



University
of Exeter



Evening language programme 2026/27

Course title: Introduction to British Sign Language

Course descriptor/objectives

The aim of the course is to offer an introduction to British Sign Language (BSL).

Participants are introduced step by step by the Deaf course leader into silent communication with hands, face and body and will gain a first insight into the basic concepts of sign language. The main topics are introductions, the finger alphabet and simple dialogues.

Participants will develop some basic signing skills through a series of task-oriented sessions and will be provided with informal formative feedback during contact hours.

In seminars, participants will have to engage in practical exercises and group interaction, in order to develop relevant language-specific learning strategies. The role of the instructor is to facilitate this process, provide useful tools and encourage participants to become independent learners and basic users of the language too.

Language-specific information:

Sign language is a visual means of communication using gestures, facial expressions, and body language. It is primarily used by people who are Deaf or have hearing loss. In the UK, the official and most used sign language is British Sign Language (BSL).

BSL has its own grammatical structure and syntax, independent of spoken English. The language uses hands to create signs, but also incorporates

gestures (i.e. head, arms, and body movements), facial expressions, and body language to convey meaning.

Mouth patterns play a vital role in BSL; they accompany signs to provide additional information and clarify meaning, particularly for nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

A finger alphabet supports communication of proper names, foreign words, or terms that do not have an established sign.

Prerequisite:

This course is a short, beginner-friendly taster for those completely new to British Sign Language. It's ideal if you're curious and want to explore BSL without committing to the longer Level 1 course.

Coursebook and/or Learning

Resources:

Materials and resources will be provided by the teacher.

For reference:

[How to sign the alphabet in British Sign Language - BBC Bitesize](#)

www.signbsl.com

<https://bslsignbank.ucl.ac.uk>