



American Sign Language and English Language Milestones: The Next Steps

This resource contains American Sign Language (ASL) and English language expectations for middle school students, high school students, and young adults. It also contains information on language skills needed to be an independent adult, succeed in college, as well as functional language skills needed for students who are deaf and hard of hearing with additional needs.

Knowing what is expected for each age range or educational level is useful for developing a student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), setting the trajectory to meet their future goals, and ensuring a successful transition to adulthood.

Middle School Receptive and Expressive Language Skills

Language your student understands		How your student expresses thoughts/feelings	
<p>Uses context cues to interpret vague, humorous, or sarcastic signed/spoken messages</p> <p>Understands that body language and facial expressions can change the meaning of a message</p> <p>Understands and participates in their case conference meeting</p> <p>Understands logical steps required to arrive at a solution to a problem</p>		<p>Retells a story from a witnessed event, book, or movie with the correct sequence, character emotions, and dialogue</p> <p>Uses abstract vocabulary learned in school in everyday signed/spoken conversation</p> <p>Provides adequate background knowledge to ensure their audience/communication partner understands the signed/spoken message</p> <p>Proficiently uses mental state vocabulary (e.g., promise, wonder, believe, etc.) in discourse</p>	
ASL	Spoken English	ASL	Spoken English
<p>Uses relationships between particular sign choices (e.g., synonym/antonym, analogy) to better understand each of the concepts/signs</p> <p>Distinguishes among the connotations (associations) of signs with similar denotations (definitions) (e.g., RESPECT, HONOR, LOOK-UP)</p>	<p>Understands jokes and riddles based on deep structure ambiguity (e.g., Nicole saw the people with binoculars)</p> <p>Interprets the meaning behind changes in vocal intonation (e.g., saying "stop it" with a quiet, friendly voice or loud, deep voice)</p> <p>Gains knowledge in prefixes and suffixes, root words, and derivatives (e.g., un-, pre-, -ly, etc.)</p>	<p>Adapts signs to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal ASL when indicated or appropriate</p>	<p>Tells jokes and riddles based on different types of linguistic ambiguity (e.g., The fisherman went to the bank)</p> <p>Expressive grammar is consistently accurate and adult-like</p> <p>Uses appropriate vocabulary and explains how to use, maintain (cleaning, checking, charging, etc.), and troubleshoot amplification and HAT equipment</p>



Middle School Social and Print Skills

Your student's social skills	Your student's print skills	
	Reading	Writing
May enjoy chatting and interacting with friends more than adults	Distinguishes fact from opinion when reading	Writes effectively in narrative and descriptive genres
Requests repetition/clarification and appropriate accommodations	Comprehends and identifies inferred information within text	
Independently navigates demands of school, home, and extracurricular activities (e.g., supplies needed, schedule, preparation, etc.)	Spends less time reading for pleasure and more time reading for school	Can take class notes but may need guidance on what is most important to place in notes
Negotiates using language to resolve conflicts but may need guidance for more difficult situations	Reads quickly and accurately and can decode thousands of different words	
Consistently aware of communication partner's potential confusion or disinterest and adjusts accordingly	Reads charts and graphs related to topics of study/interest proficiently	
Advocates for needs politely at school and home		
Uses a wide variety of emotional descriptive terms (e.g., frustrated, disappointed, etc.)		
Discusses with family members and friends their feelings associated with their hearing levels		
Has developed an identity that includes their hearing status (e.g., deaf, hard of hearing, etc.)		

If you are having trouble getting your middle schooler to chat with you, try joining their favorite activity or playing a game with them.

High School Receptive and Expressive Language Skills

Language your student understands

Knows meaning of 30,000 words

Solves second order analogy problems (A:B::C:D)

Understands what assistive technology they need, where to find them, and how to use each item (e.g., visual alarm systems, access settings on phones, etc.)

Identifies and discusses deaf and hard of hearing community services

How your student expresses thoughts/feelings

Defines abstract nouns by mentioning key features or functions

Understands and produces slang terms during peer interaction

Uses sarcasm or has humorous exchanges with peers, parents, and siblings and able to change style of communication based on audience (e.g., would not be sarcastic with boss)

Conducts an in-service about their access needs

Describes course of action when accessibility is denied or when accommodations are not readily available

ASL

Uses context (e.g., the overall meaning of a sentence, paragraph, or text; a sign's position or function in a sentence) as a clue to the meaning of a sign or phrase

Spoken English

Understands how the physical and psychological meanings of double-function terms are interrelated (e.g., an advertisement for a pie using the term 'upper crust' to mean the pie crust, the physical meaning, and wealthy social class, the psychological meaning)

Understands difficult opaque idioms (e.g., paint the town red)

Understands some abstract proverbs (e.g., expectation is better than realization)

ASL

Identifies and correctly uses patterns of sign changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., DCL in describing a plush chair, DCL in describing a person sitting comfortably in a plush chair)

Identifies and correctly uses patterns of sign changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech (e.g., inflections in ANALYZE, ANALYSIS)

Spoken English

Explains the meanings of predicative metaphors that express abstract concepts (e.g., jealousy is a green-eyed monster)

Uses moderately difficult subordinate (e.g., even though) and adverbial (e.g., furthermore) conjunctions

Explains the ambiguity contained in some commercial advertisements



High School Social and Print Skills

Your student's social skills	Your student's print skills	
	Reading	Writing
Spends free time talking and socializing with friends with language used to maintain social bonds	Reads and comprehends technical material well	Completes an essay independently using an outline to paper method
Manages schoolwork effectively on a day-to-day basis, including completing and handing in assignments on time, studying for tests, creating and following timelines for long-term projects, and making adjustments in effort and quality of work in response to feedback	Recognizes different author's conflicting points of view	Writes essays that are longer, containing more idea units and literate words; sentences are 12 words or longer
Identifies intrapersonal/interpersonal behaviors (e.g., shut down, dominate conversation, avoidance, etc.) across environments (e.g., large gatherings, noisy restaurants, etc.) that are caused by hearing loss	Critically evaluates passages of text	Uses knowledge of morphology to spell difficult words
Identifies how others perceive one's behavior as a result of their hearing levels (e.g., someone says "hello" and one is unaware and unresponsive due to not hearing the individual)		Takes essay exams successfully
Navigates subtle sarcasm in peer interaction (e.g., understands when communication such as "I just LOVE peanut butter" is sarcastic or serious by attending to eye gaze, body language, and sign/vocal intonation)		
Asks for clarification of meaning beyond factual details (e.g., asking if a person does not like clothes if feel that vocal intonation or eye gaze conflicts with words signed/spoken)		

Developing independence, particularly with self-advocacy, is an essential part of a high school student's journey to adulthood. You can help your student brainstorm strategies to address a problem if they need help but be sure to let them try to solve their issues on their own.

Young Adult Receptive and Expressive Language Skills

Language comprehension

Uses analogical reasoning to understand complex problems

Continues to use morphological analysis and context clues to learn new words

Knows the meaning of at least 50,000 different words

Understands subtle differences between semantically similar adverbs of magnitude (e.g., severe, considerable)

Expressing thoughts/feelings

Explains solutions to abstract analogy problems by using proportional reasoning

Defines abstract nouns completely

Mean T-unit length in expository discourse = 11+ words. Mean T-unit length in conversational discourse = 9+ words

Contacts and requests DHH community-based services (including audiological services)

ASL

Understands a variety of styles and formality of signed presentations using complex ASL grammar constructs and language levels (e.g., college lecture, business interview, etc.)

Spoken English

Uses context clues to understand sarcasm in the absence of intonational clues

Understands the functions of sarcasm in humor and in muted criticism

ASL

Independently uses ASL appropriate to the situation to give presentations (virtually, recorded, or live)

Explains the meaning of ASL humor, ASL idioms, and other ASL sign modifications used as humor or sarcasm

Spoken English

Uses difficult subordinate conjunctions (provided that, in case)

Explains the meanings of complex psychological metaphors (e.g., genius is perseverance in action)

Describes detailed mental images of idioms that are well understood. (e.g., being able to explain that 'throw caution to the wind' means taking a risk)

Uses difficult adverbial conjunctions (conversely, similarly, moreover)



Young Adult Social and Print Skills

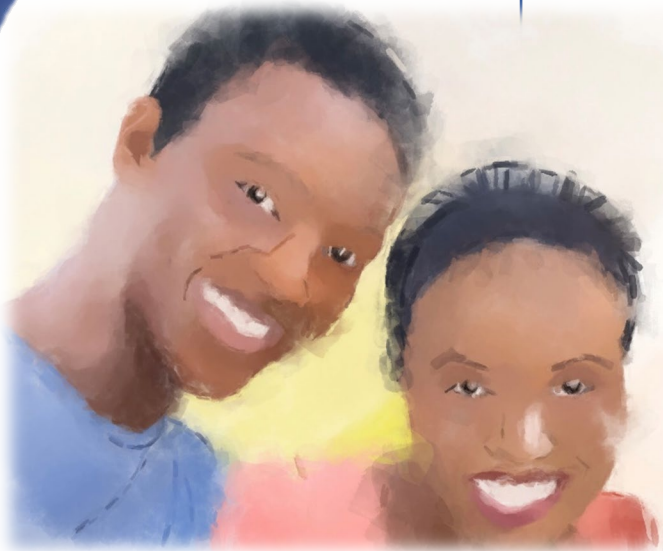
Social Skills	Print Skills	
	Reading	Writing
Stays on conversational topic for extended periods of time	Reads with strong inferential and theme comprehension	Shows greater flexibility of thought in persuasive writing
Gives accurate, clear, and informative directions in efficient manner	Balances and integrates conflicting points of view	Persuasive writing T-units = 15+ words
Provides elaborate, detailed explanations of a game or sport	Uses morphological analysis proficiently to decode and comprehend difficult new words encountered in text	Writes essays that continue to increase in length, number of idea units, and number of literate words
Knows rights about disclosure of hearing levels, when it is appropriate to disclose deafness, and the pros/cons of disclosure	Reads and understands a wide variety of topics	Demonstrates skill with expository writing
Is capable of high-level conflict resolution		Spells thousands of morphologically complex words
Saves money and/or plans for future equipment needs		
Tells long and complex narratives		

Sometimes young adults who are deaf and hard of hearing experience anxiety about moving out of their parents' house and striking out on their own. There are counselors who can help these individuals learn to cope and become more comfortable.



Receptive and Expressive Language Skills Needed in College

Language comprehension	Expresses thoughts/feelings
Attends/ listens to lectures about topics of study and grasps the information taught	Participates in group discussion and study groups
Understands historical perspectives involved with topic of study and how impacts current information	Answers questions related to the topic of study fluently and on point
Understands how to navigate the campus facilities and resources	Gives organized and technical presentations fluently
	Requests needed accommodations from appropriate individuals within the correct time frame.
	Utilizes language for thinking to complete projects independently or with groups



Tip: When touring college campuses, have your student schedule an appointment with the office of disabilities. Your student can learn what the college will need in order to access services and accommodations.

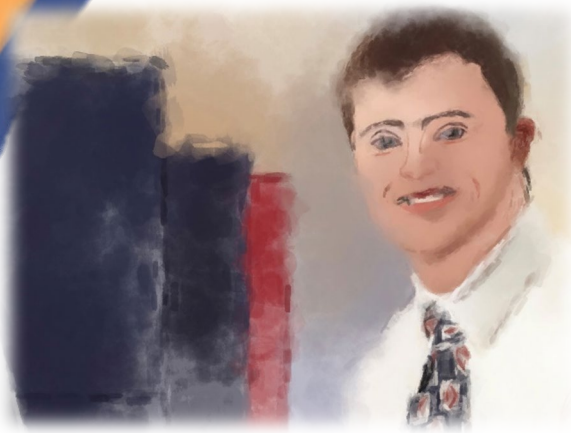
Social and Print Skills Needed in College

Social Skills	Print Skills	
	Reading	Writing
Meets new people regularly and generates new friendships independently	Reads technical materials/ college course materials and uses available resources to learn unfamiliar words	Communicates effectively and appropriately through email or text message by adjusting the tone depending on the reader
Uses telephone, videophone, or online live chat functions to make appointments, navigate daily living needs, and gain clarification	Reads and understands class scheduling and degree requirement information	Writes essay, term, and research papers using effective organizational strategies
Engages in leadership and/or mentoring roles	Understands fee and tuition notices	Revises written work incorporating feedback and direction
Maintains contact with family and friends appropriately	Notices information in text that is likely to be topics of discussion or included on an examination	Self-corrects written work and accepts feedback from professors and peers
Manages schedules, studying, coursework, social events, and stress effectively		
Uses explanations that reflect growing knowledge base of topic		

Writing college level materials is hard for every student. Most universities and colleges have resources available to help their students.



All students will learn, grow, and change. Those who are deaf and hard of hearing with additional needs may do so at a different pace, but they can continually increase their language to improve independence. This Functional Language Skills handout provides a list of some of the communication abilities needed for gaining and maintaining a job and optimum independence.



Functional Receptive and Expressive Language Skills

Language comprehension	Expressing thoughts/feelings
Knows values of coins and currency; performs basic math	Makes a transaction at a local store and counts change
Knows name and use of everyday daily living items (e.g., cooking utensils, transportation, workplace items)	Orders independently in a cafeteria or fast-food restaurant
Uses the internet or other appropriate means to obtain information	Asks for help using clear and appropriate language
Demonstrates transportation safety skills and appropriate behavior	Completes a job interview
Demonstrates problem solving skills needed to complete daily living and job tasks	Indicates support needs for hearing and other accommodations to family, friends, coworkers, and employers
Demonstrates appropriate home safety skills (e.g., locking the door, not opening the door to strangers, managing home key, etc.)	Demonstrates the ability to ask conversationally/contextually appropriate questions
Demonstrates the ability to follow directions/instructions from multiple people	Asks supervisor "what is next?" after completing a task
Understands safety and how to keep themselves and others safe (personal, kitchen, workplace, community)	States identifying information appropriate to the situation (name, date of birth, address, emergency contact, etc.) and knows when not to share this information.

Functional Social and Print Skills

Social Skills	Print Skills	
	Reading	Writing
Labels and expresses anger or other strong feelings appropriately and uses language to address problems	Follows written directions but may need key words pictured (e.g., steps at work, taking medicines, following recipes, etc.)	Knows when and how to send written notes typed and/or handwritten
Demonstrates appropriate use of conversational social conventions for their language community	Identifies warning signs/ labels/ environmental signs/workplace signs	Sends an email to communicate a clear message
Demonstrates socially appropriate non-verbal skills (eye-contact, tone of voice, body orientation) during conversations	Completes a list of tasks	Completes job application/fact sheet to take on a job interview
Demonstrates appropriate work habits (e.g., punctuality, task completion, ability to accept redirection and correction)	Reads building/area maps for exit, restroom, offices, etc.	Sends appropriate text messages
Describes the relationship between actions and consequences	Follows a printed schedule	Utilizes a computer to perform daily tasks
Demonstrates the ability to say "no" to peers		Fills out a timesheet



Many areas have programs that will help your student learn a job or trade in order to foster independence. Be sure to work with your student's counselor and/or teacher of record before they exit high school to find resources.



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