

## Transcript

Hello. I'm Sean Ryan Hauschildt. Today, we will be discussing fingerspelling. American Sign Language has well-established rules regarding fingerspelling, such as hand movements, hand positions, and how each letter corresponds with the next. Today, I will explain five principles for ASL fingerspelling that are related to ASL phonology. Think about English phonology and how it is related to the speaker's prosody, articulation, and tone. Sign language phonology has its own phonological rules, just like any other language. For ASL, when many people think of ASL fingerspelling, they think of it as a way to borrow words from English and write them in ASL, akin to someone using a typewriter, banging out a word letter by letter. For example, my name again: "S-E-A-N, spacebar, H-A-U-S-C-H-I-L-D-T," then you continue to spell the next word again in a similar fashion. In actuality, fingerspelling has a complex, natural, and authentic movement that uses what we call "fingerspelling space." You cannot use the entire signing space to fingerspell a word, rather you use the "fingerspelling space." Fingerspelling tends to be produced with the speller's hand positioned roughly at shoulder height. There are situations where fingerspelling is produced outside of that space, but we will not go into depth about that right now. Rather, we will talk about "fingerspelling space" and how the principles impact that space. Look at the English word "style:" "S-T-Y-L-E." When following the ASL Fingerspelling Principles, it would be signed. How and why did I spell it this way? The ASL Fingerspelling Principles say that fingerspelling should be done smoothly, and in a circular motion. Also, look at my "E" and compare it to the English manner of spelling "S-T-Y-L-E." And then again at the correct spelling. Why is my "E" different in the two manners? That is a phonological rule called

a unimorph, which means a blending of two letters. This tends to show up commonly in the letter "E." The letters preceding and following the "E" influence how the signer sets up their "E." Now I will show you other examples of the unimorph as it pertains to the letter "E." "Bette Davis." "Style." "Sue." "Henry." "Meme." "Well." Did you see how my "E" was set up differently in each word? It's really wonderful how ASL Fingerspelling Principles adjust for the audience's easy viewing, rather than the clacking manner of a typewriter. "S-T-Y-L-E." "S-U-E." No, "Sue." "Henry." This is an example of a unimorph. Now I will discuss synomorphs. "S-Y-N" from synomorph comes from the word synchronous, meaning that there are two phonological features happening at the same time. Are you ready to see an example? "I-L." "OIL." "COIL." "BOIL." See how the "I" and the "L" show up synchronously? Any word that has "I-L" in it will follow this rule, and that's interesting. Another example is "P-I." Look at "pizza." Look at the "P" and the "I," the pinky extension, and the remaining letters. When the word entered the language, it did not follow the Fingerspelling Principles. But over time, it now conforms to the rules. Now, the next principle is the bimorph. We just talked about "pizza." The "Z-Z" in "pizza" is an example of a bimorph because we are seeing two letters at the same time, like so. Some sign it this way. This is an example of variation in sign. Such variations are natural in any language as the language evolves and shifts. And neither are right nor wrong. The next principle is the trimorph. This means three phonological features in one movement. For example: "I need a new place, I don't want to live with my parents anymore." I am going to look for an apartment." "A-P-T," "Apartment." There are three letters in this fingerspelled word, the movement is quick and fluid. Instead of spelling out "A-P-A-R-T-M-E-N-T," we simply use the trimorph, "A-P-T." The fifth principle is the quadmorph. This means four letters merged into one quick movement. For

example: "Deafhood." "Deaf-hood." Notice the "hood" part of "Deafhood." See how fluid this word is. This sign is an example of a quadmorph. Now I will show you an example of one word to tie it all together. There are several phonological rules in this example. Let's take the English word, "S -I -L -V -E -R." "Silver." Signed naturally it looks like this. See, "S-I" is produced synchronously, so this component is a synmorph. The "V-E" is an example of unimorph. The "R" stands alone. "S-I-L-V-E-R." "Silver." Now research shows fingerspelling follows rules, and one common rule is there must be three groups in each word. "S-I-L" is one. "V-E" is the second group. And "R" is the third group. "Silver." Now when you watch the STEM fingerspelling vocabulary, see if you can identify the principles in each word. Can you find them? Let us know!