

What Do I Do With My Hands?

Answer Key

Year 1 | Semester 1 | Week 1

Dominant vs. Non-Dominant Hand

- You have two hands: right and left.
- The one you write or throw with is your dominant hand.
- The other is your non-dominant hand.
- Be consistent: always use the same hand to lead your signs.
- Tip: Wearing a watch can help you track your dominant hand.

Rest Position

- When not signing, keep your hands relaxed at your sides or gently in front of your body.
- A calm rest position keeps your message clear.
- Avoid fidgeting or holding random shapes.

Finger Names & Handshapes

- Index finger – the one you point with.
- Middle finger – the tallest one, often called the Feeler Finger in ASL.
- Ring finger – where a ring goes.
- Pinky – the smallest finger.
- Thumb – the one that sticks out.
- Handshapes – describe how your hand looks:
 - Y hand – thumb and pinky out.
 - 5 hand – all five fingers spread.

The Five Parameters of ASL

Every sign is made of five building blocks:

1. Handshape – what your hand looks like.
 2. Palm Orientation – which way your palm faces.
 3. Location – where the sign happens on the body.
 4. Movement – how your hand moves.
 5. Non-manual signals – what your face, head, and body do.
- Example: PLAY
 - Handshape: Y hands
 - Palm Orientation: facing each other
 - Location: in front of the chest
 - Movement: small outward flick
 - Facial Expression: neutral
 - Changing one parameter can change the entire meaning of a sign.
 - Example: MOM (chin) vs. DAD (forehead).