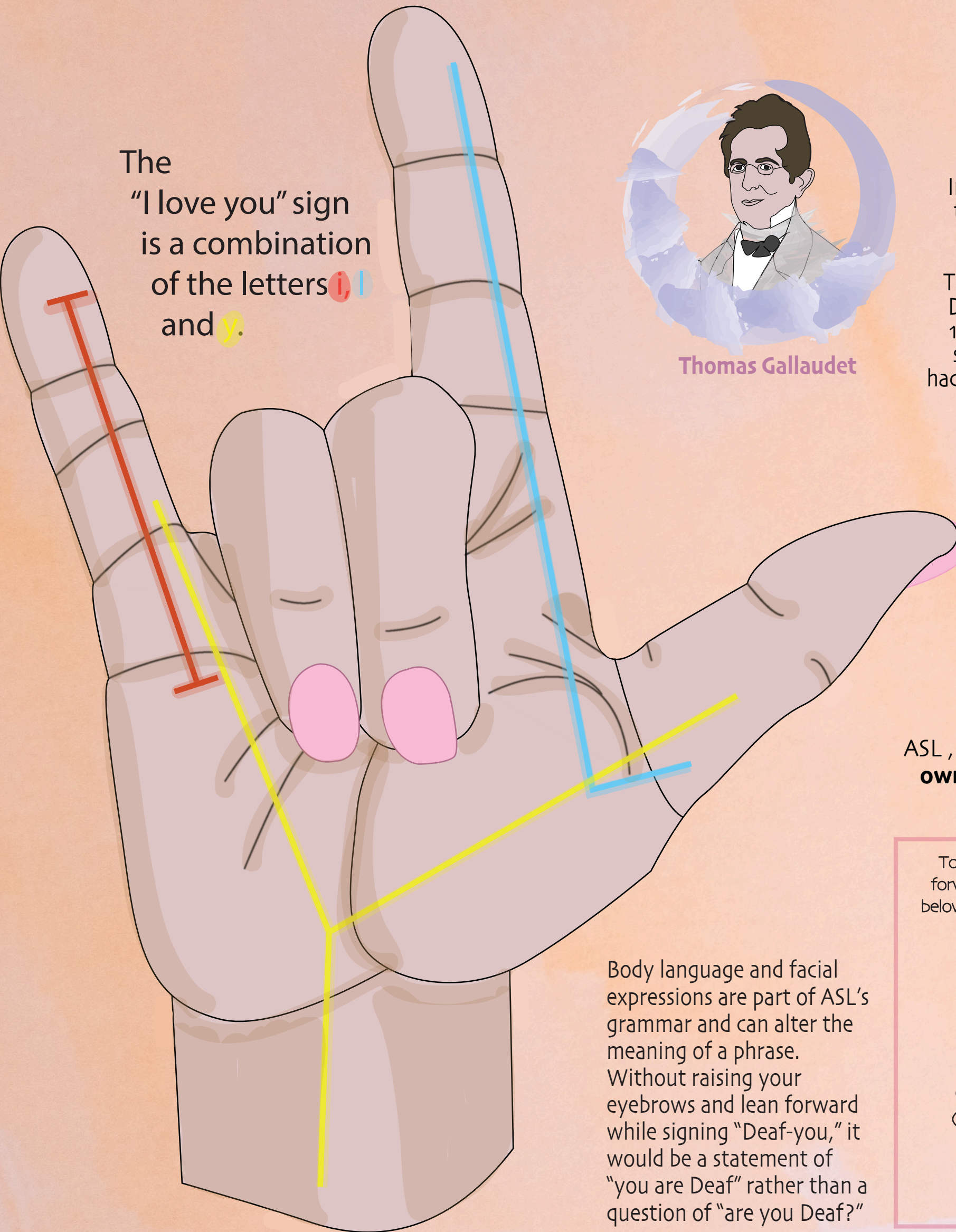


A Beginner's Guide to ASL: American Sign Language

The Fingerspelling Alphabet

The "I love you" sign is a combination of the letters **I**, **L**, and **Y**.



Thomas Gallaudet

In the early 1800s, **Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet** became interested in teaching Deaf people after meeting a young Deaf girl.

In 1815, Gallaudet went to France to try to learn how to teach Deaf people. He met **Laurent Clerc**, a Deaf teacher.

Together, they set up the first school for Deaf people in Hartford, Connecticut in 1817. The signs used at that school, plus some of the signs that Deaf Americans had already created, eventually became ASL.



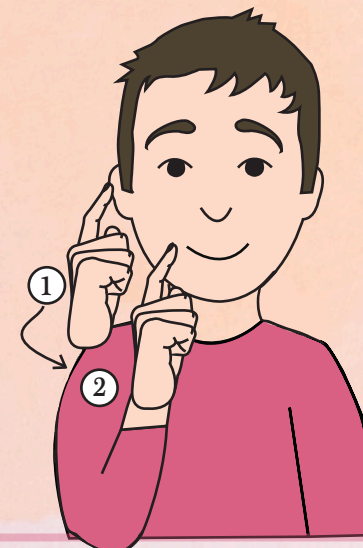
Laurent Clerc

Gallaudet University, located in Washington, D.C., is the only university for the Deaf in the United States. Its student body consists of over 1,400 students.



ASL, although not spoken, **is its own complete language; it has its own unique grammar structure and words, and is NOT signed English.** Here are a few basic signs you can use:

To ask if someone is Deaf, lean forward and sign "Deaf" (pictured below) and then point to them with your eyebrows raised.



To sign "thank you," touch your chin with your fingers, your palm facing toward you, then bring your arm out.



Body language and facial expressions are part of ASL's grammar and can alter the meaning of a phrase. Without raising your eyebrows and lean forward while signing "Deaf-you," it would be a statement of "you are Deaf" rather than a question of "are you Deaf?"

