

numbering in american sign language

Understanding Numbering in American Sign Language

Numbering in American Sign Language (ASL) is a fundamental aspect of communication within the Deaf community. Just as in spoken languages, numbers in ASL are crucial for a variety of everyday interactions, from telling time to discussing quantities. This article aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how numbers are represented in ASL, including their formation, context, and variations.

Basic Number Signs

In ASL, numbers are conveyed through specific hand shapes and movements. The basic number signs are categorized into different groups, each serving a unique purpose. Below are the foundational numbers from 1 to 10:

1. 1 - Raise the index finger.
2. 2 - Raise the index and middle fingers.
3. 3 - Raise the index, middle, and ring fingers.
4. 4 - Raise all four fingers (excluding the thumb).
5. 5 - Open hand with all fingers extended.
6. 6 - Extend the pinky finger and thumb (like a "thumbs up" with one finger).
7. 7 - Extend the ring finger and thumb.
8. 8 - Extend the middle finger and thumb.
9. 9 - Extend the index finger and thumb.
10. 10 - Make a fist and tap the thumb on the index finger.

These signs are straightforward and serve as the building blocks for understanding more complex number systems in ASL.

Counting Beyond Ten

Once you have mastered the basic numbers, you can easily advance to counting beyond ten. In ASL, the numbers 11 through 15 are formed by combining the basic numbers with a specific handshape:

Numbers 11 to 15

1. 11 - Tap the index finger on the palm of the opposite hand.
2. 12 - Tap the index and middle fingers on the palm.
3. 13 - Use the sign for 3 and tap the palm.
4. 14 - Use the sign for 4 and tap the palm.
5. 15 - Use the sign for 5 and tap the palm.

For numbers 16 to 19, the signs are created by combining the sign for 10 with the respective number from 6 to 9:

1. 16 - Sign for 10 and then sign for 6.
2. 17 - Sign for 10 and then sign for 7.
3. 18 - Sign for 10 and then sign for 8.
4. 19 - Sign for 10 and then sign for 9.

Numbers 20 and Beyond

From 20 onwards, ASL employs a combination of hand shapes and movements to convey numbers:

1. 20 - Use the sign for 2 and tap the palm.
2. 21 - Sign for 2 followed by the sign for 1.
3. 22 - Sign for 2 followed by the sign for 2.
4. 23 - Sign for 2 followed by the sign for 3.
5. 24 - Sign for 2 followed by the sign for 4.
6. 25 - Sign for 2 followed by the sign for 5.
7. 30 - Sign for 3 followed by tapping the palm.
8. 40 - Sign for 4 followed by tapping the palm.
9. 50 - Sign for 5 followed by tapping the palm.

When counting beyond 30, the structure typically follows the pattern established above, with the tens place indicated first, followed by the unit digit.

Special Numbering Techniques

In addition to standard counting, ASL employs several techniques for expressing numbers in different contexts:

Cardinal vs. Ordinal Numbers

ASL distinguishes between cardinal numbers (e.g., one, two, three) and ordinal numbers (e.g., first, second, third). To indicate ordinal numbers, a slight modification is made to the cardinal signs:

- 1st - Sign for 1 with a small twist at the end.
- 2nd - Sign for 2 with a small twist at the end.
- 3rd - Sign for 3 with a small twist at the end.

This twisting gesture signals that the number is an ordinal, providing clarity in communication.

Using Numbers in Context

Understanding numbers in ASL goes beyond mere signs; it includes the context in which they are used. Here are some common scenarios where numbers play a crucial role:

- **Time:** Telling time involves specific signs for hours and minutes.
- **Dates:** Expressing dates requires knowledge of both the month and day.
- **Quantities:** Discussing shopping or inventory often necessitates counting items.
- **Age:** Asking or stating someone's age is a common conversational topic.

In these contexts, fluency in ASL numbers enhances effective communication.

Resources for Learning ASL Numbers

For individuals interested in learning more about numbering in ASL and expanding their skill set, several resources are available:

Online Courses and Videos

Platforms like YouTube offer a wealth of tutorials and demonstrations by experienced ASL instructors. These resources provide visual aids that are essential for mastering hand shapes and movements.

Books and Guides

Numerous books focus specifically on ASL, including comprehensive guides that cover numbers and their various applications. Titles such as "The American Sign Language Phrase Book" can be particularly beneficial.

Community Classes

Local community centers and educational institutions often offer ASL classes. Participating in these classes can provide hands-on experience and opportunities to practice with others.

Conclusion

Numbering in American Sign Language is an essential skill that facilitates effective communication within the Deaf community. From basic counting to understanding special applications of numbers, mastering ASL numbers opens doors to deeper interactions and relationships. By utilizing the resources mentioned and practicing regularly, learners can enhance their proficiency in ASL and foster a greater appreciation for this rich and expressive language.

Frequently Asked Questions

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

In ASL, the basic handshapes for numbers 1 to 5 are represented by extending the corresponding number of fingers on one hand while keeping the others folded down.

How do you sign the number 10 in American Sign Language?

To sign the number 10 in ASL, you use a fist with the thumb extended and then flick the thumb up.

Are there different signs for large numbers in American Sign Language?

Yes, in ASL, larger numbers are often signed by using the base number and then incorporating additional hand movements or configurations to indicate tens, hundreds, or thousands.

How do you indicate numbers from 11 to 15 in ASL?

To sign numbers 11 to 15 in ASL, you start with the number 1 to 5 handshape and then tap the thumb of your dominant hand against the palm of your non-dominant hand twice for 11 to 15.

What is the sign for the number 100 in ASL?

To sign the number 100 in ASL, you use the number 1 handshape and then move it away from your body while keeping the fingers extended.

How do you sign the number 20 in American Sign Language?

In ASL, the number 20 is signed by forming a '2' handshape and then moving it slightly outward, often combined with facial expressions to indicate the number.

What is a common mistake when signing numbers in ASL?

A common mistake is to use the wrong handshape for numbers, especially for numbers 6-9, where the placement of the thumb and fingers can change the meaning.

Can you combine numbers in American Sign Language?

Yes, in ASL, you can combine numbers to create compound numbers, such as signing 'twenty-one' by signing '20' followed by '1' sequentially.

Why is facial expression important when signing numbers in ASL?

Facial expressions in ASL provide context and convey emotion or emphasis, which is crucial for understanding the meaning behind the numbers being signed.

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