are similarly structured but have specific signs to indicate position. Here are the signs for the first ten ordinal numbers:

1. **First:** Sign "one" and then wave your hand slightly.
2. **Second:** Sign "two" and then wave your hand.
3. **Third:** Sign "three" and then wave your hand.
4. **Fourth:** Sign "four" and then wave your hand.
5. **Fifth:** Sign "five" and then wave your hand.
6. **Sixth:** Sign "six" and then wave your hand.
7. **Seventh:** Sign "seven" and then wave your hand.
8. **Eighth:** Sign "eight" and then wave your hand.
9. **Ninth:** Sign "nine" and then wave your hand.
10. **Tenth:** Sign "ten" and then wave your hand.

For higher ordinal numbers, you will typically express the cardinal number followed by the sign for "th," which is made by placing the thumb and index finger of the dominant hand together and moving it in a small circular motion.

Tips for Mastering ASL Number Signs

Learning ASL number signs can be challenging but rewarding. Here are some tips to help you master them:

- **Practice Regularly:** Consistency is key in learning any new language. Set aside time each day to practice your number signs.
- **Use Visual Aids:** Consider using videos or flashcards that illustrate ASL signs to help reinforce your learning.
- **Engage with the Deaf Community:** Attend local Deaf events, workshops, or classes to immerse yourself in the language and culture.
- **Record Yourself:** Use a camera or smartphone to record your signing. This will help you assess your progress and identify areas for improvement.
- **Learn in Context:** Try to learn numbers in the context of sentences or conversations. This will help you remember their use and meaning more effectively.

Conclusion

Numbering in American Sign Language is an essential part of effective communication, whether you are counting, ordering, or discussing numerical data. By understanding the signs for cardinal and ordinal numbers, as well as practicing consistently, you can enhance your proficiency in ASL. Remember that learning a language is a journey, and engaging with the Deaf community can provide invaluable resources and support. With time and practice, you will be able to communicate numbers fluently in ASL, fostering better connections with those who use this beautiful language.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the basic way to sign numbers 1 to 5 in American Sign Language (ASL)?

To sign numbers 1 to 5 in ASL, you extend your fingers corresponding to the number. For example, 1 is an upright index finger, 2 is an upright index and middle finger, and so on up to 5.

How do you sign the number 10 in ASL?

To sign the number 10 in ASL, you can make a fist and then extend your thumb upward.

What are the differences in signing numbers between ASL and other sign languages?

Different sign languages have unique signs for numbers, so while ASL may have specific signs for numbers, other sign languages like BSL (British Sign Language) will have different signs for the same numbers.

How do you sign larger numbers, like 20 or 30, in ASL?

For numbers like 20 or 30, you typically use the sign for 2 or 3 and then incorporate the sign for '10' or use a combination of signs, like '2' and then '10' for 20.

Is there a specific sign for the number zero in ASL?

Yes, the number zero is signed by making a circle with your fingers, usually with the thumb and index finger touching.

How do you indicate numbers beyond 10 in ASL?

To indicate numbers beyond 10, you generally combine the signs for the digits. For example, to sign 21, you sign '2' followed by '1'.

What is the significance of hand shapes in ASL number signs?

Hand shapes are crucial in ASL number signs as they differentiate numbers; each number has a distinct hand shape or configuration to convey its value.

How can beginners practice signing numbers in ASL?

Beginners can practice signing numbers by using flashcards with numbers on one side and their corresponding ASL signs on the other, or by watching instructional videos.

Are there any cultural aspects to consider when signing numbers in ASL?

Yes, understanding the context and cultural relevance of numbers in ASL can enhance communication, such as knowing when to use fingerspelling for numbers in specific contexts.

What resources are available for learning ASL number signs?

There are various resources available, including online courses, ASL dictionaries, YouTube tutorials, and mobile apps dedicated to teaching American Sign Language.

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