GENERAL

signing naturally units 1 6

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Introduction

American Sign Language (ASL) has become more accessible than ever, thanks to a wealth of structured learning tools. Among the most respected and widely used is the **Signing Naturally**series, a curriculum that blends clear video instruction, engaging activities, and practical application. If you're looking to build a solid foundation in ASL, you'll likely find yourself working through the first six units of the course. These units introduce core concepts, essential signs, and foundational grammar that will set the stage for more advanced study.

In this comprehensive guide, we'll walk through the content of **Signing Naturally Units 1–6**, discuss effective study strategies, highlight how to integrate the materials into everyday practice, and explore the benefits of mastering these early lessons. Whether you're a beginner, a teacher, or a curious learner, this article will give you the knowledge and confidence to navigate the first half of the Signing Naturally journey.

What Makes Signing Naturally Stand Out?

Before diving into the units themselves, it's helpful to understand why Signing Naturally has earned a reputation as a go-to resource for both students and educators. The series offers:

- Clear, Concise Video Demonstrations – Each lesson features a professional signer who explains signs in a relaxed, conversational tone.
- Structured Progression – The curriculum is organized into logical units that build on one another, ensuring that learners grasp foundational concepts before moving on.
- Interactive Practice – Exercises, quizzes, and reflection activities encourage active engagement.
- Multimodal Learning – Text explanations, visual cues, and audio narration support diverse learning styles.
- Teacher Resources – Lesson plans, assessment rubrics, and downloadable worksheets make it a favorite in classroom settings.

With these strengths, Signing Naturally provides a balanced approach that keeps learners motivated and helps them develop genuine proficiency.

Overview of Units 1–6

The first six units cover the essential building blocks of ASL. Below is a concise snapshot of what each unit offers:

1. Unit 1: Introduction to ASL – Basic hand shapes, orientation, and the importance of facial expressions.
2. Unit 2: Everyday Vocabulary – Common nouns and verbs that form the core of daily communication.
3. Unit 3: Grammar Foundations – Introduction to sentence structure, question formation, and negation.
4. Unit 4: Numbers, Time, and Dates – Signage for counting, telling time, and discussing dates.
5. Unit 5: Family and Relationships – Vocabulary related to family members, friends, and social interactions.
6. Unit 6: Describing People and Emotions – Signs for physical appearance, emotions, and personality traits.

Each unit is designed to be completed in roughly 3–4 weeks, allowing learners to absorb material at a comfortable pace while reinforcing retention through practice.

Unit 1: Laying the Groundwork

Key Concepts Covered

Unit 1 introduces the fundamental components that constitute ASL:

- Handshapes – The basic configurations of the hand that differentiate signs.
- Location and Orientation – Where signs are performed relative to the body and how the hand's angle affects meaning.
- Facial Expressions – The non-manual markers that add nuance, such as questions or emphasis.

Why These Foundations Matter

Understanding handshapes and orientation is akin to learning the alphabet in spoken languages. Without a solid grasp of these elements, subsequent signs can be misinterpreted. Facial expressions, often overlooked, are essential for conveying tone and intent.

Practical Study Tips

- Use a mirror to practice handshapes, ensuring symmetry and accuracy.
- Record yourself and compare with the instructor's demonstration.
- Focus on facial expressions by practicing simple yes/no questions in ASL.

Unit 2: Everyday Vocabulary

What You'll Learn

Unit 2 expands your lexicon with everyday nouns and verbs. Topics include:

- Household items (e.g., chair, table, book)
- Food and drink (e.g., apple, coffee, breakfast)
- Common verbs (e.g., eat, drink, read, write)

Integrating Vocabulary into Conversations

To reinforce learning, pair new signs with simple sentences. For example:

"I eat an apple."– Combine the sign for "I" with "eat" and "apple." Practice this phrase in different contexts, such as describing your breakfast routine.

Memory Aids

- Use mnemonic devices that link the shape of a sign to its meaning.
- Create flashcards with images and the corresponding sign.
- Join an online ASL community to practice vocabulary in real-time chats.

Unit 3: Grammar Foundations

Essential Grammar Topics

ASL grammar differs significantly from English, and Unit 3 introduces:

- Subject-verb-object order and how it can shift.
- Question formation using facial expressions and word order.
- Negation with the sign "NO" and its placement.

Why Grammar Is Crucial

Mastering grammar allows you to construct sentences that are both clear and natural. Unlike spoken languages that rely heavily on word order, ASL uses a combination of hand movements and facial cues to convey meaning.

Practice Exercises

1. Recreate simple sentences from the lesson, paying close attention to facial expressions.
2. Write down five questions in ASL using the new question format.
3. Translate a short paragraph from English to ASL, focusing on proper negation.

Unit 4: Numbers, Time, and Dates

Counting Basics

Unit 4 covers numbers 1–100, which are foundational for everyday conversations, such as:

- Asking for prices (“How much is this?”).
- Describing ages (“I am 25 years old”).
- Communicating quantities (“We have five apples”).

Time and Dates

Learning how to express time and dates is vital for scheduling and planning. The unit teaches:

- How to sign “time” and “hour”.
- Expressing specific times (e.g., “It’s 3 o’clock”).
- Discussing dates and days of the week.

Applying Numbers in Context

Practice by creating a simple calendar for a week, noting activities and times. Incorporate numbers into daily routines, such as counting steps, measuring time, or discussing deadlines.

Unit 5: Family and Relationships

Family Vocabulary

Unit 5 introduces signs for family members and relational terms:

- Parent, sibling, child, grandparent.
- Friend, colleague, partner.
- Relationship adjectives (e.g., good, close, distant).

Building Contextual Sentences

Compose sentences that describe your family tree or social circle. For example:

“My sister lives in New York.” – Combine the sign for “sister” with “live” and the location sign for “New York.”

Role-Playing Scenarios

Engage in role-playing exercises where you introduce yourself and your family to a new friend. This helps solidify the vocabulary and encourages natural conversation flow.

Unit 6: Describing People and Emotions

Physical Appearance

Unit 6 covers signs that describe physical traits and clothing:

- Hair color, height, eye color.
- Clothing items (e.g., shirt, pants, shoes).
- Adjectives to describe appearance (e.g., tall, short, thin).

Emotions and Personality

Understanding how to express emotions is essential for authentic communication. The unit introduces:

- Basic emotions (happy, sad, angry, surprised).
- Personality traits (friendly, shy, confident).

Descriptive Practice

Describe a friend or a public figure in ASL, using both physical and emotional descriptors. Record yourself and review for accuracy and natural flow.

Effective Study Strategies for Units 1–6

Mastering the first six units requires consistent, focused effort. Below are proven strategies that will help you retain information and apply it in real-world contexts.

1. Consistent Practice Schedule

Set aside 20–30 minutes each day to review signs, watch videos, and complete exercises. Consistency beats marathon sessions.

2. Active Recall and Spaced Repetition

Use flashcards or spaced repetition apps to revisit signs at increasing intervals. This technique boosts long-term memory retention.

3. Peer Interaction

Pair up with a fellow learner or join an online ASL chat group. Practicing with others exposes you to spontaneous conversation and immediate feedback.

4. Real-Life Application

Incorporate signs into your daily routine. For instance, sign the items you pick up while grocery shopping or the steps you take to get ready in the morning.

5. Record and Review

Video yourself signing sentences or conversations. Watching the playback helps you spot errors in handshape, orientation, or facial expressions.

6. Use Supplementary Resources

Supplement Signing Natural with additional tools such as:

- ASL dictionaries and mobile apps.
- YouTube channels focused on ASL practice.
- Community meetups or local ASL clubs.

Integrating Units 1–6 Into Your Learning Journey

Once you've completed the first six units, you'll have a solid foundation that can be leveraged in many ways:

1. Transition to Advanced Courses

Use the skills gained to tackle higher-level units or specialized topics such as medical or legal ASL.

2. Teaching and Tutoring

If you’re an educator, the structured lesson plans in Signing Naturally

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