

Learning American Sign Language

All communication modalities welcome.

Free and paid resources, starting in Arizona and moving outward

Three things worth knowing before you start.

Free does not mean lesser. Some of the strongest ASL instruction available anywhere costs nothing, and some expensive courses are mediocre. Judge by who is teaching, not by price.

You cannot learn ASL only from videos. Signing is a live, visual language, and receptive skill — understanding other people — only develops through interaction with real signers. Pair any course with actual contact with the Deaf community.

Learn from Deaf instructors wherever possible. They carry the language and the culture that comes with it, and the difference in what you learn is substantial.

Part 1 — Arizona, free

ASDB Family ASL Classes

The best free option in the state for families. Both site-based schools — Phoenix Day School for the Deaf and the Arizona School for the Deaf in Tucson — offer ASL classes for families every week during the school year. Classes are taught with ASL as the primary language, with some English support and Spanish available at certain locations. Families in regional cooperative programs can attend on campus as well.

Cost: Free to families.

Worth knowing: Childcare is offered for younger children and siblings, which removes the most common reason families stop attending.

Contact: Phoenix Day School for the Deaf — 602-771-5304. Arizona School for the Deaf, Tucson — 1200 W. Speedway Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85745.

ASDB Deaf Mentor Program

Pairs families of young children with a Deaf adult mentor who brings ASL and Deaf culture into the home. For a family of a newly identified child, contact with a Deaf adult is often more valuable than any class — it shows parents what their child's future can look like, which no curriculum does.

This program is not open to the public.

It is available only as an additional resource to families already receiving services, in two situations: children from birth to three enrolled in the Arizona Early Intervention Program through ASDB's Early Learning Program, and children aged three to five receiving ASDB itinerant services through their school district. A family cannot enroll directly. If you believe you may be eligible, raise it with your early intervention provider or your itinerant teacher of the deaf.

Ages: Birth to three through ELP, and three to five through district itinerant services.

Cost: No cost to eligible families.

How to access: Through your existing AZEIP or ASDB itinerant provider, not by direct application.

ASDB ASL Programs

Beyond the family classes, ASDB runs beginner, intermediate and advanced ASL courses, along with special topic courses and Sign Language Proficiency Interview assessments. Instruction is available in person, virtually, or asynchronously through Google Classroom, and a family ASL immersion experience is offered periodically.

Cost: Family classes are free; ask about fees for the wider community course offerings, which may differ.

Contact: asdb.az.gov/asl

Deaf community events

Deaf coffee chats, Deaf socials and community events happen regularly across the Phoenix and Tucson areas. They are free, they are the fastest way to build receptive skill, and they are where classroom signing becomes actual communication. Search for current listings rather than relying on a fixed schedule, since venues change.

Where to find them: The Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing maintains community information — acdhh.org. Local Deaf community social media groups list events as they are scheduled.

Go early, go often, and go before you feel ready. Signers are generally patient with learners who show up honestly as beginners.

Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing

The statewide information and referral point for anything hearing-related, including where to find current ASL classes and community events.

Contact: 100 N. 15th Ave, Suite 104, Phoenix, AZ 85007 — 602-542-3365 — toll free 1-866-223-3412 — videophone 602-761-9541 — acdhh.org

Public libraries

Phoenix Public Library and other Arizona library systems periodically run free ASL classes, ASL storytimes and signing practice groups. Offerings rotate, so check the events calendar rather than assuming none exist.

Contact: phoenixpubliclibrary.org, and your local library system's events calendar.

Part 2 — Arizona, paid

A note on what “no college enrollment” means.

Community college ASL courses are open-admission — you do not need to be pursuing a degree, and you can register for a single class. You do, however, have to enroll as a student and pay tuition. Options requiring no enrollment of any kind are the free programs in Part 1 and the online courses in Part 4.

Maricopa Community Colleges

ASL courses are offered across the district, with Phoenix College holding the fullest program — ASL, Deaf Studies, and Interpreter Preparation. Courses run from introductory through advanced, including accelerated formats. You can take a single course without entering a degree program.

Cost: Per-credit tuition. In-county rates are among the lowest formal instruction available in Arizona.

Contact: maricopa.edu and phoenixcollege.edu — search current offerings at classes.sis.maricopa.edu

University programs

The University of Arizona and Arizona State University both offer ASL coursework. These are credit-bearing university courses, appropriate if the goal is a transcript or a degree pathway rather than conversational skill.

Contact: education.arizona.edu/asl

Private immersion and tutoring

Private ASL instruction and immersion programs operate in the Phoenix area, including total-immersion formats that use no spoken English. These cost more than a community college course but move faster and can be scheduled around work.

Worth asking: Whether the instructor is Deaf, what the class size is, and whether the program includes contact with the wider Deaf community rather than classroom time alone.

Part 3 — National, free

Lifeprint / ASL University

The most comprehensive free ASL curriculum available anywhere online, developed by Dr. Bill Vicars, who is Deaf. Structured lessons, an extensive video dictionary, fingerspelling practice, Deaf culture materials and printable resources. Used widely by homeschool families, parents, interpreters and self-study learners.

Cost: Free.

Contact: lifeprint.com — and the accompanying video lessons on YouTube.

If someone wants one free starting point and nothing else, this is it.

Gallaudet ASL Connect — free resources

Gallaudet University is the world's only Deaf-centered university. Alongside its paid courses, ASL Connect publishes free learning materials and vocabulary resources taught by Deaf faculty.

Cost: Free resources; courses are paid and listed in Part 4.

Contact: gallaudet.edu/asl-connect

Language First — free resources

An organization dedicated to ASL and English bilingualism for deaf and hard of hearing children, founded by Dr. Kimberly Ofori-Sanzo, a speech-language pathologist. Their framework is built around providing both ASL and English from birth and letting the child show which language best supports their development, with the emphasis on cognitive and language growth rather than speech production alone.

- **Free ASL sessions.** Applications open quarterly, and this is one of the few places a family can get direct ASL instruction at no cost regardless of where they live.
- **Parent handouts and videos.** Written and video material created for parents rather than professionals.
- **Professional directory.** A searchable directory of pro-ASL professionals organized by state — useful for finding providers who support signing families.
- **Monthly newsletter.** Ongoing updates on resources and research.

Contact: info@language1st.org — language1st.org

Worth knowing that their orientation differs from a listening and spoken language approach. Both perspectives are represented in this guide deliberately, because families are entitled to see the full range and decide for themselves.

Other free online resources

- **HandSpeak.** Free dictionary, grammar explanations and cultural content, with some premium material.
- **SignSchool.** Free vocabulary and lesson content with a searchable dictionary.
- **ASL Nook.** Free family-focused videos designed for households learning together, including siblings.
- **The Daily Moth.** Daily news delivered entirely in ASL. Excellent receptive practice once basic vocabulary is in place, and a window into Deaf community issues.
- **YouTube.** A large amount of high-quality free instruction, including Dr. Bill Vicars' full lesson series. Prefer Deaf creators.
- **National Association of the Deaf.** Advocacy organization with free informational resources on ASL and Deaf culture.
- **Promova ASL lessons.** Free introductory mini-lessons covering greetings, everyday situations and emergency communication.

Part 4 — National, paid

Gallaudet ASL Connect online courses

Six structured levels of online ASL instruction taught by Deaf faculty. Two pathways, and the distinction matters if college enrollment is a concern.

Non-credit pathway (SLA 51–56): \$990 per course plus a one-time \$75 application fee. Earns continuing education credit. No degree program enrollment required.

University credit pathway (ASL 111–116): \$2,403 per course for three credits, plus the \$75 application fee. Produces a transferable undergraduate transcript and may satisfy a foreign language requirement.

Structure: Levels 1 to 4 are asynchronous; levels 5 and 6 are synchronous. No prerequisite for Level 1; higher levels require placement screening.

Additional: True-Way ASL digital textbook, \$60. ASL VIBE virtual practice sessions, \$20 per series, discounted for enrolled students.

Contact: gallaudet.edu/asl-connect/asl-online-courses

Subscription and course platforms

- **Sign It! ASL.** A structured video course from Dr. Bill Vicars and Sign Language 101, designed for families. One-time purchase rather than a subscription.
- **Lingvano.** App-based lessons with practice exercises, sold as a monthly or annual subscription.
- **ASL Deafined.** Subscription platform used by some schools and districts, with graded lesson content.
- **Start ASL.** Free introductory material with paid full courses and certificates.
- **Signing Savvy.** Free tier with a large dictionary; a paid membership adds sentence examples, quizzes and additional features.

Language First — paid offerings

Alongside the free materials in Part 3, Language First offers paid training and community access. Aimed primarily at professionals and schools, though the membership and conference content is open to families as well.

- **FiRST Training.** A research-based professional development course on language acquisition and bilingual approaches with deaf and hard of hearing children.
- **Membership.** Community access with member benefits and resources.
- **Conferences and webinars.** Continuing education for professionals, and sessions relevant to families.
- **Online store.** Educational materials and products.

Contact: info@language1st.org — language1st.org

Private instruction

One-to-one tutoring with a Deaf instructor is the fastest route to conversational skill and the most expensive per hour. Worth considering for a family with a deaf child who needs to build usable language quickly rather than over several semesters.

Choosing well

If you are...	Start here
A family already receiving ASDB or AzEIP services	Ask your provider about ASDB Family ASL Classes and the Deaf Mentor Program — free, designed for families, and they connect you with Deaf adults. Add Lifeprint for self-study between sessions.
A family with a deaf or hard of hearing child, no ASDB connection	Lifeprint and ASL Nook for structure at home, Deaf community events for live interaction, and a community college course if you want accountability. Ask your child's teacher of the deaf what local family options exist.
An adult starting from zero, no budget	Lifeprint as the spine, The Daily Moth for receptive practice, and Deaf community events for live interaction.
Someone who wants structure and accountability	A Maricopa Community College course, or the Gallaudet non-credit pathway if no enrollment is preferred.
A professional needing documented proficiency	Gallaudet's credit pathway, or an ASDB Sign Language Proficiency Interview assessment.
Someone who has taken classes but cannot follow conversation	Stop adding coursework and start attending Deaf events. This is nearly always the missing piece.

A few cautions

- **Baby sign is not ASL.** Baby sign programs teach isolated vocabulary to hearing infants and are not ASL instruction. They are fine for what they are, but they will not give a family a language.

- **Signed English is not ASL.** Signed English systems and ASL are different. ASL has its own grammar and syntax and is not English on the hands. Check what a course is actually teaching.
- **Apps have limits.** Apps are good for vocabulary and poor for grammar and comprehension. Use them as a supplement, never as the whole plan.
- **Vocabulary is not fluency.** A family learning alongside a deaf child needs enough language to have real conversations, not just labels for objects. Aim for connected sentences early, and keep going past the point where the basics feel comfortable.

Every child deserves to be understood.

Language grows where it's nurtured.

Hear Talk Grow • amber@heartalkgrow.com • (585) 484-7697 • heartalkgrow.com

Auditory-verbal therapy, listening and spoken language services, and family coaching across Arizona — virtual and in person.

Course offerings, costs and schedules change. Confirm current details directly with each program before enrolling. Compiled August 2026.

