

What is the difference between American Sign Language and Braille?

American Sign Language is a manual\* based language incorporating facial expressions, body languages and rules to govern languages. It does not have a formal written system as the facial expressions and body languages are difficult to translate on paper. It does not derive any basis from the English language.^ ASL evolved from several groups who used sign language: Martha's Vineyard (it once had a large deaf population and the entire island signed), Indian Sign Language (local) and Old French Sign Language (LSF).

Braille is a coded system used by people who are blind or have low vision. It is a series of bumps representing the English alphabet. It requires the use of hands as a tactile tool. Braille was created by Louis Braille who became blind at a young age and wanted a way to be able to read books. You can get more information at:

[http://www.nfb.org/nfb/braille\\_initiative.asp](http://www.nfb.org/nfb/braille_initiative.asp)

<http://www.afb.org/braillebug/braille.asp>

\*Manual/Merriam-Webster Dictionary: *a*: of, relating to, or involving the hands.

^There are manual coded systems that derive from the English language. Those are called Manually Coded English and are composed of several systems: Signed Exact English (I, II), Conceptually Accurate Signed English (CASE), Cued and Fingerspelling.

Fingerspelling is actually an adopted aspect of ASL that has its own function. In its early days, ASL did not have fingerspelling, despite having a manual alphabet. Oral method or "reading lips" is not a manual system.