

# **American Sign Language (ASL) and the Special Language Credit Option**

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American Sign Language (ASL)  
and the Special Language  
Credit Option

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Any websites referenced in this document are subject to change. Educators are advised to preview and evaluate websites and online resources before recommending them for student use.

This resource is also available on the Manitoba Education and website at [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/asl/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/asl/index.html).

Available in alternate formats upon request.

# Contents

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<b>ASL and the Special Language Credit Option</b>	<b>1</b>
• Please note the following	
<hr/>	
<b>General Information about ASL and the ASL Deaf Culture Curriculum</b>	<b>2</b>
• Did you know . . .	
<hr/>	
<b>Information for Students: The ASL and Deaf Culture Curriculum Concepts</b>	<b>3</b>
• The ASL and Deaf Culture Curriculum: Grade-Level Expectations	
• Examination Process for All Grades 9 to 12 ASL Special Language Credit	
• Option Examinations	
<hr/>	
<b>Strategies for Learning ASL and Points to Consider When Preparing for ASL Exams</b>	<b>5</b>

## ASL and the Special Language Credit Option

American Sign Language (ASL) is one of the languages eligible for Special Language Credit Option purposes. The information in this section will be of interest to students, families, and school administrators. The Manitoba School for the Deaf is responsible for coordinating the evaluation for credits in ASL. Senior Years credits are granted based on competency, as described later in this document.

Please note the following:

- These evaluations are for the purpose of **Senior Years Credits under the courses listed as 10G, 20G, 30S, and 40S in Manitoba only**. Only an official ASL examiner may assess students. Schools will award credits as appropriate based on the examiner's report and recommendations.
- Students are eligible to challenge for up to four credits, one in each of the Senior Years (10G, 20G, 30S, and 40S). Examinations are based on the ASL and Deaf Culture curriculum.
- These evaluations are generally designed for people who have had extensive exposure to ASL through Deaf parents and relatives or who have developed fluency through sign language classes. The ASL Special Language Credit Option examinations are demanding and rigorous. **To successfully challenge a particular grade level, the student must achieve a mark of 60% or higher. Retroactive credits for prior grade levels may be awarded subject to satisfactory performance.**
- Personnel from the Manitoba School for the Deaf coordinate the evaluations for these examinations.
- Evaluations are held annually. Please contact the Principal of Manitoba School for the Deaf to confirm the deadline for the receipt of applications for ASL examinations for the current school year.
- **There is no charge for this evaluation.** A copy of the application form may be downloaded.
- The contact for ASL Special Language Credit Option examinations is:  
Principal  
Manitoba School for the Deaf  
242 Stradford Street Winnipeg  
MB R2Y 2C9  
Email: [principal@msd.ca](mailto:principal@msd.ca)  
Phone: 204-945-8934

## General Information about ASL and the ASL and Deaf Culture Curriculum

Did you know . . .

- Many people mistakenly believe that American Sign Language (ASL) is English conveyed through signs. Some think that it is a manual code for English, that it can express only concrete information, or that there is one universal sign language used by Deaf people around the world.
- Linguistic research demonstrates, however, that ASL is comparable in complexity and expressiveness to spoken languages. It is not a form of English. It has its own distinct grammatical structure that must be mastered in the same way as the grammar of any other language. ASL differs from spoken languages in that it is visual rather than auditory and is composed of precise hand shapes and movements.
- ASL can convey subtle, complex, and abstract ideas. Signers can discuss philosophy, literature, or politics as well as football, cars, or income taxes. Sign language can express poetry as poignantly as any spoken language, and can communicate humour, wit, and satire just as bitingly. As in other languages, new vocabulary items are constantly being introduced by the community in response to cultural and technological change.
- When two languages coexist in any community, the language of the majority culture may influence the language of the minority culture. One of the ways that ASL is influenced by English is in the incorporation of certain finger-spelled English words. In general, finger spelling is used to give the names of people, cities, and states, titles of movies or books, and brand names.
- Fingerspelling is also used for “fingerspelled loan signs.” These are two- to-five letters, commonly used words that have their own unique patterns of movement. These movement patterns are different from ordinary fingerspelling: the words have become ASL signs rather than fingerspelled words. Some examples are OK, car, bus. Fingerspelling, however, is not a substitute for signing. If you do not know a sign, you may point, describe, act it out, use gestures, draw, or spell the word.
- Please see the following website for more information on the ASL and Deaf Culture curriculum: [www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/asl/framework/intro.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/languages/asl/framework/intro.pdf).

# Information for Students: The ASL and Deaf Culture Curriculum Concepts

## The ASL and Deaf Culture Curriculum: Grade-Level Expectations

Students are eligible to challenge for up to four Senior Years credits, one in each of the Senior Years. ASL Special Language Credit Option examinations are based on the Grades 9 to 12 ASL and Deaf Culture Curriculum.

Overview of Grades 9 to 12 ASL Concepts			
ASL 10G	ASL 20G	ASL 30S	ASL 40S
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ finger spelling</li> <li>■ gender signs</li> <li>■ yes/no questions</li> <li>■ wh- questions: What? Where? How many? Who? When?</li> <li>■ personal pronouns</li> <li>■ possessive pronouns</li> <li>■ cardinal and ordinal numbers</li> <li>■ topicalization</li> <li>■ simple classifiers/location</li> <li>■ body/gaze shifting</li> <li>■ singular/plural nouns</li> <li>■ singular/plural verbs               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ tense</li> <li>■ directional</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ negation/assertion</li> <li>■ adjectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All components from the 10G level</li> <li>■ loan signs</li> <li>■ wh- questions: How? How long? Why? What are you doing?</li> <li>■ yes/no questions</li> <li>■ pronouns:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ collective</li> <li>■ demonstrative</li> <li>■ emphatic</li> <li>■ classifier</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ basic classifiers/location</li> <li>■ continuous/repetitious</li> <li>■ adverbs</li> <li>■ numerical adjectives</li> <li>■ ASL compounds</li> <li>■ time regularity, duration, and approximation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All components from the 10G and 20G levels</li> <li>■ loan signs</li> <li>■ wh- questions</li> <li>■ rhetorical questions</li> <li>■ relative pronouns</li> <li>■ indefinite pronouns</li> <li>■ cardinal/ordinal numbers</li> <li>■ advanced classifiers/location</li> <li>■ singular/plural nouns</li> <li>■ singular/plural verbs               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ tense</li> <li>■ directional</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ relative clauses (understand)</li> <li>■ simple conditional sentences</li> <li>■ role shifting</li> <li>■ comparatives/superlatives</li> <li>■ reflexive pronouns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ All components from the 10G, 20G, and 30S levels</li> <li>■ loan signs</li> <li>■ wh- questions</li> <li>■ rhetorical questions</li> <li>■ relative pronouns</li> <li>■ indefinite pronouns</li> <li>■ cardinal/ordinal numbers</li> <li>■ complex classifiers/location</li> <li>■ singular/plural nouns</li> <li>■ singular/plural verbs               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ tense</li> <li>■ directional</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ relative clauses</li> <li>■ basic conditional sentences</li> <li>■ role shift variations</li> <li>■ comparatives/superlatives</li> <li>■ reflexive pronouns</li> </ul>

## Examination Process for All Grades 9 to 12

### ASL Special Language Credit Option Examinations

Culturally Deaf evaluators who are fluent in ASL will conduct the examinations. Each participant's receptive and expressive ASL skills will be assessed through a variety of different activities (e.g., viewing and retelling) using resources such as picture stories, comics, and videos in ASL.

The assessment will be based on the following elements:

- Conversational/Discourse Skills
- ASL Vocabulary
- Money/Numbers
- Grammatical Structure
  - Use of ASL Structure
  - Body Movement
  - Classifiers
  - Facial Grammar
- Temporal Aspects
- Distributional Aspects
- Semantics
- Pronominalization
- Expressive Skills
- Comprehension Skills

## Strategies for Learning ASL and Points to Consider When Preparing for ASL Exams

- Maintain eye contact with the signer in any given conversation.
- Follow all conversations and be attentive in all settings.
- Participate as much as possible by adding comments, agreeing, or disagreeing, et cetera. The more you participate, the more you will retain what you learn. Do not worry about making mistakes. They are a natural part of the learning process.
- Try not to worry about a sign you missed. Work on getting the gist of the conversation. If a particular sign is repeated over and over, and you still do not understand the meaning, then be sure to ask. If you do not, you lose out on valuable communication experiences that can strengthen your comprehension skills.
- Try to maintain a signing environment whenever Deaf people are present.



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