

## **Skill Development Activity: IMPROVING ASL COMPREHENSION**

One of the most effective ways to enhance your ASL receptive skills is through regular and productive association within the Deaf Community. Learning to NEGOTIATE for understanding is critical. It is easy to get frustrated and just give-up. But, there are effective ways to get at the information you missed. Merely asking to have information repeated is not enough. Try some of these strategies:

- If you don't catch a fingerspelled word, ask if it is the name of a person, place, or thing. This information, along with the context in which the word was spelled, will often help you to understand the word much quicker than having it respelled several times.
- When there is a portion of a message you miss, paraphrase for the deaf person what you have understood up to that point. This demonstrates that you are not totally lost, but just looking for a certain piece of information.
- Another strategy is to ask questions about what you do understand. For example, if you miss a part of a message relating to a person's work, ask if the part you missed was about their job or something that happened at their place of employment. Often by asking questions, you will more readily get the context and details you missed. This also indicates to the deaf person that you share in the responsibility for negotiating understanding.
- Ask questions about what you missed, based on the context you have understood so far. Ask whom, what, when, where, why and how questions as a starting place. Also, try to predict possible relationships between pieces of information and suggest them to the deaf person. They will guide you into the right answers when they see you are committed to helping yourself UNDERSTAND.

Another way to improve comprehension is to view and analyze ASL texts from a variety of speakers. View a text and map what you understand. View again in an effort to use the mapping from your first viewing and expand your understanding of missing pieces. Keep building your comprehension of the text until you understand it all. If you find you are missing the same kind of information each time - such as information that is fingerspelled or numbers or pronouns (who is speaking or who is the agent and receiver of action) or transitions between topics, then work on those pieces by engaging in activities describe in other instructional sheets for the specific language feature you need to improve.

### **Resources**

#### **Free Online Materials**

**ASL Storytime** from the Department of Sign Language and Interpretation at Gallaudet University

- This series includes three volumes, each containing stories with a broad variety of ASL features.
- Available on YouTube.
  - Volume 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLxddLdxbOw>
  - Volume 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAGx5CXgmTU>
  - Volume 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xqx4wCZoCMU>

**NOTE:** These stories are good for practice of many ASL features so use them with other instructional sheets in addition to this one!

**TerpTalks** from the National Consortium of Interpreter Education Centers (NCIEC)

- This series includes diverse ASL and English texts available for practice interpreting.
- There is no charge for accessing these materials, although you may be required to register to access.
- Available on NCIEC's website: <http://www.interpretereducation.org/tim/terptalks/browse/>

### **Purchasable Materials**

*The following resources may be available for use from your local interpreter education program or through your public library. If the library does not have them, request that they purchase them for community use.*

**Interpreter Practice Materials** from Sign Media ([www.signmedia.com](http://www.signmedia.com))

- Set of 33 DVDs includes 12 simultaneous texts, 12 consecutive texts, 7 one-to-one situations, 2 small groups, 6 ASL texts and 6 English texts.
- Excellent for individual, study group, or classroom skill development exercises.