

## The 5 Parameters of ASL

*Before you begin Sign Language Partner activities, you need to learn the 5 Parameters of ASL. You will use these parameters to describe new vocabulary words you will learn with your partner while completing Language Partner activities. Read and learn about the 5 Parameters below.*

### DEFINITION

In American Sign Language (ASL), we use the 5 Parameters of ASL to describe how a sign behaves within the *signer's space*.

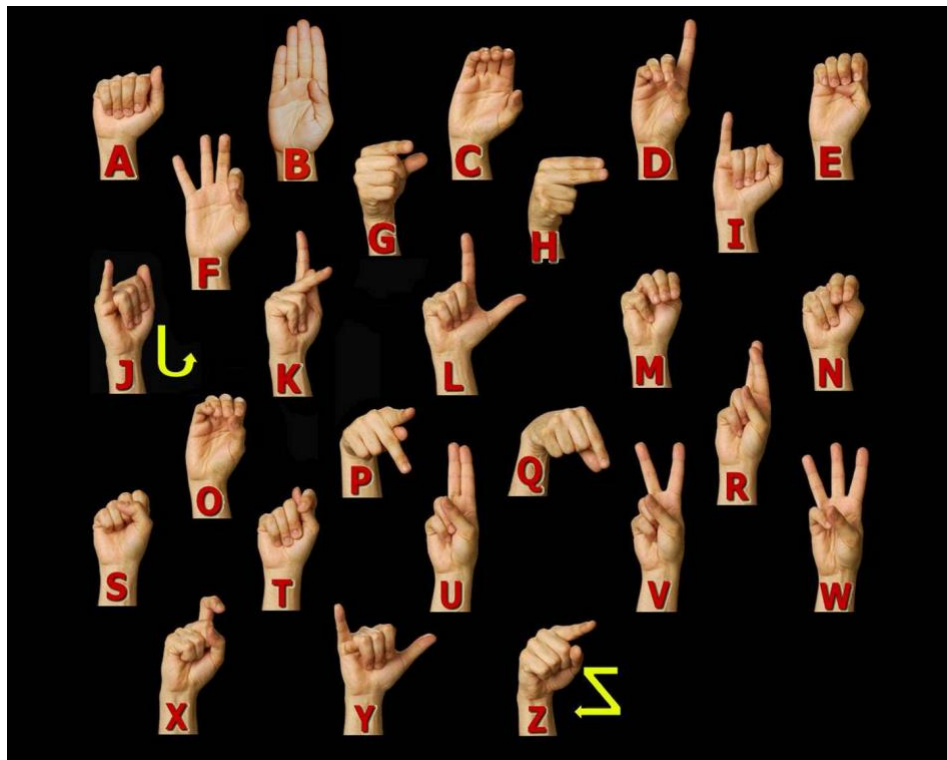
The parameters are **handshape**, **palm orientation**, **movement**, **location**, and **expression/non-manual signals**. All five parameters must be performed correctly to sign the word accurately.

Go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErkGrLiAoNE> for a signed definition of the 5 Parameters of ASL. Don't forget to turn the captions on if you are a beginning ASL student.

Note: The *signer's space* spans the width of your elbows when your hands are on your hips to the length four inches above your head to four inches below your belly button. Imagine a rectangle drawn around the top half of your body.

### TYPES OF HANDSHAPES

*Handshapes* consist of the manual alphabet and other variations of handshapes. Refer to the picture below.



## **TYPES OF ORIENTATIONS**

*Orientation* refers to which direction your palm is facing for a particular sign. The different directions are listed below.

1. Palm facing out
2. Palm facing in
3. Palm is horizontal
4. Palm faces left/right
5. Palm toward palm
6. Palm up/down

## **TYPES OF MOVEMENT**

A sign can display different kinds of *movement* that are named below.

1. In a circle
2. Up and down
3. Forward
4. Backward
5. Tapping
6. Back and forth
7. Wiggle

## **TYPES OF LOCATIONS**

*Location* is the physical place where the sign happens in relation to your body within the signer's space. The areas listed below are the most common locations. Additionally, signs can start in one location and end in a different location.

1. Chin
2. Shoulder
3. Front of body
4. Front left/right of body
5. Forehead
6. Etc.

## **EXPRESSONS/NON-MANUAL SIGNALS (NMS)**

Non-manual signals refer to facial expression or body movement used to convey additional meaning with a sign. Not all signs use non-manual signals.

1. Head nod/shake/tilt
2. Eyebrows
3. Nose
4. Eyes
5. Lips

Below is an example of how we can chart out the 5 Parameters of ASL to describe a sign. Refer to this chart to help you describe signs with your partner while completing Language Partner activities.

Note: Remember to consider what your non-dominant hand is doing when signs are two-handed. One-handed signs are written as 1H and two-handed signs are written as 2H.

Sign: not yet (1H)	Dominant Hand	Non-Dominant Hand
Handshape	Open B	
Palm Orientation	Facing in	
Location	Front right/left of body	
Movement	Back and forth	
Non-Manual Signal (NMS)	Tongue out	

Sign: people (2H)	Dominant Hand	Non-Dominant Hand
Handshape	P	P
Palm Orientation	Facing out	Facing out
Location	Front of body	Front of body
Movement	In a circle	In a circle
Non-Manual Signal (NMS)	None	none