

SignWriting

Sign Languages Are Written Languages!



Manual 1:
SignWriting Basics

by
Valerie Sutton

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Spiral Bind
Second Edition

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**The SignWriting System was first
invented by Valerie Sutton in 1974.**

**This book is based on the
Lessons in SignWriting Textbook
by Valerie Sutton**

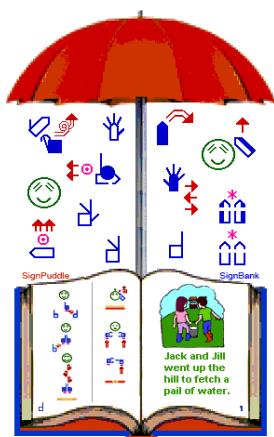
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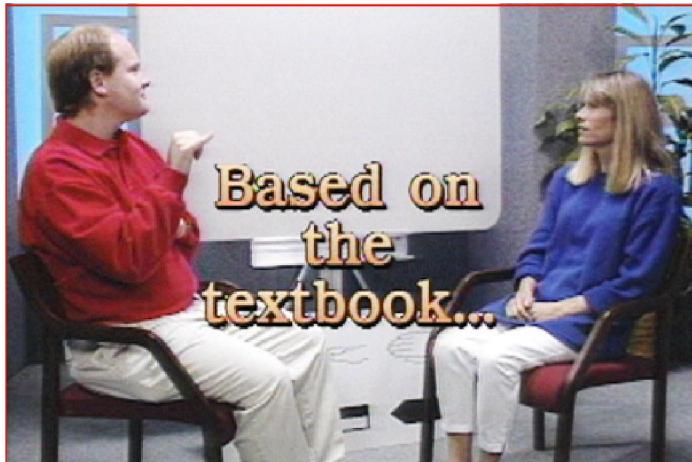
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What Is SignWriting?



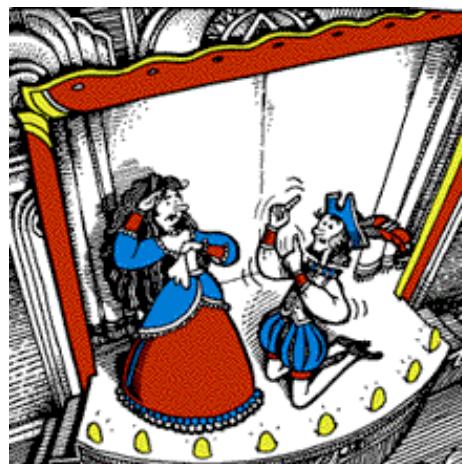
With SignWriting,
you can....



- READ
- Sign Language



- WRITE
- Sign Language



- PRESERVE
- Sign Poetry and Theater

Write SignWriting on the web!

Write signs and Sign Language documents: www.SignPuddle.org



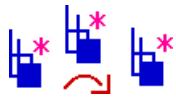
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Sign
Language



TRANSCRIBE
Sign
Language



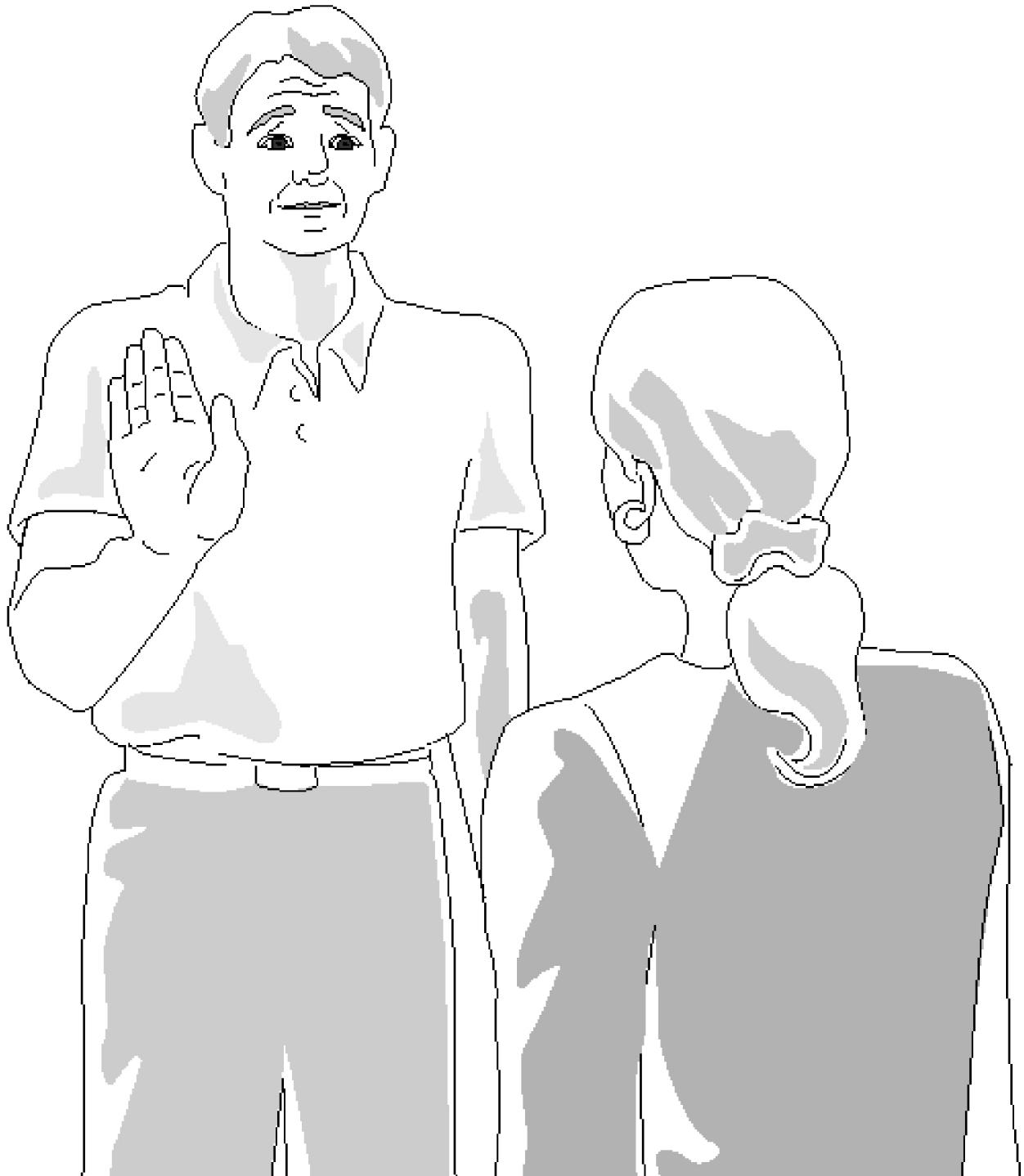
SHARE
Sign
Language



MEET Signers
Who Write
Sign Language Too!

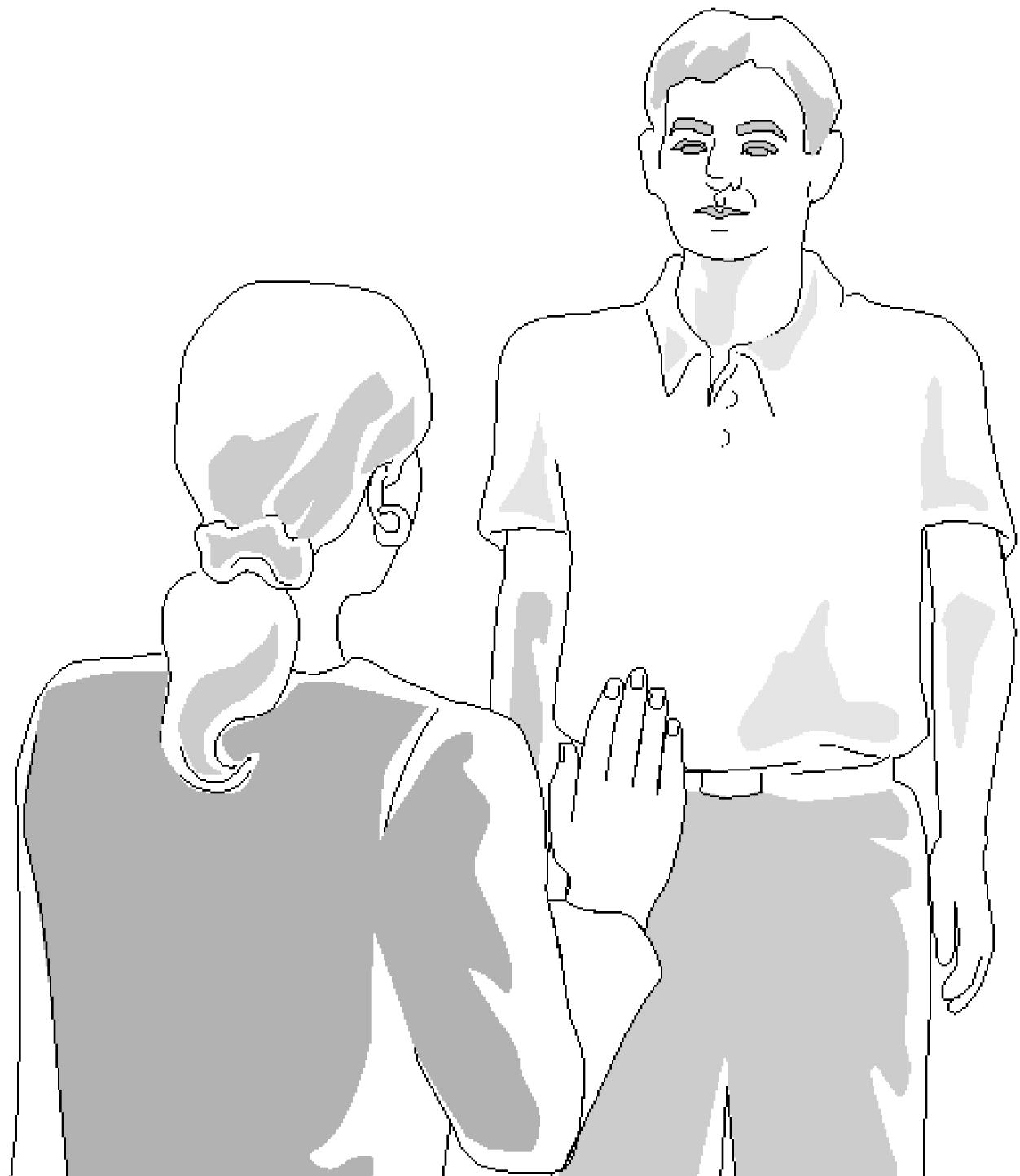
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Receptive Viewpoint

When someone is facing you, signing to you, you view the signs as an observer. The signer's right side is your left side. This is called the **Receptive Viewpoint**.



Expressive Viewpoint

When you are signing to someone else, you see signs from your own point of view.
This is called the **Expressive Viewpoint**.

The Expressive Viewpoint

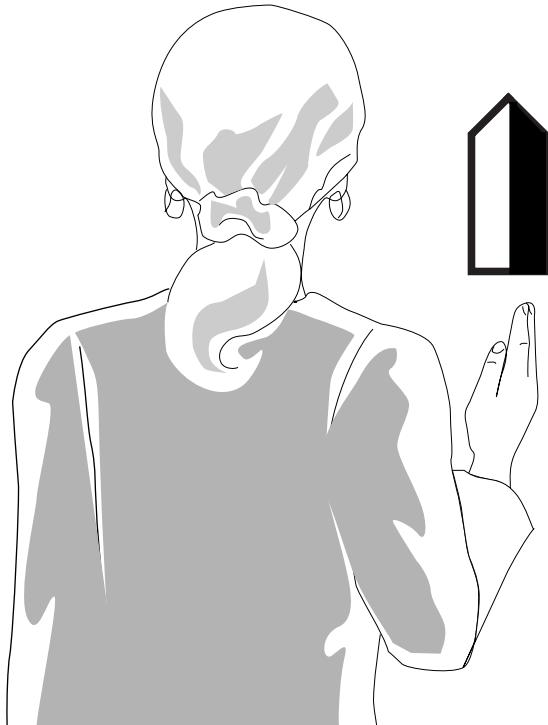
Read and write signs as if you are looking at your own hands, from your own perspective.



Palm of Hand

When you see the palm of your hand, while you are signing, the symbol for the hand will be white, or hollow.

The palm of the hand is always written with a white, hollow symbol.



Side of Hand

When you see the side of your hand while you are signing, the symbol for the hand will be half black and half white.

The white part of the symbol shows where the palm of the hand faces. The dark part represents the back of the hand.



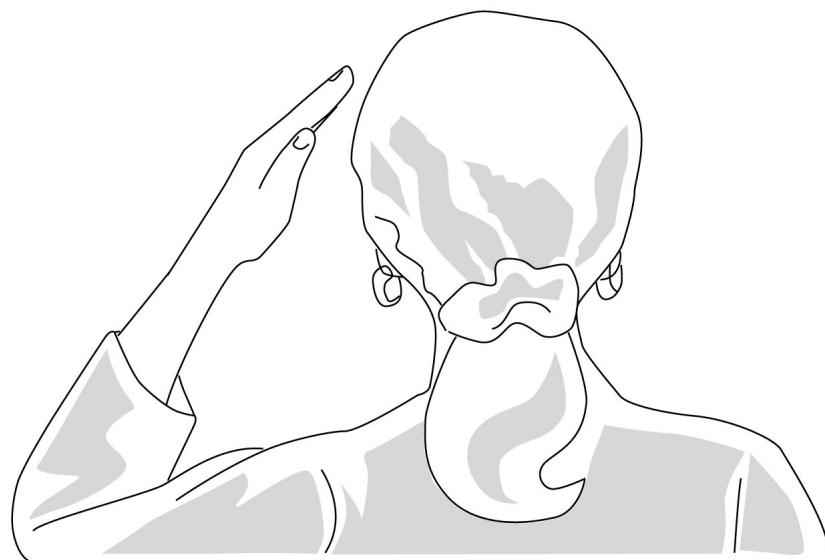
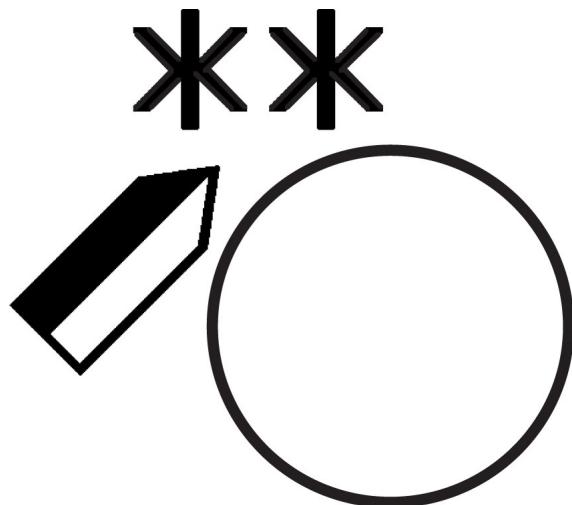
Back of Hand

When you see the back of your hand while you are signing, the symbol will be black, or filled-in.

The back of the hand is always written with a black, filled-in symbol.

Left Side of Head

The head is written with a circle, viewed from the back. When the left hand is near the left side of the head, the symbol for the hand is placed to the left:

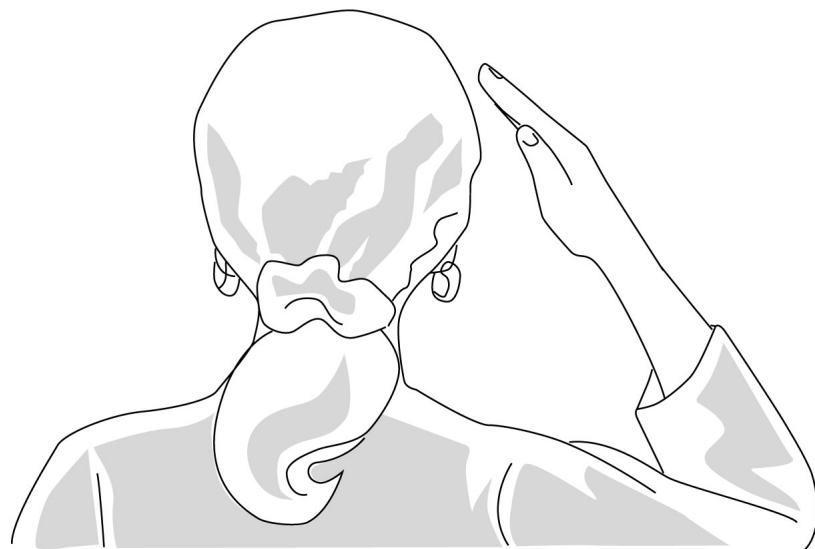
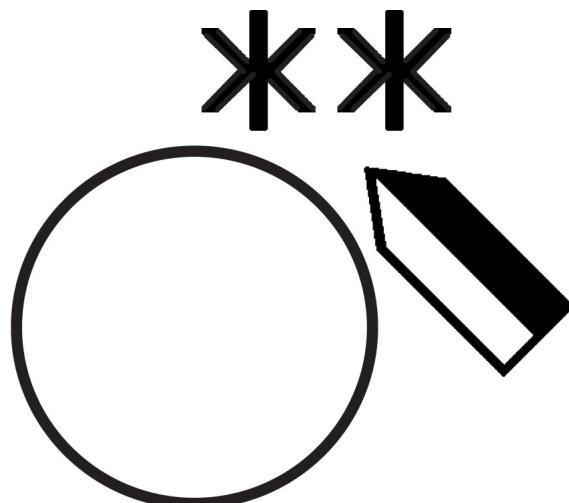


know
(hand on the left side)

Note: An asterisk means **touch**.
Two asterisks mean **touching two times**.

Right Side of Head

The head is written with a circle, viewed from the back. When the right hand is near the right side of the head, the symbol for the hand is placed to the right:



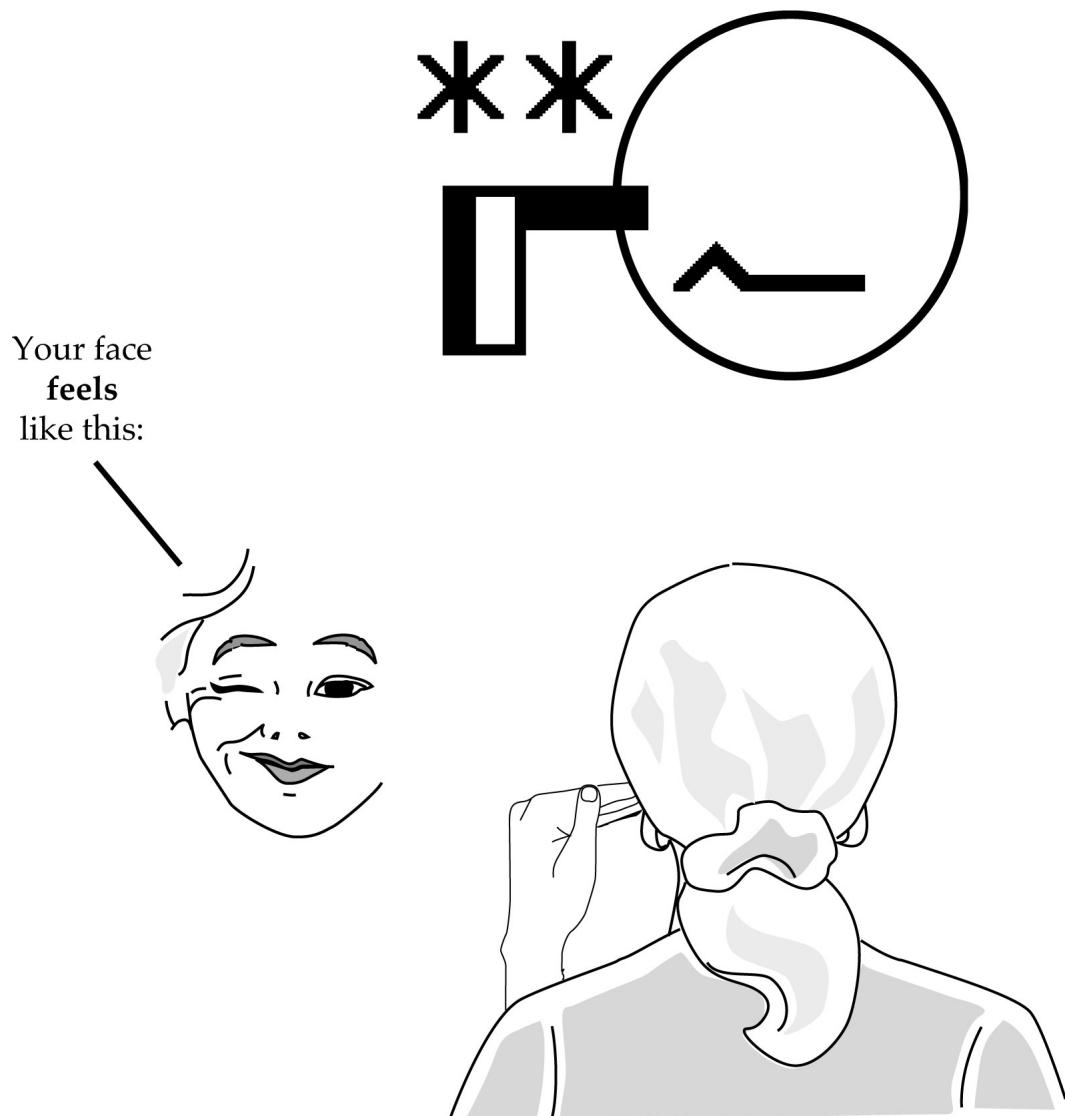
know
(hand on the right side)

Note: An asterisk means **touch**.
Two asterisks mean **touching two times**.



Left Side of Face

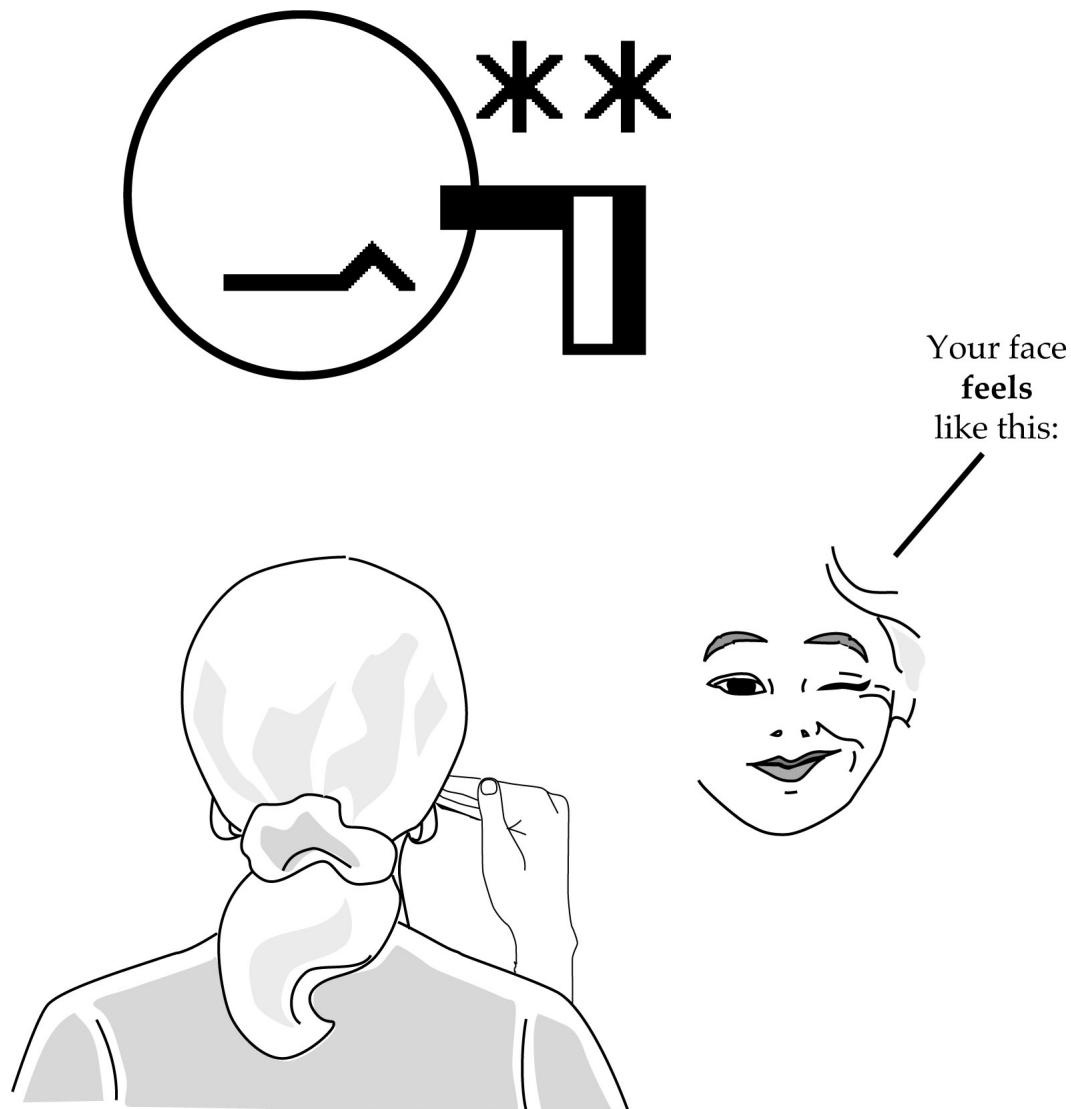
Pretend you can see through the back of the head.
You are reading and writing how your face “**feels**” when you sign:



know
(mouth pushed up on left side)

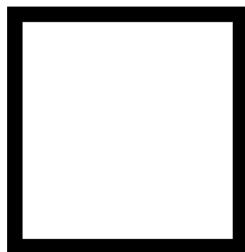
Right Side of Face

Pretend you can see through the back of the head.
You are reading and writing how your face “**feels**” when you sign:



know
(mouth pushed up on right side)

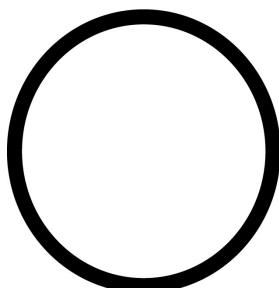
3 Basic Handshapes



Closed Fist

When the fingertips touch the palm of the hand, it is called a **Closed Fist**.

A **Closed Fist** is written with a square.

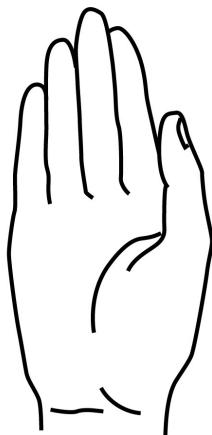
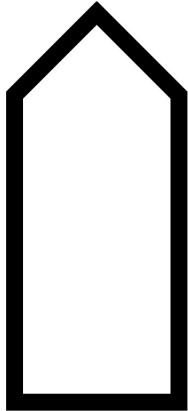


Open Fist

When the fingertips touch each other, it is called an **Open Fist**.

An **Open Fist** is written with a circle.

3 Basic Handshapes



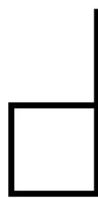
Flat Hand

When the fingers stretch straight up, and touch each other, it is called a **Flat Hand**.

A **Flat Hand** is written with a rectangle, with a tip for the fingertips.

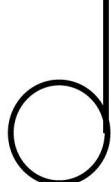
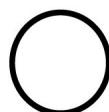
Closed Fist

Both the letter S and the number 1 in ASL are written with a square for the Closed Fist, since the fingertips touch the palm:



Open Fist

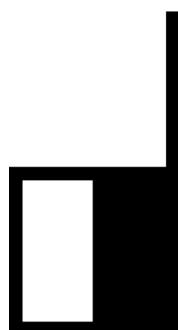
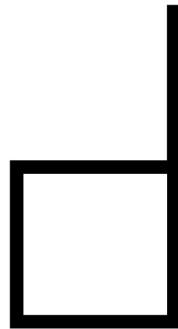
Both the letter O and the letter D in ASL are written with a circle for the Open Fist, since the fingertips touch each other:



Palm Facing

Front View

The hand is parallel with the front wall.

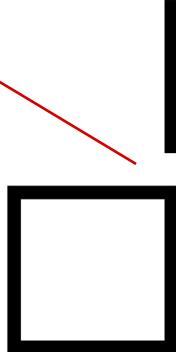


Palm Facing

Top View

The hand is parallel with the floor.

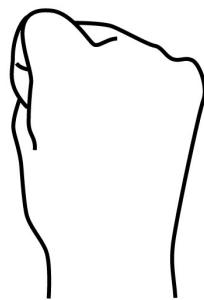
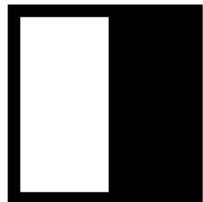
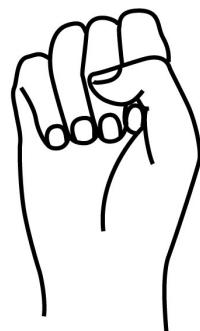
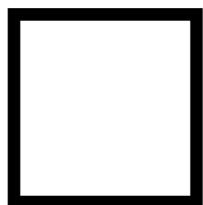
space at
knuckle joint
means hand
is parallel
to the floor



Palm Facing

Front View

The hand is parallel with the front wall.

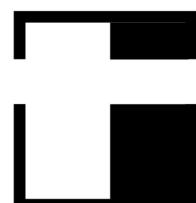
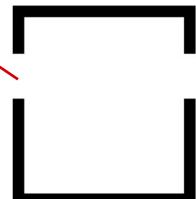


Palm Facing

Top View

The hand is parallel with the floor.

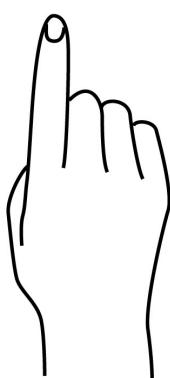
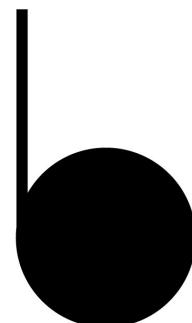
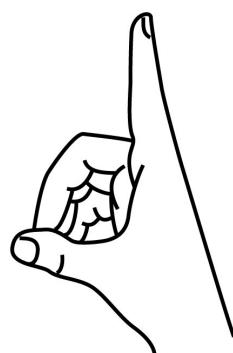
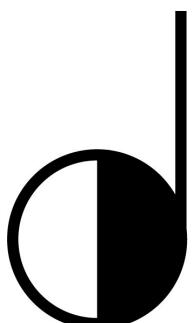
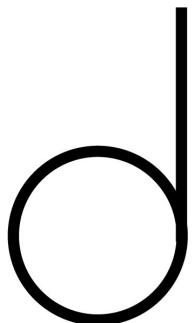
space at
knuckle joint
means hand
is parallel
to the floor



Palm Facing

Front View

The hand is parallel with the front wall.

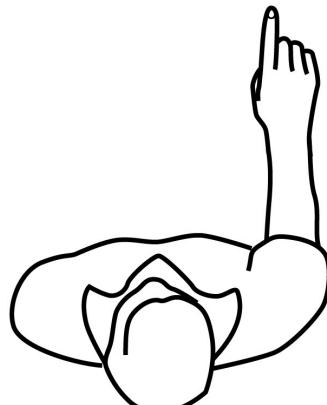
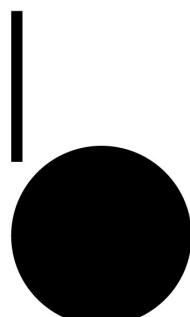
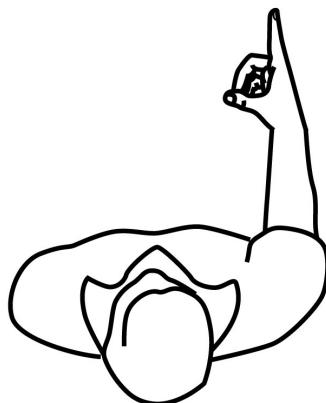
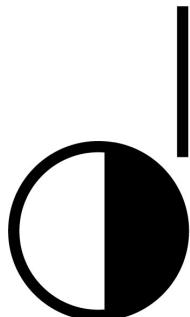
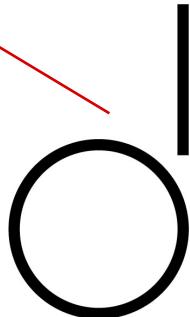


Palm Facing

Top View

The hand is parallel with the floor.

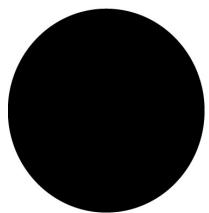
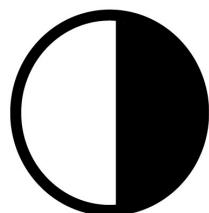
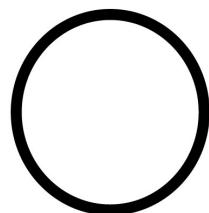
space at
knuckle joint
means hand
is parallel
to the floor



Palm Facing

Front View

The hand is parallel with the front wall.

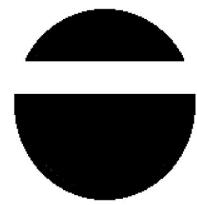
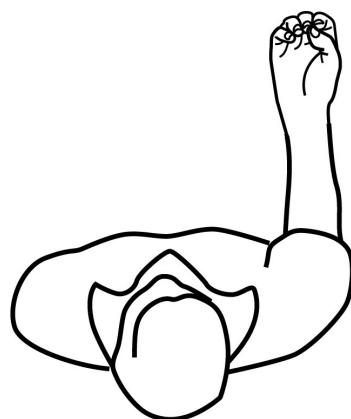
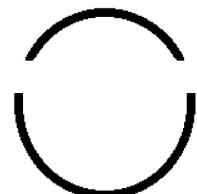


Palm Facing

Top View

The hand is parallel with the floor.

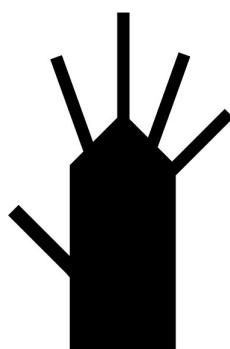
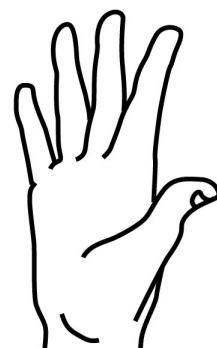
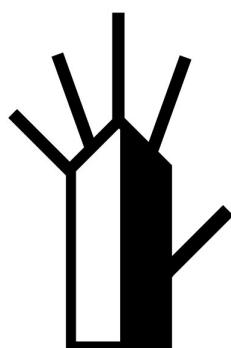
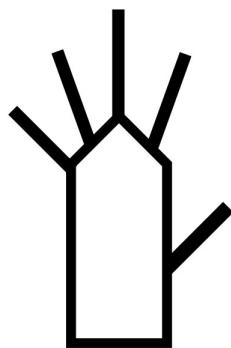
space at
knuckle joint
means hand
is parallel
to the floor



Palm Facing

Front View

The hand is parallel with the front wall.

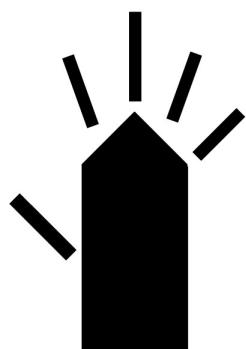
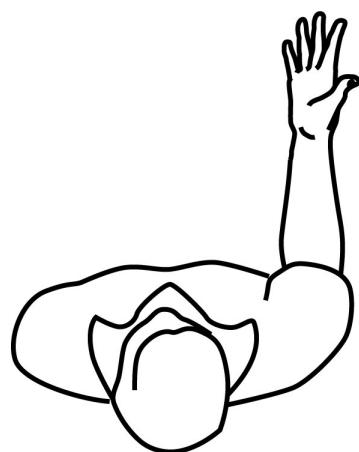
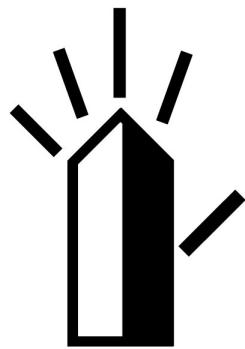
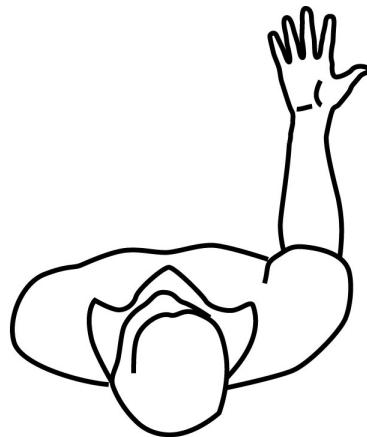
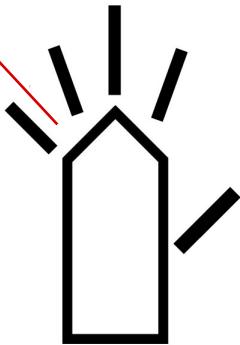


Palm Facing

Top View

The hand is parallel with the floor.

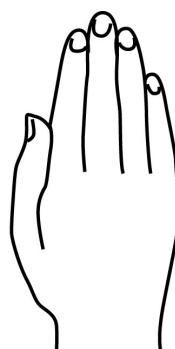
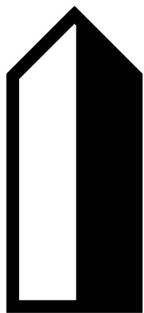
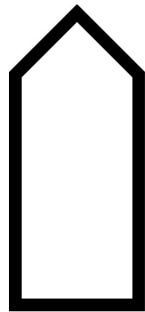
space at
knuckle joint
means hand
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Palm Facing

Front View

The hand is parallel with the front wall.

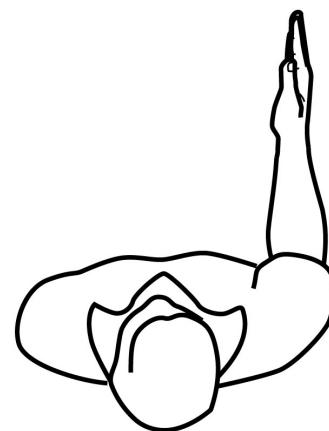
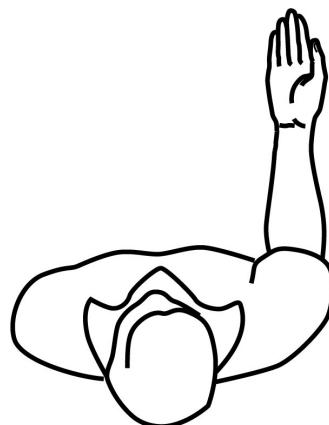


Palm Facing

Top View

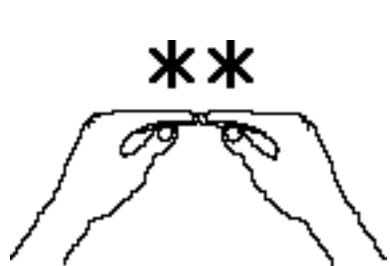
The hand is parallel with the floor.

space at
knuckle joint
means hand
is parallel
to the floor



6 Contact Symbols

- * 1. Touch
- + 2. Grasp
- |*| 3. Between
- # 4. Strike
- ◎ 5. Brush
- © 6. Rub



more



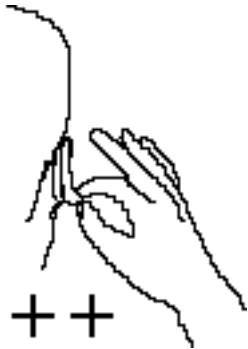
school



Touch

Touch Contact is written with an asterisk.

Touch is defined as the hand gently contacting another part of the body.



earring



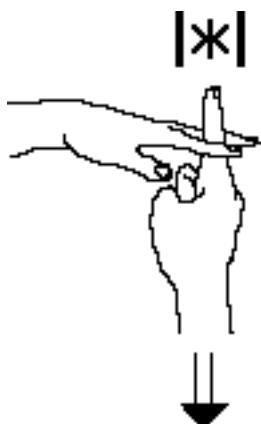
congratulations



Grasp

Grasp Contact is written with two crossed lines.

Grasp is defined as the hand grasping or pinching a part of the body or a prop, such as clothing.



disappear



America

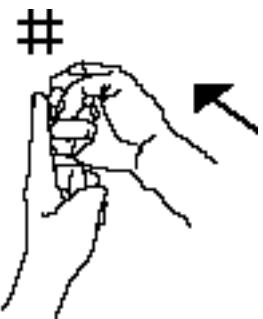


Between

Between Contact is written with a Contact Symbol between two lines.

Between is defined as contacting between two fingers or other parts of the body.

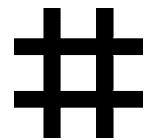




hit



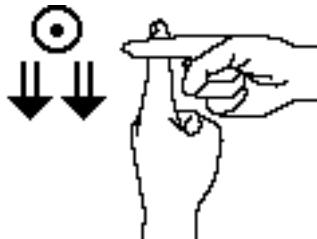
clap



Strike

Strike Contact is written with two lines crossing two lines.

Strike is defined as the hand contacting a surface **with force**.

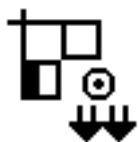


Brush

Brush Contact is written with a circle with a dark dot in the center.



excuse me



monthly

Brush is defined as movement that first contacts and then **moves off** the surface.



coffee



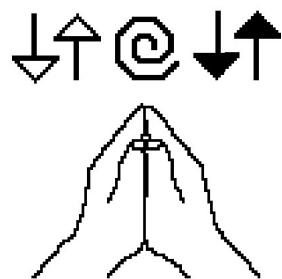
chocolate



Circular Rub

Circular Rub Contact is written with a spiral.

Rub is defined as contact that moves, but **stays on the surface**.



neat



eager

Straight Rub

Straight Rub Contact is written with the same spiral symbol, but the spiral symbol is **connected with a straight arrow**.

When the Rub Contact symbol is **connected with an arrow**, it rubs in a straight line (not in a circle). It stays on the surface but moves in the direction of the arrow.



6 Finger Symbols

- 1. Squeeze, Middle Joint Closes
- 2. Flick, Middle Joint Opens
- ▼ 3. Hinge, Knuckle Joint Closes
- ▲ 4. Hinge, Knuckle Joint Opens
- ~~~~ 5. Hinge, Knuckles Open & Close Together
- ~~~~~ 6. Trill, Knuckles Open-Close Alternating

● ○
**Middle Joint
Squeeze & Flick**



Middle Joint Finger Movements, also called Squeeze and Flick Movements, are written with small dots.

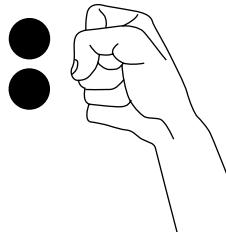
▼ ▲
**Knuckle Joint
Hinge & Trill**



Knuckle Joint Finger Movement, also called Hinge and Trill Movements, are written with small arrows.



Middle Joint **Closes**

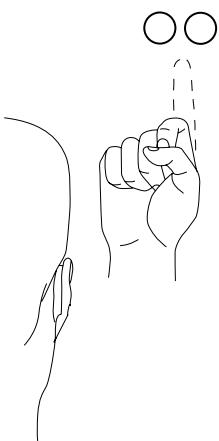


huh?

milk

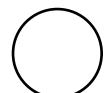
When the middle joint of the finger squeezes tight (bends down or in), this **closing finger movement** is written with a **dark dot**.

The dot is placed near the finger joint that does the squeezing. Two dots represent two squeezes..



eleven

understand

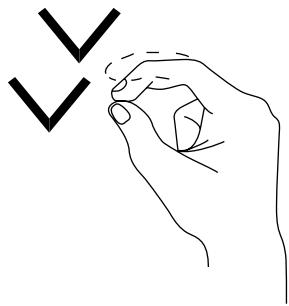


Middle Joint **Opens**

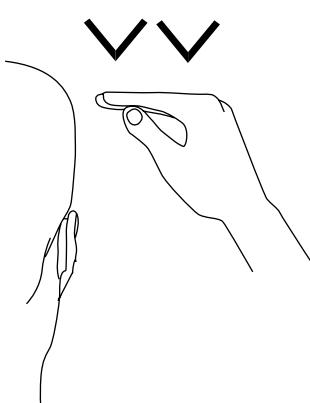
When the middle joint of the finger flicks open (goes from bent to straight), this **opening flicking movement** is written with a **hollow dot**.

The dot is placed near the finger that flicks. Two dots represent two flicks.





twenty

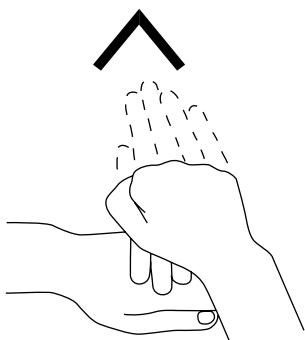


boy



Knuckle Joint Closes

The middle joint of the finger locks, while the knuckle joint bends down, like the Hinge on a door. This **closing knuckle movement** is written with a small arrow that points down. The arrow **pushes** the fingers down. Two arrows mean 2 hinges.



send



send-send

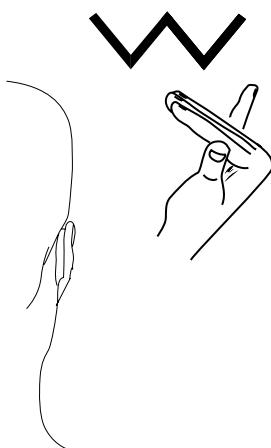


Knuckle Joint Opens

The middle joint of the finger locks, while the knuckle joint bends up, like the Hinge on a door. This **opening knuckle movement** is written with a small arrow that points up. The arrow **pulls** the fingers up. Two arrows mean 2 hinges up.



goodbye

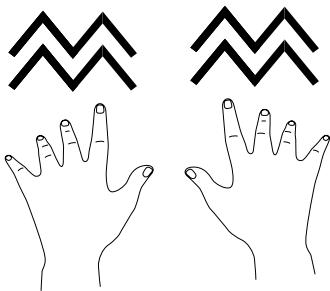


why



Knuckle Joints Open-Close

The fingers move together in the same direction, as a unit. The knuckle-joints of the fingers open and close (bend up and down) together. This **open-close knuckle movement** is written with one row of small connected arrows pointing up and down.



Knuckle Joints Alternate

The fingers do not move together in a unit. Instead they hinge in opposite directions. One moves up, as the other moves down. This **Alternating Finger Movement**, also called **Finger Trills**, is written with two rows of small arrows pointing up and down.



fingerspell



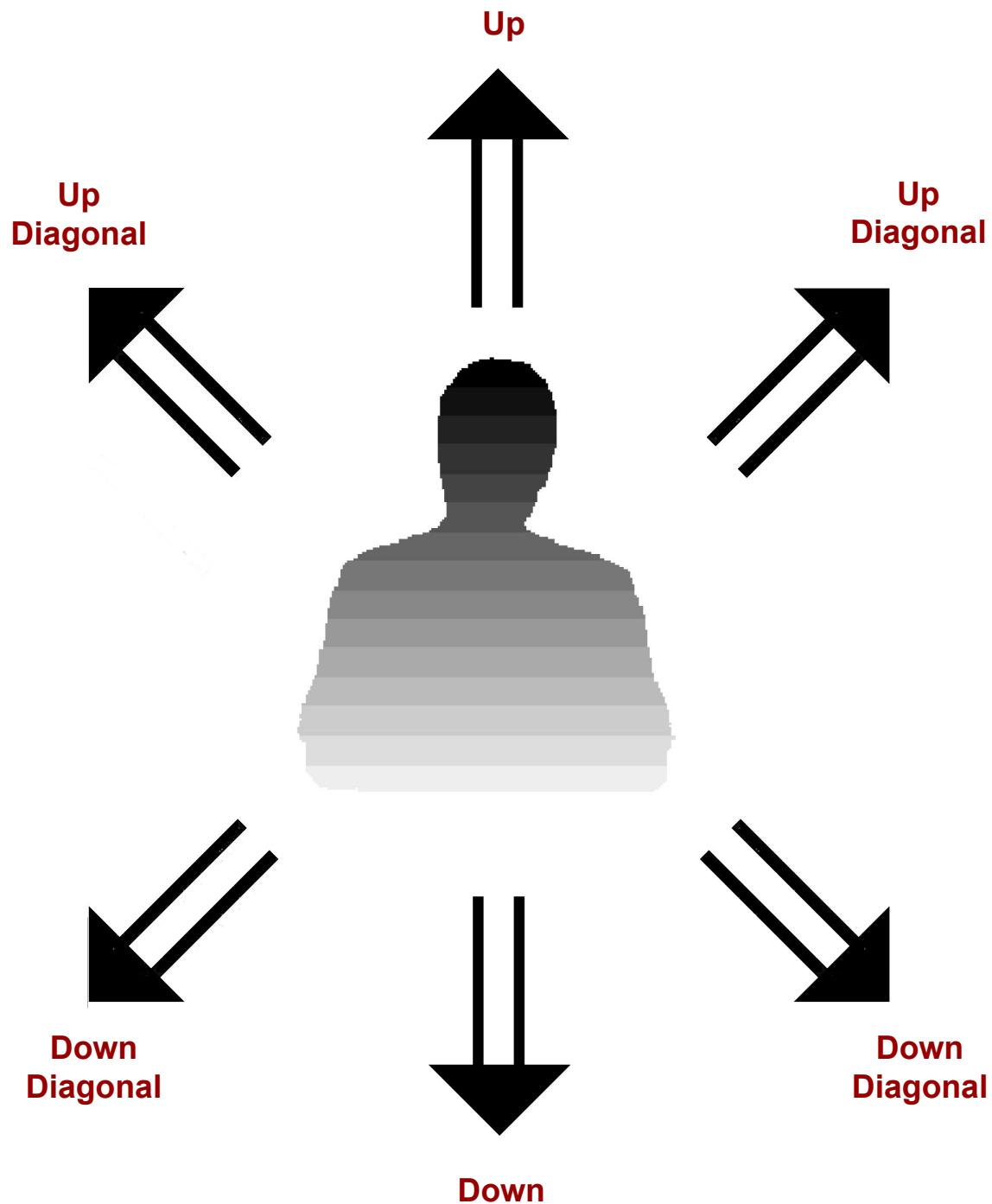
typing



Up-Down Movement

Up-Down Movement is parallel with the Front Wall or your chest.

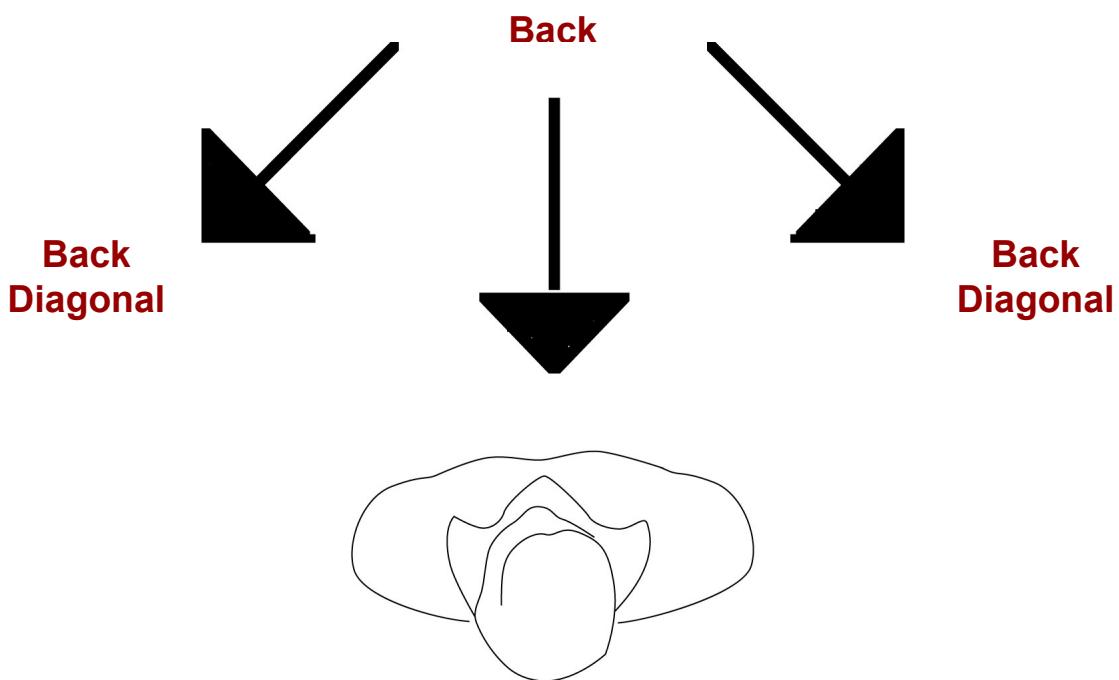
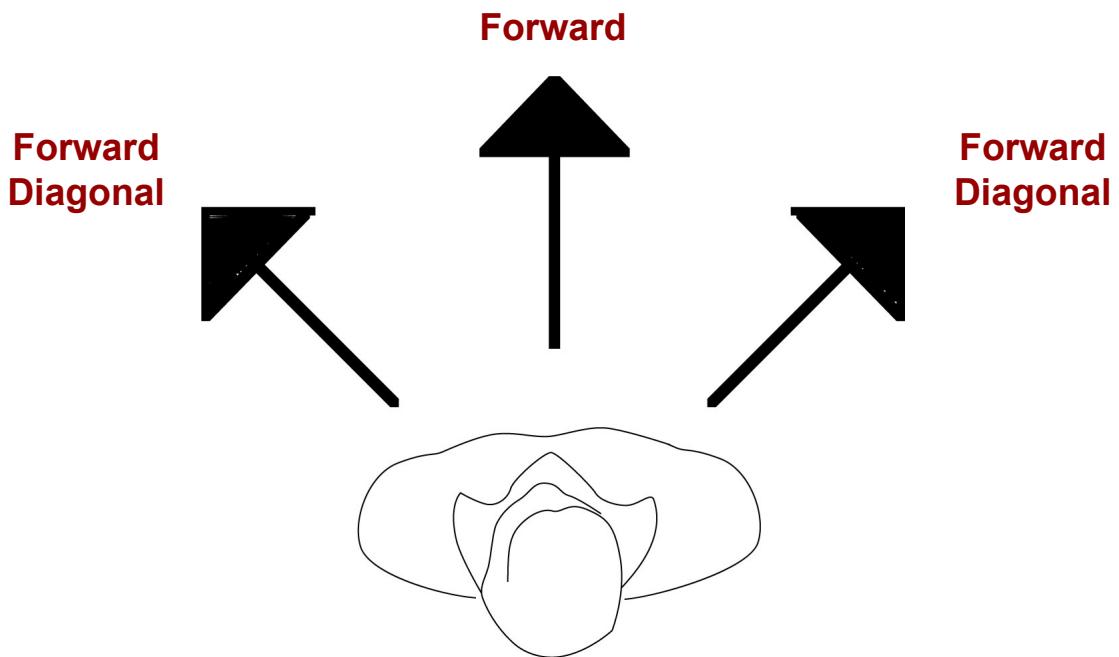
It is written with double-stemmed arrows:



Forward-Back Movement

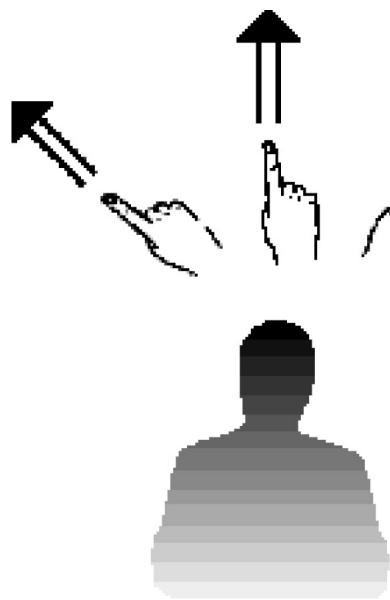
Forward-Back Movement is parallel with the Floor or a table top.

It is written with single-stemmed arrows:

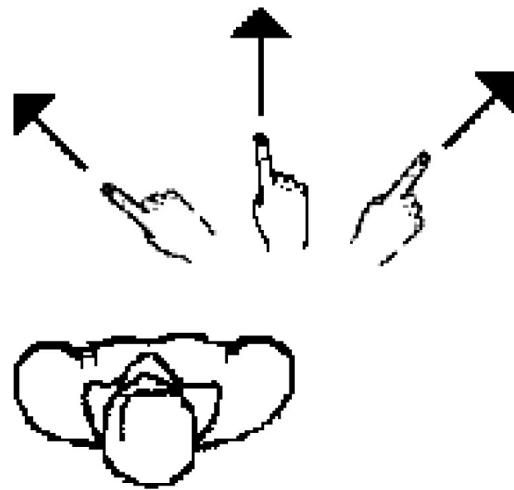


Movement With The Right Hand

A dark arrowhead.



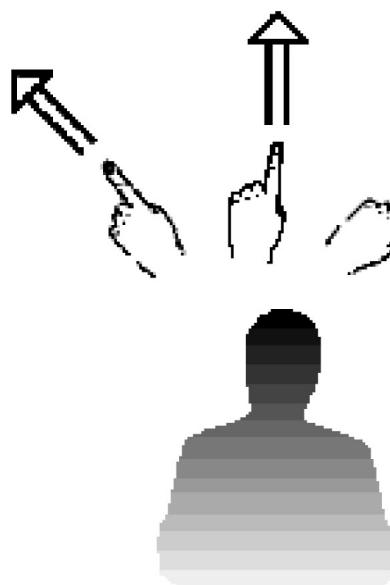
Front View



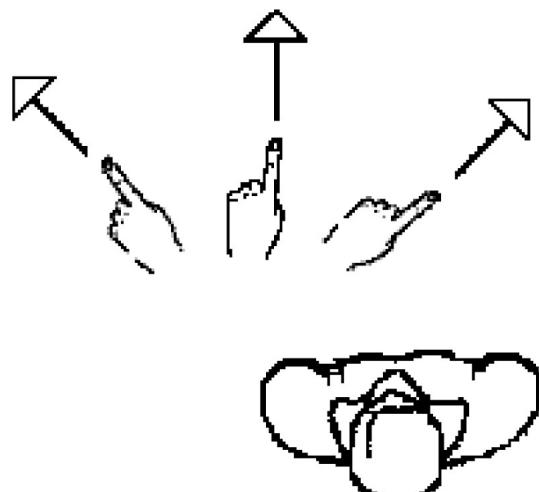
Top View

Movement With The Left Hand

A light arrowhead.



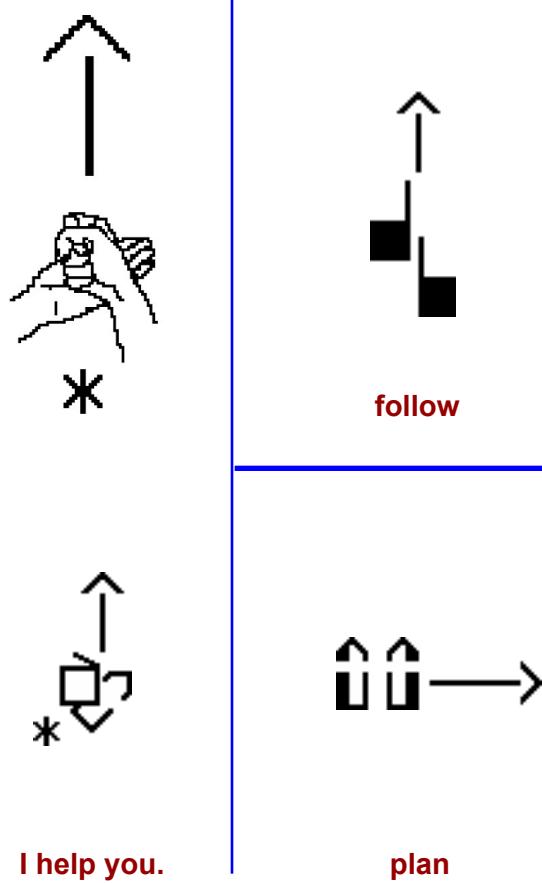
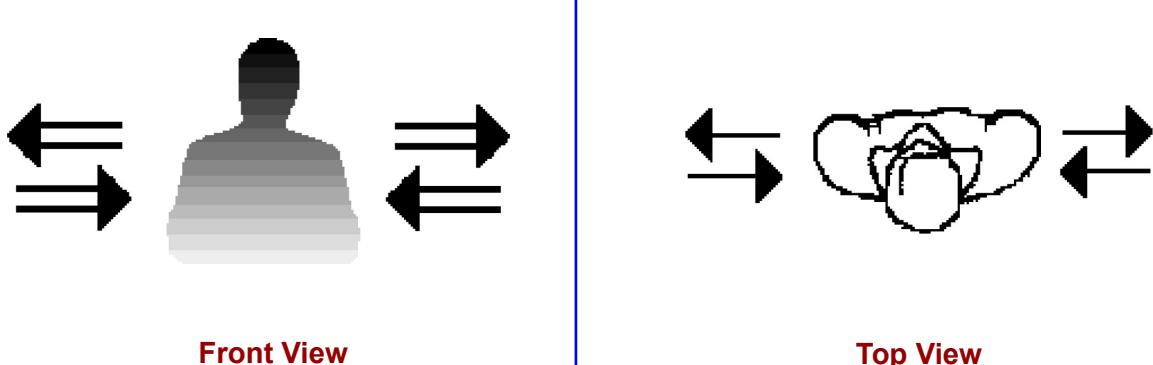
Front View



Top View

Movement To The Side

Movement to the side can be viewed from either the Front View or the Top View. It can be written with either double-stemmed or single-stemmed arrows.



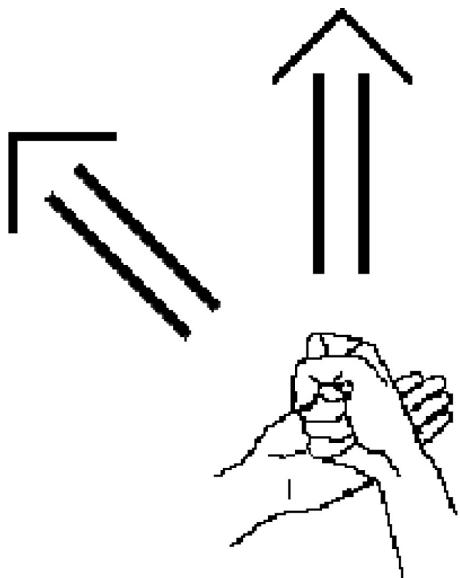
General Arrowhead Writes Overlapping Paths

When a right movement arrow writes **ON TOP OF** a left movement arrow, the two movement paths **overlap each other**. The two arrows blend together. The dark arrowhead and the light arrowhead become one arrowhead, called the **General Arrowhead**.

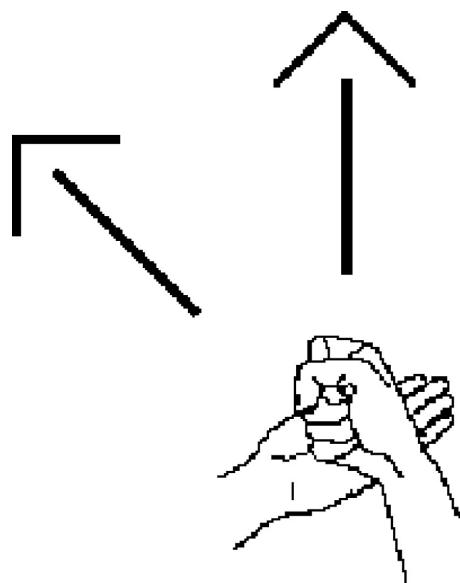
Often the hands are contacting when moving in overlapping paths, but it is **NOT ONLY** for contacting hands. For example, two hands can be parallel, side by side, without contact, and then both move to the same side, so that the right arrow writes on top of the left arrow. This creates a **General Arrowhead**.



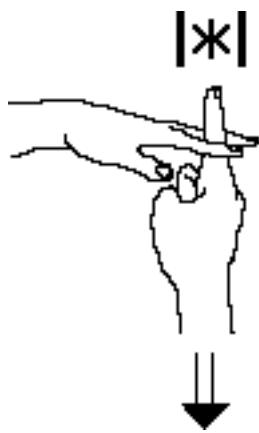
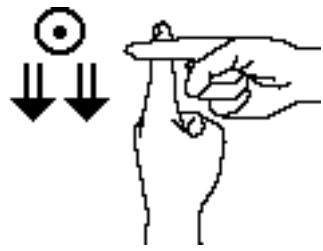
Do not confuse these arrows:



double
stemmed
arrows
mean
movement
is **UP**



single
stemmed arrows
mean
movement
is **FORWARD**



Straight Movement



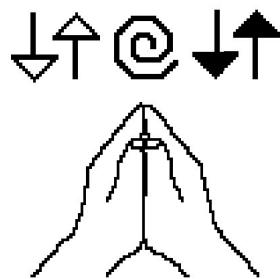
monthly

disappear



Up or Down

A double-stemmed arrow means that the movement is straight up or down, parallel with the front wall. The movement is flat with the front of your body.



Straight Movement



**Forward
or Back**



excuse me

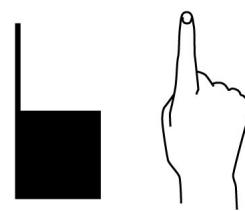
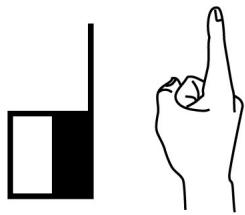
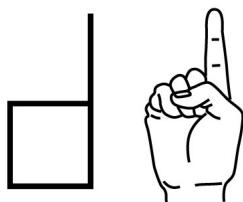
eager

A single-stemmed arrow means that the movement is forward or back, parallel with the floor. You are looking down, on top of the movement.



Front View

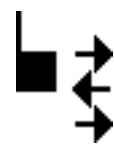
Hands parallel with the Front Wall.



one half



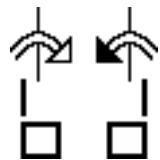
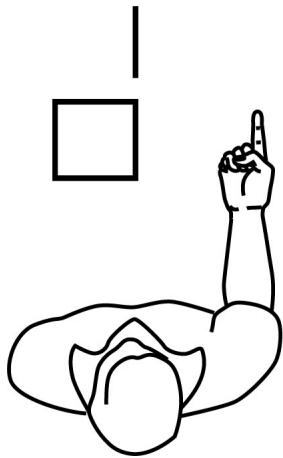
Deaf



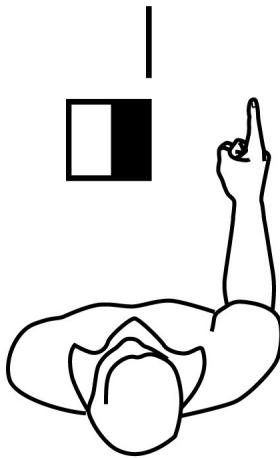
where

Top View

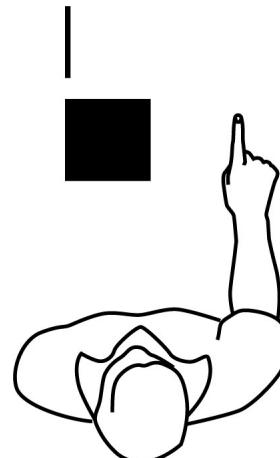
Hands parallel with the Floor.



happen



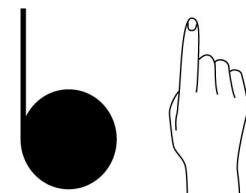
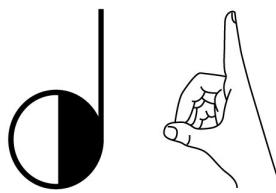
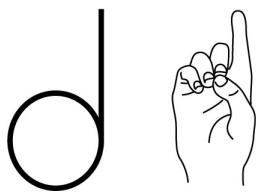
you



also

Front View

Hands parallel with the Front Wall.



dinner



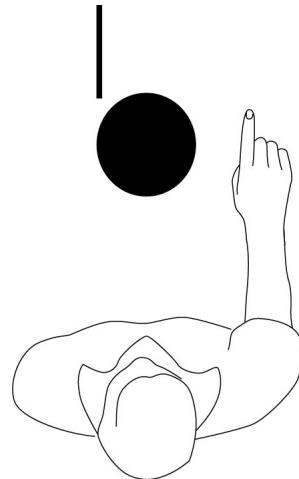
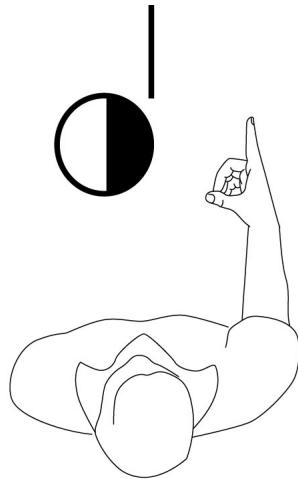
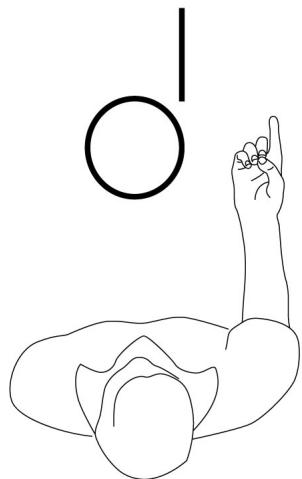
dating



democracy

Top View

Hands parallel with the Floor.



do-do?



dessert

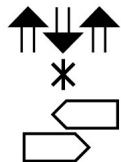
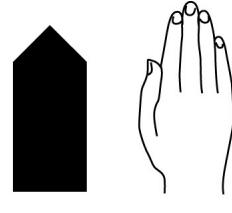
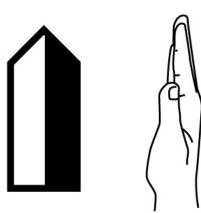
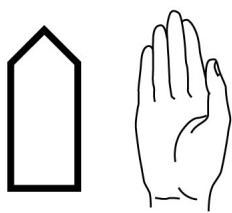


doctor

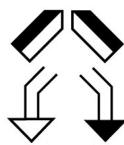


Front View

Hands parallel with the Front Wall.



window



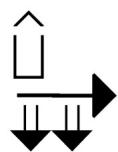
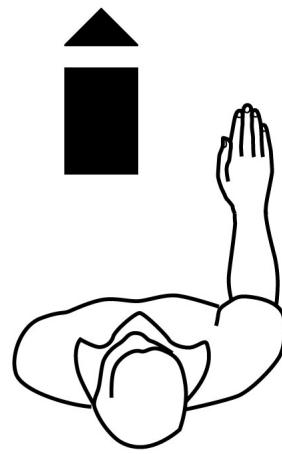
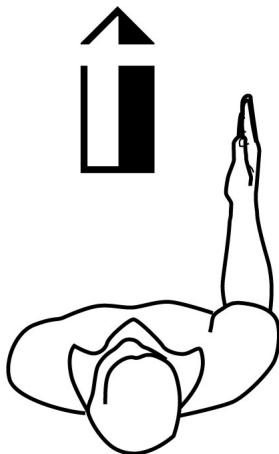
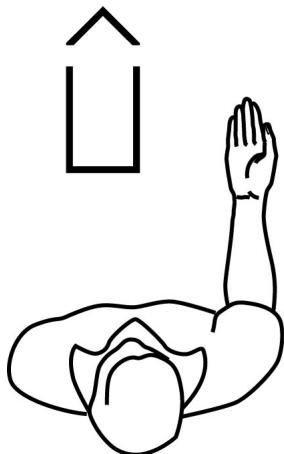
house



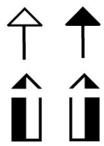
his, hers

Top View

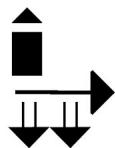
Hands parallel with the Floor.



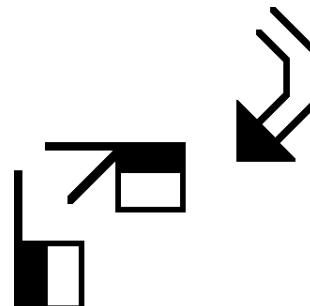
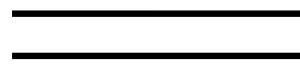
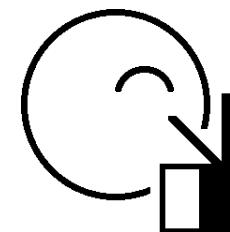
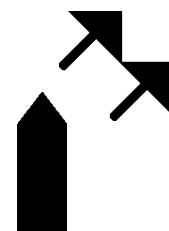
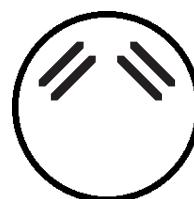
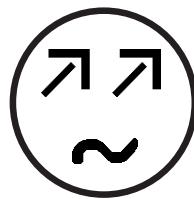
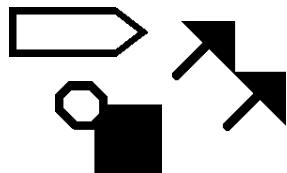
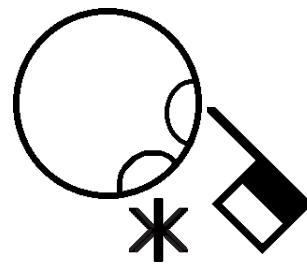
things



way, street



children

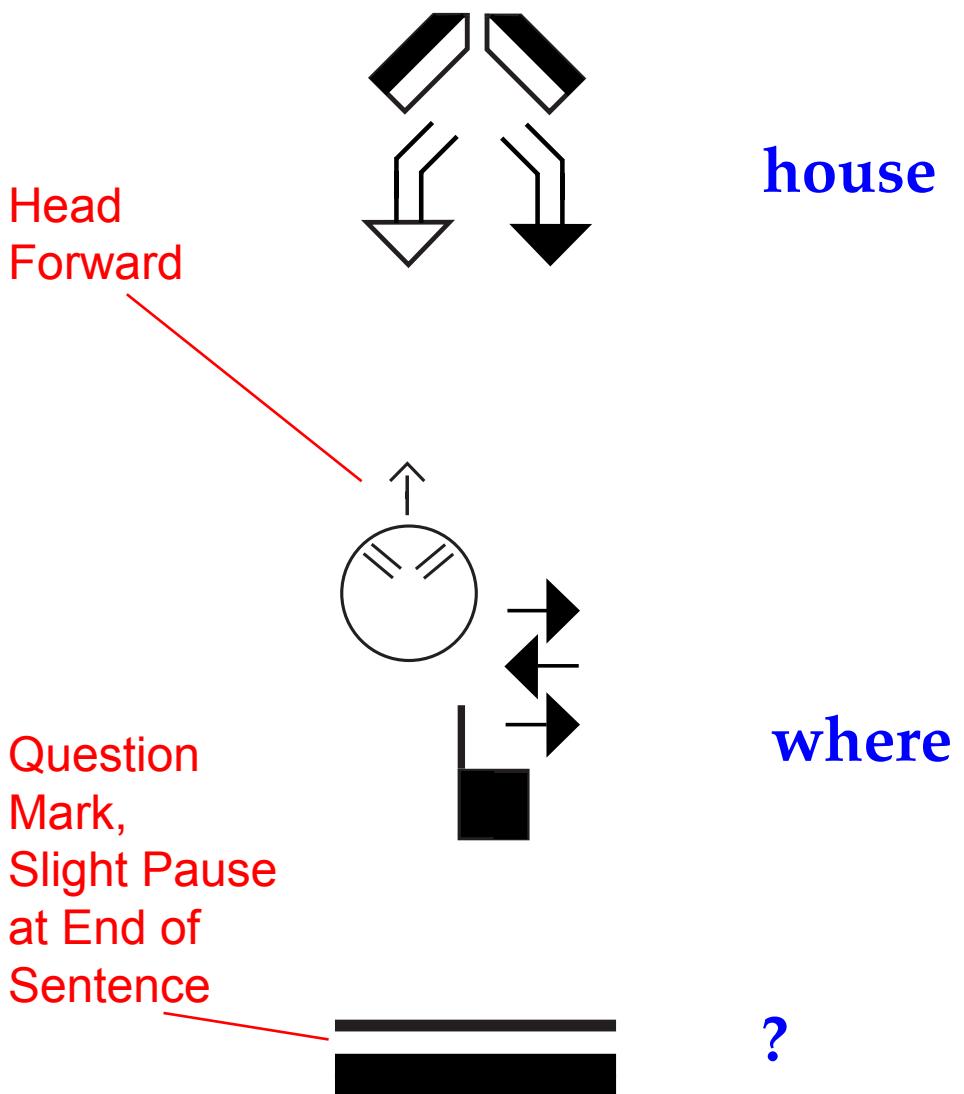
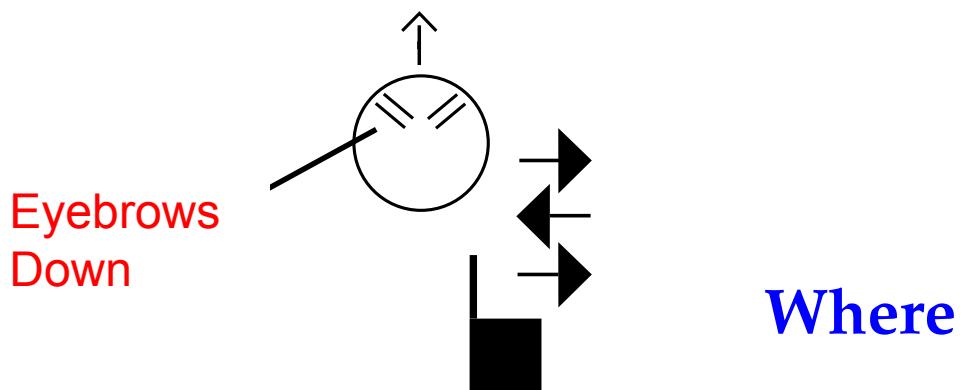


Pause,
Comma

Period,
End of
Sentence

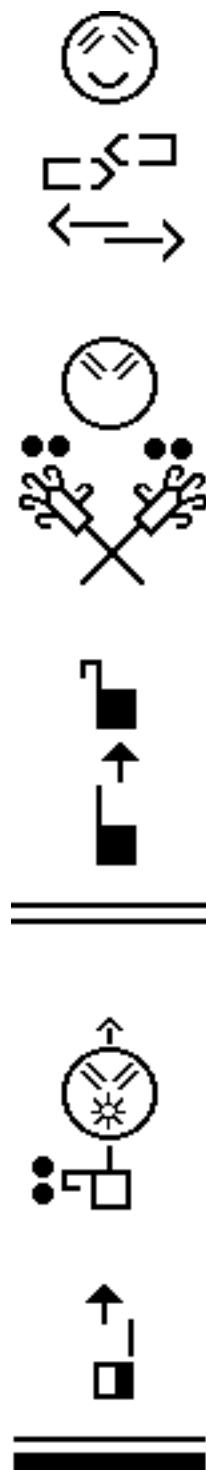


English Translation: Writing ASL from the Deaf perspective.

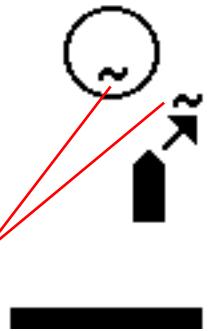
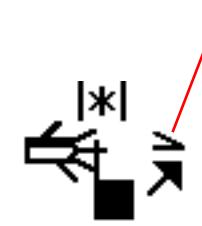


English Translation: Where is the house?

Fast Movement



Tension Symbol

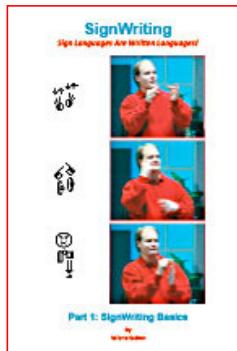


English Translation: Baby Bear asks "Who are you?"
Goldilocks saw the bears, became frightened,
shot out of the house, and ran all the way home.



SignWriting Instruction

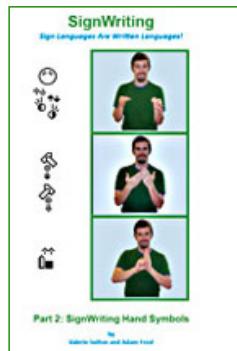
SignWriting.org/lessons • SignWriting.org/shop



1 SignWriting Reference Manual

Manual 1: SignWriting Basics

Learn the basics of SignWriting with this slender, 42 page, spiral-bound manual. An introduction to reading and writing any sign language, it gives a summary of hand symbols, contact symbols, finger movements, arm movements, facial expressions, and reading of sign language literature. All examples are in American Sign Language (ASL). Free for download on the web, and only \$10.00 in the SignWriting Shop. ISBN: 978-0-914336-49-5



2 SignWriting Reference Manual

Manual 2: SignWriting Hand Symbols

This 300-page spiral-bound reference manual devotes a full page to each of the 261 hand symbols of the International SignWriting Alphabet (ISWA 2010), used to write over 40 sign languages on the web in SignPuddle Online. Each page shows one handshape with 6 photos showing 6 different palm facings. The corresponding SignWriting symbol is placed next to each photo. Additional SignWriting instruction is included in the front and the back of the book. ISBN: 978-0-914336-86-0



3 SignWriting Lessons on the Web

Web lessons show moving handshapes with symbols

Adam Frost's photos of his own hands move from one palm facing to another, on 261 web pages, each devoted to one of the 261 hand symbols of the ISWA 2010. This popular site is located in SignWriting Lessons Online. Take a visit:

ISWA 2010 Symbol Lessons Online

Animated GIFs by Adam Frost

<http://www.SignWriting.org/lessons/iswa/>



The SignWriting Press

<http://www.SignWriting.org/shop>

The SignWriting Literature Project

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ISBN 978-0-914336-49-5



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SIGNWRITING BASICS