

Black American Sign Language: A toolkit

The @Work Toolkit is a collection of additional resources and tips that might be useful when discussing the topic with your team.

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Did You Know

“It is estimated that 50% of Black Deaf people in the United States use BASL. This was made possible by BASL being preserved intergenerationally through Black Deaf families and also the Black Deaf community.”

[The Project on the History of Black Writing, University of Kansas](#)

Definitions

[Black American Sign Language \(BASL\)](#): Black American Sign Language (BASL) or Black Sign Variation (BSV) is used by Deaf Black Americans in the U.S. A variation of American Sign Language (ASL), it was highly influenced by the segregation of schools in the South.

[National Black Deaf Advocates \(NBDA\)](#): Founded in 1982, the organization has more than 30 chapters across the United States. NBDA is the official advocacy organization for thousands of Black deaf and hard of hearing Americans.

[Deaf vs. deaf](#): The lowercase form of deaf refers to the audiological condition of not hearing, and the uppercase form of the word refers to identifying with a particular group of people who share the same language and culture.

Sources: [Talking Black in America](#); [National Association of the Deaf](#)

How to talk about language

Develop an awareness of language practices. According to Carla España and Luz Yadira Herrera, authors of “En Comunidad: Lessons for Centering the Voices and Experiences of Bilingual Latinx Students,” a language practice describes how we “use language to communicate, convey emotions, and create or support relationships.” Language practices can be suppressed within environments like school or work; language practices even change generationally, as immigrants assimilate into a dominant culture. Take some time to appreciate the multiple linguistic practices we engage in every day: How do you use language? What are the less-obvious ways that you use language (spoken, written, or bodily)? How have certain environments supported or limited your language practices?