



BASIC SIGN BOOKLET IN HAPTIC COMMUNICATION



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Haptic communication – signals through touch

- to reclaim the surroundings, to capture the surroundings

“Haptic” is derived from the Greek term *Haptikos* which relates to the **sense of touch**.



If you look this word up in a dictionary or an encyclopaedia, you'll find that the Latin term for the lexemic equivalent is “tactile”.

In respect of the combined auditory and visually impaired, the deaf-blind, this has NO parallel to tactile in a linguistic context. As previously mentioned, tactile sign language is a method where the deaf-blind rests his/her hands on the speaker's hands as the message is signed. Tactile familiarisation is when a deaf-blind or blind person uses his/her hands to create a mental image of the shape and boundaries of the surroundings. Haptic communication deals with a far wider range of touch, where the deaf-blind do not use his/her hands to establish shape and boundaries but receives this information from the touch of others. As an established concept in other forums, Haptic deals with shape and boundaries. It expresses the opposite of optic, i.e. what is visually perceived. Haptic has been established as a term by PhD Candidate Riitta Lahtinen, Finland. The concept of haptic sign language, haptic communication has been introduced to the deaf-blind in Norway by Trine Næss.

Haptic signs

A tactile sign/touch system which runs parallel with “the spoken word”, simultaneously, during communication/familiarisation in an environment with interaction between the deaf-blind and the hearing, between the deaf-blind and the hard of hearing/deaf, between two deaf-blind people in conversation. Haptic signals will thus run parallel with any other language. Communication is not limited to signs that can be felt by resting the hands on top of the speaker's hands. The signals can be perceived through a number of “neutral sign areas” by using other parts of the body.

Such signals will primarily supplement the spoken or signed word, and the aim is to communicate context. Haptic communication utilises the nerve cells in the skin which perceive and limit pressure, temperature, direction and shape. At the same time, the system makes use of the body's kinaesthetic senses, and this provides a perception of motion in terms of room and boundaries, balance.

In its extended form, in what is known in sign language linguistics as “Intimate Level” and “Casual Level”, it is possible to use haptic sign language as an independent language. People at this level have used haptic communication

over a long period of time and in an environment where any other person(s) involved is as familiar with the language style as the person who is deaf-blind.

The mysterious body signs used by “everyone” – what are they?

This chapter provides a basic framework for giving signals through contact with the body. It is important to keep in mind that the boundaries and perception of what is comfortable and uncomfortable will vary from individual to individual.

This applies to the body part as well as the pressure level used.

However, a certain level of pressure is required in order for the signals to be perceived clearly.

Any personal areas of the body are clearly marked in red. It is not acceptable to use the front of the body from the neck down to the knees. This also applies to the back, from the lower back and all the way down.

Five haptic articulation area

1) Shoulder, upper arm

– is reserved for linguistic signals, to indicate names, items etc.

- the area between elbow and shoulder is used to indicate height (level) and amount.



2) The upper back, or the whole back

-is used to draw maps, such as over a room (small square area) or surroundings (large outdoor and indoor areas)

- the upper back, between the shoulders, is used to indicate direction, right/left. The spine is “straight ahead”, in the middle....

3) **The hand as proform for face**

– can be used to signal facial expressions, or to create maps, localisation of items in the surroundings. Used in the same way as the back.

The hand as response indicator:

To indicate the signs for yes/no, wait, what, and to spell out names, words etc.

4) **At the very front of the knee, the outer part of the knee.**

In a sit-down position: feedback/response (yes, no, what), smile/grumpy, mouth/laughter, spellings, initials and more.

5) **The instep; foot to foot, response “yes/no”**

Haptic articulation area, are linked to neutral sign/contact areas on the body. Everything on the front of the body, from the neck down to the knees, is a RED area, i.e. NOT neutral.

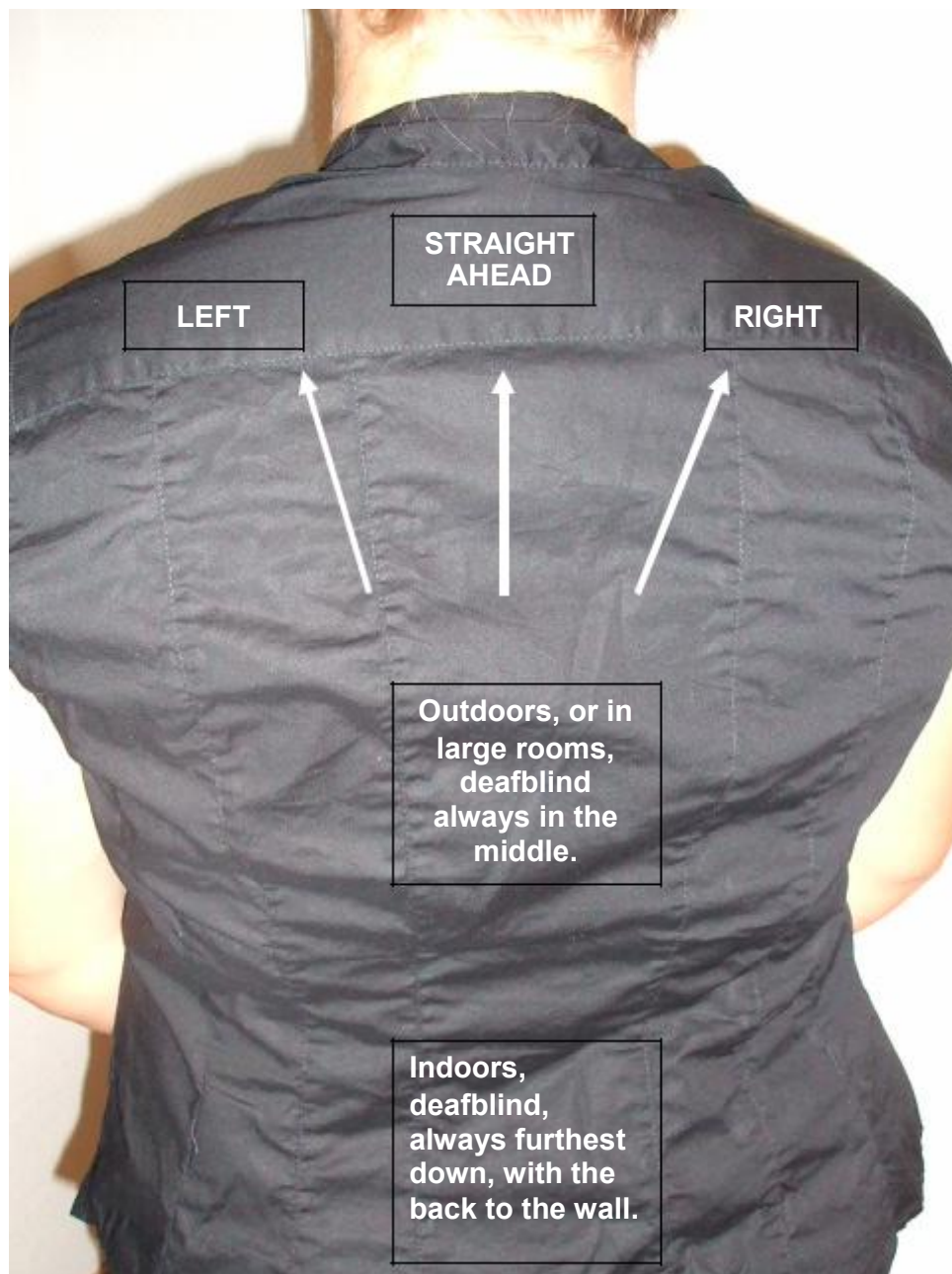
The experience of the touch is highly individual.

Through mapping and discussion, five areas have been established as articulation areas for active users of haptic communication.

It important to work together with the person who is interested in using haptic communication to establish which articulation areas he/she prefers or, alternatively, do not wish to use. For most people, the back and shoulder/upper arm are perceived as less uncomfortable and easier to accept and get used to.

It is also important to be aware that the intensity and pressure level required will vary from individual to individual. Signals one person perceives as weak and thus confusing and diffuse, someone else may perceive as painful. Use of haptic communication requires collaboration and open feedback from all involved.

THE BACK AS ARTICULATION AREA



HAND SIGNS, LEXEMES, WORDS AND PHRASES



- Circular motion = coffee
- Place the hand carefully on the shoulder = wait
- Two clear taps = Yes, now you can talk/your turn.
Two thumps = finished
- Write X using the index finger = TIME-OUT
- Stroke back and forth = NO
- Let the fingers play = WHAT? (NB! in other areas this can indicate laughter, but then on the back or the hand)

DIRECTION



- Gradual motion to the left, right and straight ahead.
- Both an open hand and the index finger can be used to indicate direction.

INDICATION OF ROOM



- Start from the lower back, to the centre, and use both index fingers to draw a square. Fingers are to be moved in parallel. First, the fingers will move apart to each side and then run in parallel up towards the shoulders and back in towards the centre until the fingertips meet.
- Reference sign for room. Description of room will follow.

POINTING HAND



- No motion = where a person or item is positioned
- Motion in one direction = person walking
- Rapid upward motions = a person raising his/her hand

U-HAND, TWO FINGERS



- Indicates chair
- Can also be used for person if use of index finger is uncomfortable, sharp-pointed touch.
- 2 fingers provide a softer touch

WINDOW/SIT DOWN



- 2 thumps indicate window. Shown in the place where the window is positioned.
- Indicates sit down. The contact area is somewhat larger than when using a U-hand.

SHOULDER/UPPER ARM as articulation area



- Size, amount and level.
- By the elbow = floor, ground, small, empty, little, low and child.
- By shoulder = ceiling, high, sky, large, plenty and adult.

SHOULDER/UPPER ARM as articulation area



- Reference signs are shown on the upper arm
- Action signs, numbers, spellings and colours
- Most signs without localisation are shown on the upper arm. Some directly by using the map on the back.

NUMBERS AND SPELLINGS



- Clearly formed on the upper arm
- Use capital letters
- Numbers are written clearly on the upper arm
- To indicate actions, first names and situations without set signs
- TIME-OUT = an X is drawn on the upper arm. International sign - indicates that the deaf-blind have to accept being escorted or have to stop due to a dangerous situation.

COFFEE



- **Fist**
- **Circular motion**

CORRECT / FINISHED



- Two thumps, “karate hand” - something is finished
- Several thumps in rapid sequence - something is correct (the “yes” sign on the back can also be used)

PERSON



- Person is indicated on the upper arm
- Two parallel lines are made by running the thumb and index finger from the top of the upper arm and down towards the elbow

HEAD, UPPER BODY, LEGS AND FEET



- The face is drawn as a circle at the very top of the shoulder
- Upper body – immediately below the face. Create two parallel lines by running thumb and index finger downwards.
- Lower body – create two narrow, parallel lines by using thumb and index finger. Immediately below the upper body.
- Feet = point to the feet, with one or two fingers

NOISE/DISTURBANCE



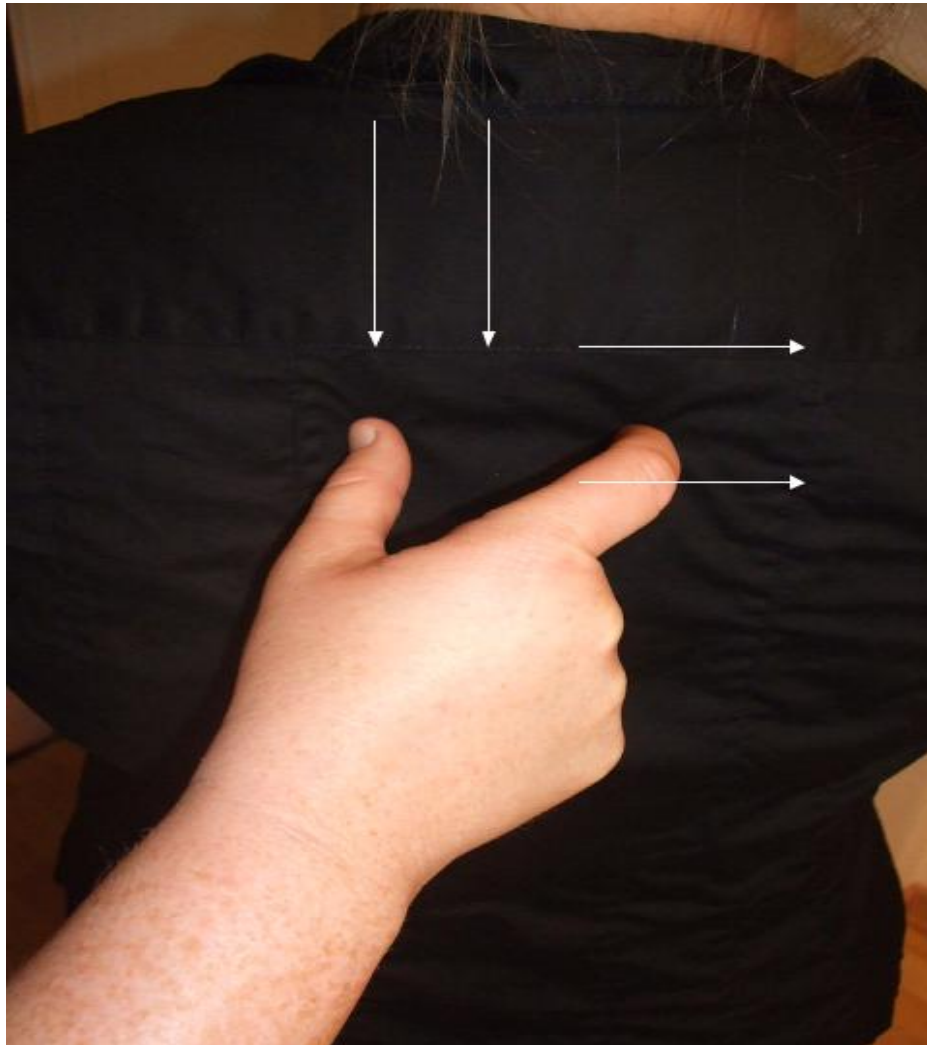
- Thumb and little finger
- Trembling motion, back and forth

TELEPHONE



- Little finger and thumb
- Toggle motion

ROWS OF TABLES AND SOFAS



- G-hand
- Rows of tables, U-shape layout, long rows in subsequent order
- Rows of tables

LAUGHTER, SIGN LANGUAGE, COMPUTER (PC)



- Playing fingers, as when playing the piano = laughter
- Circular motion = sign language is used (two hands)
- Computer, PC

SMILE - GRUMPY



- Index finger
- Smiling mouth
- Grumpy mouth

TALK WITH VOICE - CHAT



- Talk with voice, chat
- Open/close the hand several times with the fingertips in contact with the back

DOOR



- Waving motion – several times
- On spot where the door is positioned
- The hand's little-finger side touches the back

FLOWER - SHRUBS



- Touch the back with fingertips together and then spread fingers outwards.

WALK



- Signals that someone walks past in the direction indicated on the back
- Index finger and middle finger

INDICATES WHERE THE PERSON IS



- The contact point indicates one specific person already identified by name and location when going over the items and people in the room.

POSITIONING OF TREES or LARGE ITEMS



- Fist
- Location of trees, or show where larger items are positioned

PROFORMS



- Flat, open hand
- Proform for a table, a car. Depending on the situation.
- Hand held still can indicate a parked car, or a car not in motion
- Stroke back and forth = erase. Prepare for new description. Both hands slide apart = silence in the room, no one is talking

PROFORM, CAR IN MOTION



- The palm touches the back
- Car in motion in relation to where the deaf-blind is standing
- Can also be a proform for boat if sea or lake is indicated by drawing waves across the back

WE CAN GO NOW



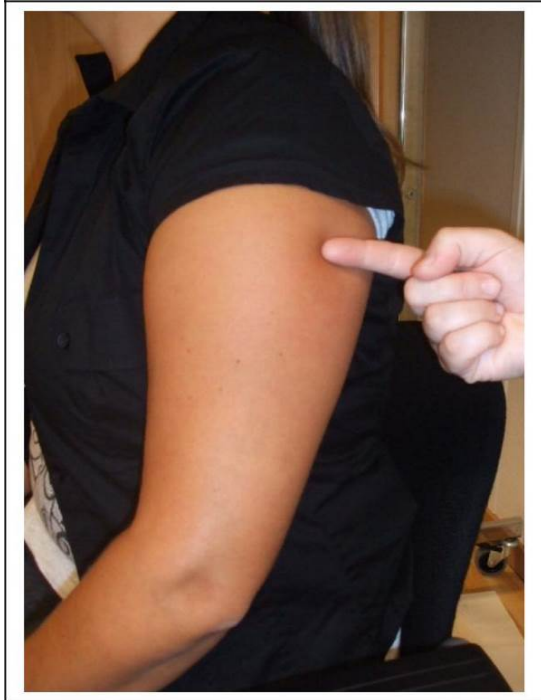
- The “walk” sign on the upper arm. “Shall we go?”

COLOURS



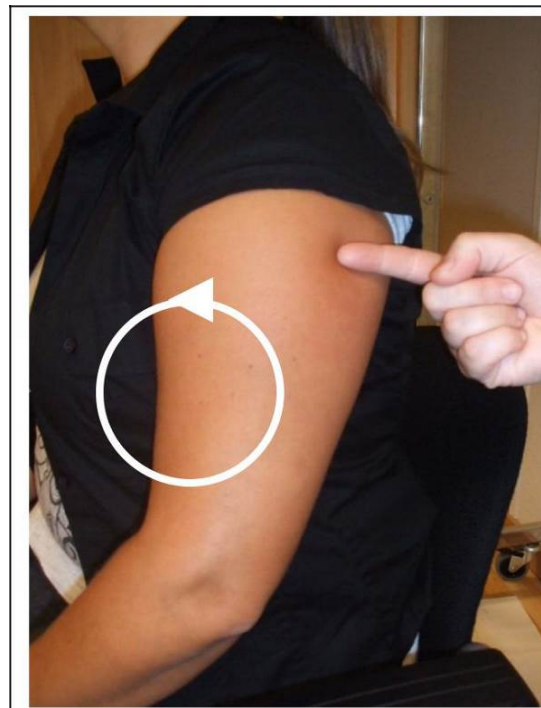
- Reference sign for colours
- Open hand spread out - motion from shoulder to elbow

RED



- Horizontal line with index finger at the top of the upper arm

YELLOW



- Index finger is used to draw a few circles

BLUE



- Flat hand as an arch upwards and to the side

GREEN



- The three fingers are run downwards in 3 waving motions.

PINK



Fingertips together and curled, and are then spread out as the sign for “flower” until the fingers are straight.

PURPLE



- Index finger and middle finger together.
- Draw a wave along the arm.

BROWN - CHOCOLATE/CACAO



Flat, open hand creating
a circular motion

ORANGE



- Index finger crawls like
a worm across the arm.
- The finger curls and
straightens.

GREY/CAKE



GREY

- Hand spread out, fingertips like a claw
- Tremble gently back and forth, as is if scratching an itch.

CAKE

- Hand spread out, fingertips like a claw
- The motion is made twice (thumping motion)

BLACK-DARK



- Run a flat, open hand down towards the elbow

WHITE – BRIGHT – NUMBER INDICATION - SPELLING



- Run the index finger straight down towards the elbow

EAT - FOOD



- Circular motion, as the fingers open and close
- Reference sign for food

FORK



- Pointing motion, twice on the upper arm

KNIFE



- Slicing motion - repeated several times, back and forth

SPOON - BUTTER



- Twice to the side = SPOON
- Repeatedly towards you, or downward

BREAD



- Slicing motion across the arm

MEAT



- Gentle pinch on the arm

CHEESE



- Run hand slowly down towards the elbow

FISH



- Open hand with the little-finger side facing the arm
- Wave motion on the upper arm.

TEA



- Index finger and thumb together
- Fingers are run up and down repeatedly

MINERAL WATER/SOFT DRINKS



- Fingers spread out like a flower

SQUASH/JUICE/MILK



- Juice/squash = squeeze the upper arm
- Milk = squeeze the upper arm and at the same time run the hand downwards

JAM



- Turning motion, as if turning a button