

Writing ASL Grammar

in SignWriting®



Lesson Two

Writing Spatial Comparisons in ASL

by

Dr. Karen van Hoek

signed in ASL by

George 'Butch' Zein

...including...

Introduction

The Importance
of Writing

Sign Language

Down In Columns

by

Valerie Sutton

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Introduction

The Importance
of Writing

Sign Language

Down In Columns

by
Valerie Sutton

Why Write Vertically?

SignWriting records the way the body looks.

If we signed lying down...



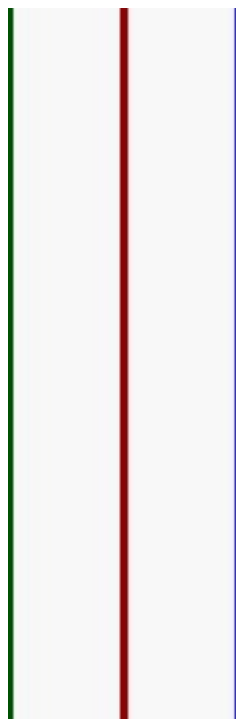
...then writing horizontally might make sense! ;-)

But we sign sitting or standing, and because our bodies are vertical when we sign, it feels comfortable to write signs vertically. Writing down the page provides important information that is easier to read vertically than horizontally. It increases reading speeds. Vertical columns establish the **center of the body**. This helps the eye take notice of **spatial comparisons**. When the hands, the head and torso are placed "off center", the changes in body shifts are clearly evident, as shown on the following pages.

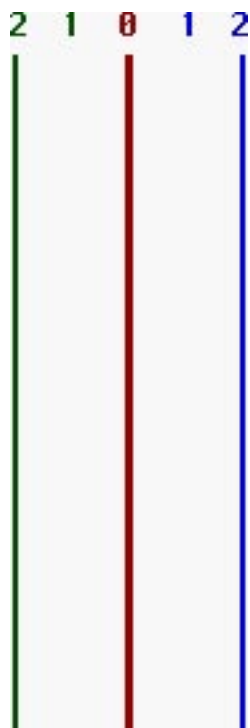
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How To Write Down In Columns

Each column is divided by three imaginary lines:



The vertical column is like a freeway. It has "lanes". The Center Line, Line-0 below, marks the center of the body. Lanes 1 & 2 are "placements" for the hands and body, to the left and right of the center line:



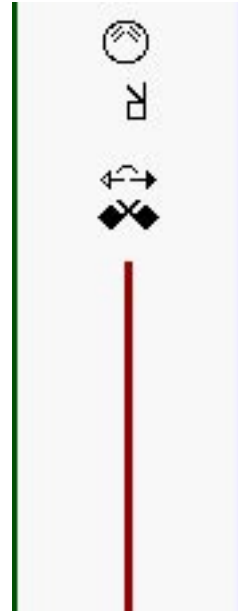
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Below

Signs In The Center

When signs are done in the center of the body, they are written down the center of the column:

2 1 0 1 2

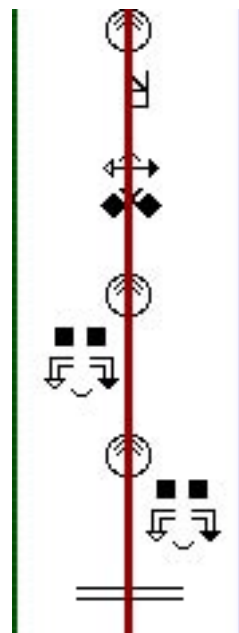


Below

Placement Left & Right of Center

Lane 1 is used when the head and body remain center, but the hands move to the left or right of the center.

2 1 0 1 2

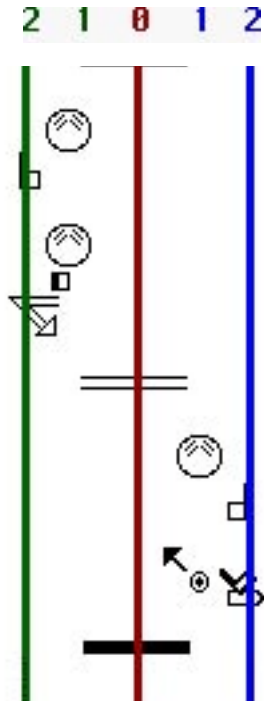


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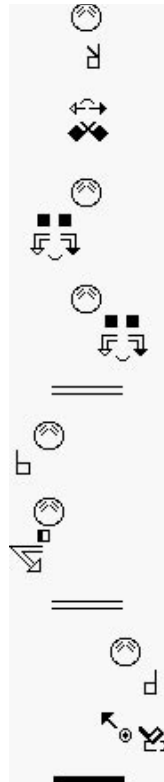
Below

Head Moves to Lane 1, Hands Move to Lane 2

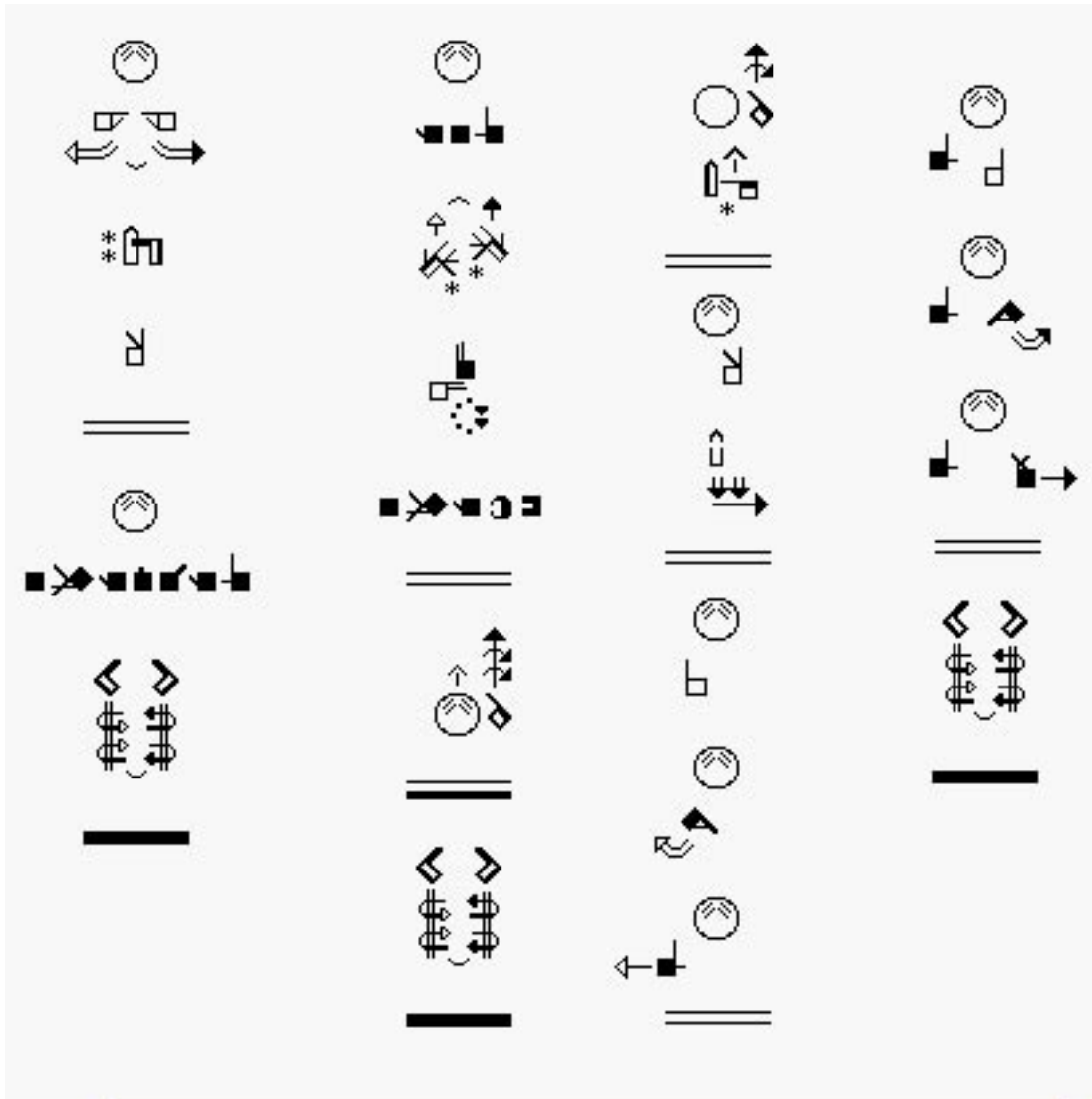
The torso shifts off-center, placing the head in Lane 1.



Here is an example of a sentence:



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Grammar Lesson Two

Spatial Comparisons

by Dr. Karen van Hoek

signed in ASL by George 'Butch' Zein

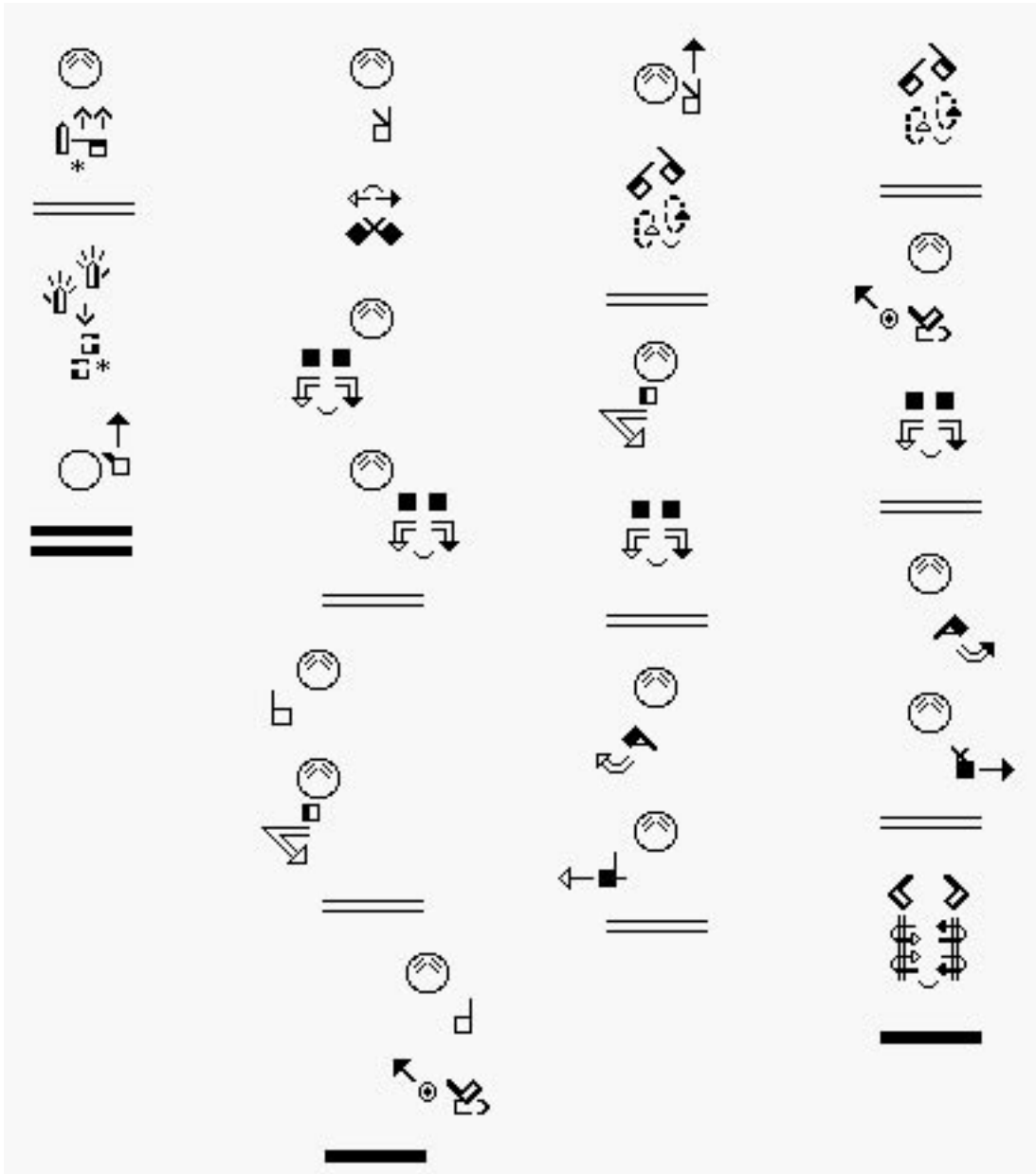
English Translation of ASL Above:

It is common in American Sign Language (ASL) to use space to make comparisons. Two things under discussion are often "set up" spatially. The signer places one item to the left and the other item to the right. The signer compares the left item with the right item.

English Gloss of ASL Above:

grammar...lesson...two...spatial...compare...ASL...tend...use...space...for-for?
compare...for-example...two...things...one...put...left...one...put...right...compare

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English Translation of ASL Above:

Let us look at an example to give you an idea:

Two different systems, one old and one new.

In this example two systems are under discussion, an old one and a new one. The author placed the old system to the left, and the new system to the right.

English Gloss of ASL Above:

example...get...idea...two...different...system...system...one...old...one...new
see...sign...old...system...put...left...sign...new...system...put...right...compare

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