

Why Learn Sign Language?

I recently made a commitment to work on improving various aspects of my life in order to become a more well rounded person. For example, when I realized that I hadn't taken any kind of class since I graduated from college 10 years ago, I decided there and then that learning something new would be a priority. After a lot of consideration, I decided that I would like to learn sign language, so I recently purchased materials that will help me do that.

I've been telling my friends and family about my new interest, and the first question everyone asks me is why I want to learn sign language. After all, I'm not deaf or hard-of-hearing myself, nor is anyone in my immediate family. While hearing impairments would obviously be the most pressing reason to learn sign language, it's certainly not the only one. Here are just two more reasons that helped me make my decision.

First, I really wanted to try something different. I always hear about friends who are studying Spanish, French, Italian, Japanese, or any number of other languages, but none of those appealed to me. I would much rather learn American Sign Language (ASL) because of its relative uniqueness.

Second, I want to learn sign language because of its utility. I can say with certainty that I'll have a chance to use my ASL skills at some point in my life. Whether it's helping a hearing impaired customer when I'm at work, or carrying on a casual conversation with someone I meet at the gym, there's bound to be ample opportunity for me to apply my knowledge in practical situations. That's more than I can say about my friends who studied Japanese for all four years of college, and then never spoke another syllable of it after they left campus!

Once I decided to learn sign language, I just had to find a class that I could attend. Since my work hours are always changing, I didn't want to commit to specific evening or weekend hours at my local community college. Instead, I decided to check out a few of the many online resources that are available to people with an interest in ASL. I found several classes that are delivered entirely over the Internet, as well as several more courses that are offered on video (or DVD).

I chose to learn sign language via DVD because this format allows me to watch the classes on my 42" television screen rather than my 17" computer monitor. I can see exactly what's going on, and can replay certain sections as many times as necessary to make sure I understand everything.

I've only been studying ASL for a couple weeks now, but I'm already making rapid

progress. I can't wait to continue with my courses and develop my skills even more!