










Supplement For Lesson 1

*Objectives inspired by, vocabulary transcribed from, and sentences and story by Bill Vicars.
No endorsement implied nor given.*

Objectives

- I have completed the objectives for this lesson.
- I am able to recognize common ASL handshapes in SignWriting.
- I am able to read and write my name in fingerspelled SignWriting.
- I am able to read and write the numbers 1 through 5 in SignWriting.
- I able to *briefly* describe the history of SignWriting.
- I know which direction to read and write SignWriting.
- I am able to explain how the glyphs of SignWriting are organized.
- I have a *basic* idea of how dictionary order works.
- I know how SignWriting works with left handed signing.
- I am able to read the vocabulary for this lesson.
- I am able to read the practice sentences for this lesson.
- I am able to read the practice story for this lesson.

The Common Handshapes of ASL






Bent V	Bent Hand	Claw Hand
		
Closed Hand	Curved Hand	Horns
		
Index	Cocked Index	Open Hand
		

Writing Your Name In SignWriting

Take a small peek into supplement two for a list of symbols for fingerspelling. With how visual SignWriting is, you can start by just “drawing” them while remembering:

- keep the letters centered in a column;
- for each hand, draw the palm with it’s fill;
- then decorate each palm with fingers.

The Numbers One Through Five

One	Two	Three	Four	Five
				

A Very Brief History of SignWriting

*This is a brief extract from www.signwriting.org/library/history.
Please feel free to do some additional reading.*

Valerie Sutton invented a notation to record the movements of ballet as part of her dance studies. She then moved to Copenhagen to train in the Danish Royal Ballet and began to record their movements to prevent the loss of ballet through time. Some people researching Danish Sign Language read a newspaper article about it and contacted her to record the movements of signing—this became the earliest form of SignWriting.

When Valerie Sutton returned home her research turned to recording ASL. Soon books, articles, pamphlets, and even a newsletter began to be written in ASL using SignWriting. Then SignWriting began to be put into a computer, and with that SignWriting became simplified, abstract, and regular.

It was during this time that Deaf users of SignWriting demanded that SignWriting switch from recording what a researcher sees (receptive) to what a signer does (expressive). Then the direction changed from horizontal to vertical.

Today it is used unofficially for close to sixty sign languages and is the official writing system for Brazilian Sign Language with, hopefully, more to follow.

Direction of Reading and Writing

A full word in ASL can consist of a face along with movement and handshapes that change over the course of movement. If SignWriting is written horizontally, as it was initially, then you are left with a word which is half iconic with individual parts of the word being iconic but those parts being horizontally separated from each other. So, of course, individual words have long been written vertically even if the words were strung along horizontally.


Along with writing ASL came a better understanding of the grammar of ASL and a way to write role shifting was required. The simplest way to accomplish this? Write the words vertically and place them in the correct column corresponding to the role.

Today all SignWriting is written vertically, from the top of the page to the bottom of the page, with columns of text moving from the left of the page to the top of the page.

How Do I Remember Over 10,000 Letters?

Yes, that is correct. SignWriting has about ten thousand “letters”, though there are a couple things that make this less daunting.

The first thing to remember is that ASL doesn’t use every letter, just like even if English was written in the International Phonetic Alphabet it would not require all hundred or so letters. SignWriting is usable for all sign languages, and even though we will be learning *about* the whole system we will focus on the *part* that ASL uses.

The second thing to know is that SignWriting isn’t just a list of ten thousand letters, but organized into related groups. So when you see , it's not just *symbol 7,520*. It's *Category One, Symbol Group Four Fingers, Second Symbol, Fill Three, Rotation One*.

The levels of organization for SignWriting are:



1. **Category.** Every symbol in SignWriting fits into one of these seven categories.
2. **Symbol group.** Each category has between one and ten symbol groups for a total of thirty symbol groups which you will eventually know as well as you know your own alphabet.
3. **Base symbol.** Each symbol group has a number of base symbols, and you should learn the order of these but you will not need to know all of them.
4. **Fill.** Each base symbol has between one and six fills.
5. **Rotation.** Each fill has between one and sixteen different rotations, though it tends to be regular enough that it can be ignored when identifying a symbol.

The Basics of Dictionary Order






Let's start by pointing out that we don't have a dictionary, we have a glossary. If we had a dictionary then we would include information about scope, alternates, pronunciation (formation) helps, and even point to additional words to look at. All of this information is available at <https://www.lifeprint.com/dictionary.htm> but we only list glosses — basic word correspondence.

Second, let's comparing the order of our glossary with the order of a typical English dictionary.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Even if you don't know whether # comes before <i>apple</i> or after <i>zebra</i> you know that punctuation marks will be grouped together. | SignWriting symbols are grouped by their functional categories. |
| 2. Alphabetic order is arbitrary. The letter <i>A</i> comes before <i>B</i> simply because of where the Romans borrowed them from. | The order is arbitrary, someone picked it. |
| 3. The exact rules being followed vary slightly on purpose. For instance, author lists will treat <i>Mac</i> and <i>Mc</i> as a separate letter between <i>M</i> and <i>N</i> . | This sorting follows the international standard but you may find different ways to sort in other places. |
| 4. We sort word by word so <i>I Read</i> comes before <i>In May</i> . | These rules are for sorting words. |

- | | |
|--|--|
| 5. Shorter words come before longer words so <i>pen</i> comes before <i>penmanship</i> . | Words like  come before words like  . |
|--|--|





For English, that's the end of the story because one sound comes at a time; but in ASL more than one thing can be happening at the same time so we have to decide how to handle both simultaneous and sequential activity. A full sign is first broken into syllables based generally on sequential ordering.


- | | | |
|--|---------|---|
|  | becomes | 1. Syllable 1. Hands beginning position —  |
| | | 2. Syllable 2. Movement between hand positions —  |
| | | 3. Syllable 3. Hands ending position —  |
| | | 4. Syllable 4. Everything else —  |

We are literally following the order of a verbal description of how to sign. “First to make your primary hand into a bent V shape, your secondary hand into a flat hand” which makes for our first syllable. “Then you move your primary hand in a downward loop while moving your secondary hand down” which makes for our second syllable. “Then a V handshape hits the back of a B handshape” which makes for our third syllable. Everything else goes into the final syllable. For longer or compound words we extend this pattern of basing the syllables on a verbal description of how to sign the word.

You might notice that we left some of the movement of the secondary hand implied. This is a fairly common practice in day-to-day SignWriting because the secondary hand is *secondary*.

Within each of these syllables we consider all the simultaneous things that can occur in a certain order. We don't use any mark to show separation of syllables but the odd syllables contain handshapes and occasionally contact, the even syllables (except the last) contain movement and often contact, the last syllable has anything leftover.

For odd syllables we sort the right hand (, ) , then the left (, ) , then the finger movement, and finally contact (#).

For even syllables, except the last, we sort finger movement, contact, right hand movement () , simultaneous movement, and finally left hand movement.

For the last syllable we just follow the arbitrary order we will be learning over this and the next several supplements.

This does have the side effect that which syllable finger movement and contact exists in is technically up for interpretation. Consider the description we gave verses “you move your primary hand in a downward loop to strike the back of the b hand after your secondary hand moved down” — which syllable does the strike contact belong to? That’s really open to interpretation.

SignWriting and Left Handed Signing

Throughout these lessons I refer to right and left hands. It would be most accurate to call them dominant and non-dominant hands. When using SignWriting to read ASL the dominant hand visually appears as if it is the right hand and is placed on the right side.

Of course, for your own writing you are free to draw the sign anyway you would prefer, but for purposes of these supplements we assume right-handed signers.













Vocabulary for Lesson 1

1		sign (as in “signing”)	who	
2		meaning	why	
3		meet	yes	
4		name	<i>Indexing</i>	
5		student	he	
again		nice	her	
clean		no	him	
deaf		over	I	
don’t		public	it	
understand		repeat	me	
hearing		re-	she	
learn		say	you	
like (emotion)			<i>Plural Indexing</i>	

Practice Sheet 1.A

In addition to vocabulary, anytime you write there are additional conventions which exist outside of the spoken (or signed) word. For instance, if the practice sentence said something like: “1. ¿Cómo se llama?”, you wouldn’t practice saying “One dot inverted question mark cómo se llama question mark”. Even when you learn the names of these symbols, you still wouldn’t say “Uno punto signo de apertura de interrogación cómo se llama signo de interrogación”! You use the punctuation as markers for what to practice and how to speak.

It’s just that in a language like Spanish, you already know most of the punctuation and what it means because of shared literary history. When writing ASL, those marks don’t work very well with the other symbols so there are new symbols to learn. So for practice sheet 1.A we are going to have a side by side gloss of every symbol and discuss what it going on. Then you will be expected to apply that knowledge in all additional practice sheets, and we will continue to warn you about new punctuation.

	1	Because of the next symbol, this simply tells us that this is the first item to practice.		2	
)	This normally would be paired with an opening parentheses as well. The fact that we have a closing parentheses without an opening parentheses points out that this separates the counter from the actual sentence to practice. Comma (two straight lines) is another common punctuation to use here.		,	We will usually use parentheses, but here is an example of using comma instead and is perfectly acceptable in any homework (subject to teacher’s approval).
	you			deaf	
	Eyebrows	Question that isn’t a yes or no question.		Eyebrows	Question that is a yes or no question.
	name			you	
	?	Nothing is signed here. This just signals that the sentence is over.		?	Draw three lines, connect the last two by making an wide “X” between them.

	3		4		5
	learn		your		you
	-er		teach		understand
	yes/no		-er		yes/no
	you		i		s/he
	?		name		?

Practice Sheet 1.B

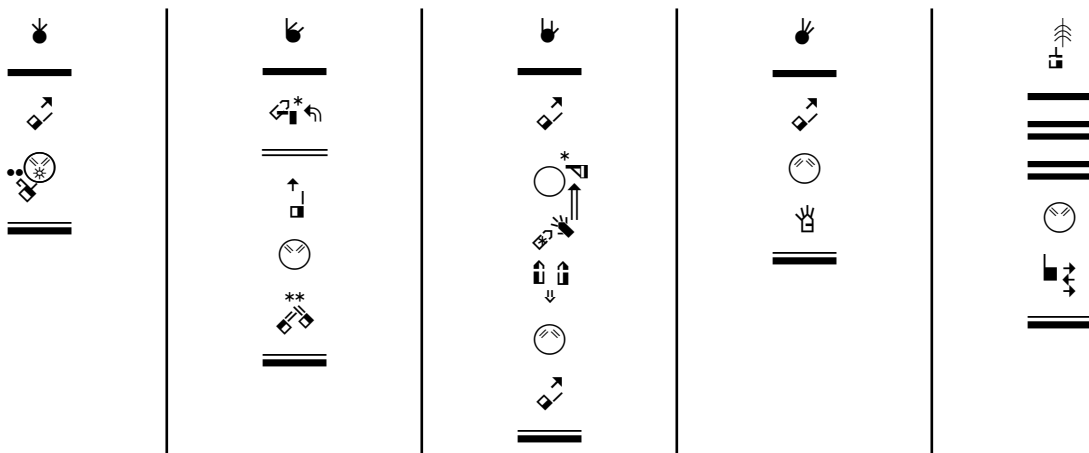
There are two things to notice in this practice sheet. The first is that we have the numbers for 6–9 and zero, but don't worry about these yet as that's for lessons 2 and 5. Just know that we will be numbering these much like we would in English.

The second thing to notice is the sign for who. There are two ways to deal with this word depending on the overall context of the sentence. You can write the eyebrows followed by a head without eyebrows to indicate “first adjust your eyebrows to show you are asking a question and then do the sign for who” and that is a perfectly acceptable way to write it. This is especially true if the question starts before the word who. You can also write the eyebrows as part of the sign for who, and that is a perfectly acceptable way to write it.


The third is the comma or in number seven which *is* part of the practice. In this case it represents a brief pause in signing.

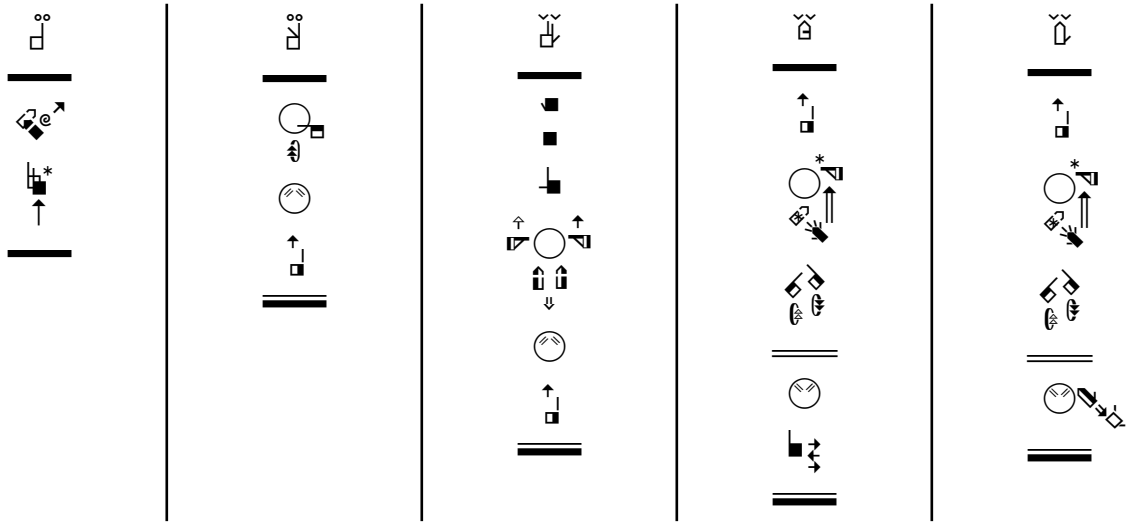
The final is in number ten, which is “::”. This is a stand in for _____ or ... — it means

that there is something to practice which we have not fully specified. In the case of question ten, you are supposed to spell someone's name. In the case of the practice story, it means to fill in your details — practice your story and not someone else's.

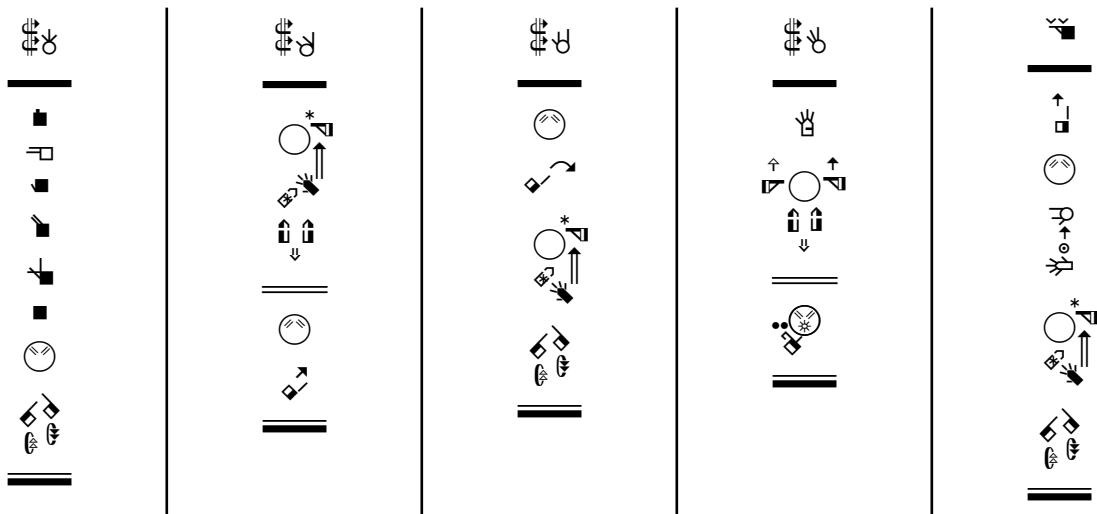


Practice Sheet 1.C


Number eleven introduces a new punctuation mark of  or period. It simply marks the end of a statement. You draw it by drawing two lines and then connecting them by making an wide “X” between the lines.



Practice Sheet 1.D



Story 1

This story has the last of the punctuation which is  which represents “/”. In this case we have it to indicate to you to “select between one of ‘deaf’ or ‘hard of hearing’ or ‘hearing’ ”.



