

UNIT 14

Complaining, Making Suggestions and Requests

LANGUAGE IN ACTION

Asking to Borrow a Truck

Read the situation below before watching the videotaped series of conversations, "Asking to Borrow a Truck." Then watch the tape and try to follow the intent of the exchange. Do not concern yourself with unfamiliar signs, but use context to help you figure out the meaning. After you can follow the conversation, fill in the information requested at the end of the exercise.

Situation: Anthony has just bought a dresser and needs to borrow a truck to take it home.

(Anthony goes to Joe's home and finds him washing the car.)

Anthony: greets Joe

Joe: greets Anthony, asks what's happening

Anthony: asks if he still has a truck

Joe: says yes, tells where it is, asks why

Anthony: tells about his purchase, **asks if he can borrow the truck, explains why** he needs it

Joe: **responds**

Anthony: accepts explanation, says he will ask around

Anthony: } leavetakings...
Joe: }

(Anthony goes to a playing field where his friend Shane is sitting on the bench, waiting for his turn at bat.)

Anthony: gets Shane's attention, **makes request**

Shane: **responds**, asks why

Anthony: explains why

Shane: asks if he knows Pat (name sign)

Anthony: spells out name to confirm

Shane: confirms, explains she has an old truck

Anthony: asks if Pat's truck is very old

Shane: gives opinion, suggests Anthony go see her and find out

Anthony: asks if Pat still lives near the park

Shane: replies affirmatively

Anthony: says he'll go see her (another ballplayer tells Shane he's up at bat)

Anthony: } leavetakings...
Shane: }

(Anthony approaches Pat, who is mowing the lawn.)

Anthony: } greetings
Pat: }

Anthony: asks why her husband is not mowing the lawn

Pat: complains about husband

Anthony: responds

Pat: asks why Anthony is here

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Anthony: **gives reason, makes request**
 Pat: asks where Anthony lives
 Anthony: tells where: nearby, in Berkeley
 Pat: tells him that's not really near, it's far
 Anthony: disagrees
 Pat: **responds to request**
 Anthony: tells Pat he will check with other people
 Pat: apologizes
 Anthony: responds
 Anthony: } leavetakings...
 Pat: }

(Anthony goes to Cinnie's place, and finds her reading the newspaper on her front porch.)

Anthony: } greetings
 Cinnie: }
 Anthony: tells about his purchase, **makes request**
 Cinnie: **responds**
 Anthony: responds, tells Cinnie he'll get back to her if he cannot find another truck
 Cinnie: suggests he check with Lon who is coming by any minute
 Anthony: agrees
 Cinnie: offers him the paper
 Anthony: asks for sports section
 Cinnie: } discuss their favorite teams
 Anthony: }

(Lon arrives.)

Cinnie: (gets Anthony's attention) tells him Lon is here
 Anthony: } greetings
 Lon: }
 Anthony: explains situation, **makes request**
 Lon: **responds**
 Anthony: asks if he can pick it up tomorrow at 3:00
 Lon: agrees
 Anthony: expresses relief
 All: leavetakings

Key phrases that express target language functions for this unit are highlighted. Observe how Anthony makes the same request in different ways, and how the reasons given for his request vary in detail with each person he asks. The reason he gives to Joe at the beginning includes information about his purchase and the fact that the store doesn't make deliveries. Giving a reason to Lon at the end, he explains that he tried to borrow a truck from several people to no avail, but Cinnie suggested he contact Lon. Watch the dialogue once more and observe the reasons Anthony gives to each person.

The responses that different people give to Anthony's request also vary. Write down the type of response (see list below), and fill in the explanation or suggestion given by each person.

types of response

- agree, with condition
- agree, tell shortcoming
- decline, tell why
- decline, suggest other solution
- hedge

	type of response	explanation/suggestion
Joe:	_____	_____
Shane:	_____	_____
Pat:	_____	_____
Cinnie:	_____	_____
Lon:	_____	_____

Answers on p. 158.

LANGUAGE IN PRACTICE

Inflections for Temporal Aspect

Some verbs in ASL may be inflected for various purposes, i.e., to show who did what to whom, to show how something is moved from one location to another, or to show manner of movement. Inflections involve a change in the movement of the sign. The type of inflection discussed here is for temporal aspect, and shows the *frequency or duration of action* represented by the verb. If, for example, you want to complain about your health or an on-going personal problem, you would most likely inflect the verb sign to indicate how frequently or how long the problem has occurred.*

If a problem, activity or situation has occurred only once, use the **uninflected** form, which is the basic form of the verb with its basic movement. This is an example of an uninflected verb.



If a problem, activity or situation occurs frequently or regularly (several times a day, every day, every Monday), use **recurring inflection** by signing the verb with several repetitions. This is an illustration of the same verb signed with recurring inflection.



If a problem, activity or situation has occurred continuously with little interruption (for the whole hour, all morning, all week long), use **continuous inflection** by signing the verb with a repeated circular movement. This illustration shows the same verb signed with continuous inflection.



*Not all verbs can be inflected. Many of the verbs in the category "Complaints about" in the Vocabulary Review section at the end of this unit are examples of temporal aspect inflections.

Demonstration

On videotape, you will see the following three verb forms demonstrated:

- uninflected form (Cinnie)
- recurring inflection (Mary)
- continuous inflection (Priscilla)

Note how the time signs in each sentence agree with the inflections.

Next on the videotape, you will see 18 sentences, each with an uninflected or inflected form of the verb sign indicating how often the activity has occurred. Circle which verb form is used in each sentence. Also note how the time signs agree with the inflections.

1.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
2.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
3.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
4.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
5.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
6.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
7.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
8.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
9.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
10.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
11.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
12.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
13.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
14.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
15.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
16.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
17.	uninflected	recurring	continuous
18.	uninflected	recurring	continuous

Answers on p. 158.

Spatial Agreement

Talking About a Third Person. When you talk about a third person, it is important that you use your signing space, verb inflections and pronouns appropriately. (By a “third person” we mean someone other than yourself, the “first person,” and the person with whom you’re talking, the “second person.”) The third person can be present and in view, or out of sight, whereabouts known or unknown. The important thing is to *set up the referent for the third person in a certain location, and then use pronouns and inflections on verbs that agree with that location.*

Talking about a third person who is present: When you talk about someone who is present in the room, refer to that person’s actual location. If that person moves to another location in the room, refer to the new location to talk about that person.

What if someone was present and then left the room? Usually a new location is established in the direction in which the person was last seen: if s/he went out the front door, point to the direction of the door. If you don’t know where the person went, use the location previously established for that person.

Talking about a third person who is not present: When you talk about someone who is *not* present in the room, you need to establish a particular location to refer to that person.* You and the person you are talking with should refer to the same location for subsequent references to that third person.

Using Agreement Verbs. One verb type in ASL is called **agreement verbs**.** These verbs are inflected to show who did what to whom by incorporating the subject (the person doing the action) and the object (the person receiving the action) in the movement of the sign. The movement *agrees with* the locations established for the pronouns. (Sometimes the palm orientation rather than the movement of the verb indicates the subject and object, for example, in the sign for “look at.”) When using agreement verbs, begin the movement of the verb sign near the location of the subject, and end the movement near the location of the object. See the illustration below showing how the movement path of the verb changes to agree with different pronouns.



(you to third person)



(third person to you)



(you to third person)



(third person to you)

Using Pronouns with Plain Verbs. What if you want to talk about a third person but the verbs you use are not the type that can change movement or orientation to reflect the subject and object? (These verbs are called plain verbs—see the Level 1 *Student Workbook*, p. 55.) You must use pronouns with these verbs to specify the subject and object. As discussed previously, using personal pronouns in ASL involves pointing to certain locations. Where you point needs to be consistent within a conversation, and follow the guidelines discussed above.

*A general rule for establishing locations to represent non-present persons is: if you refer to one person, designate a location on your dominant side; if you refer to two persons, designate a location for the first person on your non-dominant side, then a different location for the second person on your dominant side.

**This is a revised term for the type we called “inflecting verbs” in Unit 9 of the Level 1 *Student Workbook*, p. 108. We use this term based on Carol Padden’s paper “The Relation Between Space and Grammar in ASL Verb Morphology” in *Sign Language Research: Theoretical Issues* (Ceil Lucas, ed.), Gallaudet Univ. Press, Washington D.C., 1990. Many of the verbs illustrated in the “Making Request” category of the Vocabulary Review at the end of this unit are agreement verbs.