

Auslan

What is Auslan?

Auslan is short for Australian Sign Language. It is a natural language that has developed over time by the signing Deaf community in Australia. The Australian Government recognised Auslan as a community language in 1991.

Auslan is made up of fingerspelling, handshapes, movements and facial expressions. It has its own grammar, syntax and lexicon. There are two main dialects of Auslan – Northern Dialect and the Southern Dialect. Some vocabulary can be different between regions but there are only minor differences in grammar and syntax.

Who uses Auslan?

Auslan is the language of the Australian Deaf community. Many Deaf people do not think of themselves as having a disability but rather as culturally Deaf (deaf with a capital 'D'). Auslan is a huge part of Deaf culture.

There are many other people who use Auslan such as friends and family members of Deaf people, interpreters, teachers, support workers, carers and people who are learning the language.

Where did Auslan come from?

Auslan was introduced to Australia when British and Scottish immigrants came to Australia during the 1800s. Since that time, Auslan has evolved into the modern Auslan used today, whilst modern British Sign Language (BSL) has evolved from the BSL that was used in the 1800s in England. There are many similarities between Auslan and BSL, including the same fingerspelling alphabet.

Fast Facts

- Auslan is short for Australian Sign Language.
- Auslan has 38 handshapes with 28 variants.
- Auslan signs can be broken down into Handshape, Orientation, Location, Movement and Expression.
- Auslan is predominantly used by the signing Deaf community in Australia.

