



SignWriter® v.4.4

# Lessons in SignWriter

Valerie Sutton

#### SignWriter Computer Program Instruction Manuals

version 4.4

#### Manual Two

## Lessons In SignWriter®

By Valerie Sutton

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Part 1:

## Your Keyboard

### **Commonly-Used Keys**

You should become familiar with your keyboard. SignWriter uses ten commonly-used keys:

Alt Key Home Key End Key Page Up (PgUp) Page Down (PgDn) Control Key Up Arrow Key Down Arrow key Side-Right Arrow Key Side-Left Arrow Key



## The Numeric Keypad

Does your keyboard have a Numeric Keypad? It is the special group of keys designed to act like a calculator, usually on the keyboards's right side. Not all keyboards have a Numeric Keypad...but...if you do...then you can use the Numeric Keypad to access eight of the commonly-used keys:



If you are using a laptop computer (for example, the Macintosh PowerBook) which does not have a Numeric Keypad, you can possibly turn the number keys on the top row of your keyboard into a Numeric Keypad by changing to Keypad Mode. Instructions on how to change to Keypad Mode are located in the manuals that came with your computer.

## The Macintosh Keyboard & The Numeric Keypad

In the year 2001, modern Macintosh keyboards are able to access all the keys necessary to run SignWriter.

On older Macintoshes, it may be necessary to have a Numeric Keypad on your keyboard. Why? Because to run SignWriter on your Macintosh, you are using another piece of software, SoftPC or VirtualPC, and in the past, those programs did not always give older Macintoshes access to certain keys. The Numeric Keypad, on the other hand, works on all Macintoshes, old or new.

For example, if you are using the Macintosh Extended Keyboard, it has the keys for Home, End, PgUp, PgDn, and the four arrow keys, as well as the Numeric Keypad. Even though all those keys work with SignWriter, there may be times when the Numeric Keypad works the best anyway. Why? Because sometimes there can be software conflicts between computer formats and other software that you might be using simultaneously. The Numeric Keypad is the most problem-free solution in that case.

If you are using a laptop, such as the Powerbook, there is no problem, because the numbers on the top row of your keyboard can turn into a Numeric Keypad by changing to Keypad Mode. Refer to your manuals that came with your computer to learn how to change to Keypad Mode.

## The Macintosh Keyboard & The Numeric Keypad

The **Option Key** on the Macintosh keyboard becomes the **Alt Key**.

The Numeric Keypad can be used for all Arrow keys, Home, End, PgUp and PgDn:





Part 2 **Basic Tasks** 

**Before you begin...** These lessons assume that SignWriter is already installed on your hard disk. If you have not done this, refer to Manual One: Getting Started. It is also assumed that you have exited Windows, and are working in MS-DOS. Be sure you are in the SW directory in MS-DOS. Need to know more about MS-DOS? There are several ways to learn: Ask someone who knows. Read the Help Menu in Windows. Refer to the Getting Started Manual, or email us at: DAC@SignWriting.org!

## **Starting The Program**

1. Type sw and then Return (or Enter on some machines). This will start SignWriter.

**2.** When the program is open, this will appear on your screen:

📸 MS-DOS Prompt - 9	W				- 🗆 🗵
Auto 💽 []	a 🛍 🔂 🛛	🖀 🔁 🗛			
C:\SW deaf1 deaf2 emai1 fal195 fal196 german gramma1 hambur keyboa1 norway spring spring swbody swcont swdyna1	9 - d 96 97		S i g n W r i 4.4 © 20 The Center for Movement Wri	ter 00 Sutton ting	
Open III	New P	rint File	e Directory	Setup	Quit 📕

**3.** Notice the long rectangular box on the screen. This is called the **file box**. The file box lists all of the files you have in SignWriter. As you can see, you have lots of files listed.

**4.** Notice the line of words at the bottom of the screen. This is called the **command line**:



**5.** The commands are used for the following:



## **Opening A File**

1. Look at your keyboard and find the Alt key.

**2.** To use a command, hold one finger on the **Alt** key, and at the same time press the **first letter** of the command you wish to use. For example, to use the **Open** command, type **Alt-o**:



**3.** This appears on your screen:

#### Open what file?

**4.** Type the name of the file you wish to open. In this case, type **welcome**. Press **Return**.







## **Browsing Through A File**

**1.** The last lesson finished looking at this command line at the bottom of your screen:

Undo Get Jump Next Previous Adjust Type Dictionary ?

**2.** Notice the **Next** and **Previous** commands. They can be used to browse through a file.

**3.** To use a command, hold one finger on the **Alt** key, and at the same time press the **first letter** of the command you wish to use. For example, to use the **Next** command, type **Alt-n**. To use the Previous command, type **Alt-p**:



**4.** The **Next** command moves you forward one line at a time. The **Previous** command moves you back one line at a time. Try this for practice.

**5.** A faster way to browse through a file is to use the **PgDn** and **PgUp** keys. Find them on your keyboard. PgDn stands for **Page Down**. PgUp stands for **Page Up**:



**6.** The **PgDn** key moves you forward three lines (one whole screen) each time you press the key. The **PgUp** key moves you back three lines. If you hold your finger down, it will scroll very quickly.

## **Closing A File**

**1.** To close a file, you must quit the file. To do this, use the **Quit** command. Type **Alt-q** for Quit:



2. This appears on your screen:

Quit | Save Write Backup Exit

**3.** Since we only browsed through the file, making no changes, we have nothing to save. Type **e** for Exit. This appears on your screen:

#### Exit without saving changes? (Y/N)

**4.** If you type **y** for yes, then you will leave the file without saving anything. The file will remain the same as before you opened it. If you type **n** for no, SignWriter will put you back into the file.

**5.** Since we know we want to leave, type **y**. You are now back at the file box:

C:\SW	
C:\SW welcome swintro swhands1 swhands2 swcont swmove1 swmove2 swmove3 swdynam swface swbody swpunc keyboard grammar	
CI4011	

	Open	New	Print	File	Directory	Setup	Qui
--	------	-----	-------	------	-----------	-------	-----

#### Before you print...

SignWriter needs to be setup to work with your printer. If you have not done this yet, refer to **Setting Up SignWriter**, in **Getting Started** in the first section of this notebook.

## **Printing A File**

1. Your screen looks like this:

C∶∖SW
welcome swintro swhands1 swhands2 swcont swmove1 swmove2 swdynam swface swbody swpunc keyboard grammar email

Open	New	Print	File	Directory	Setup	Quit
0000			1 110	Billoutory	ootap	

2. Turn on your printer.

3. Type Alt-p for Print:



The program will ask: Print what file?

**4.** Type **welcome** and press **Return**. The file named **welcome** should now print.

Note: For more advanced printing techniques, including different page formats, page numbers, varying lines per page, printing dictionaries, and printing when using the Macintosh, refer to the other manuals that came with SignWriter.

## **Starting A New File**

1. When you first open SignWriter, your screen looks like this:

Open New Print File Directory Setup Quit

2. Type Alt-n for New:



3. The program will ask you: Name of new file?

blinking m cursor 5.

**4.** Type the name you want, up to 8 letters or numbers, such as **myfirst** (for "my first file"). Then press **Return**.

**5.** A brand new file opens. You are now looking at a blank file, with a **blinking cursor** in the upper left corner of the screen.

## **Changing To Fingerspelling Mode**

**1.** There are three typing modes: **Sign**, **Fingerspelling** and **Alphabet**. When a file first opens, it is automatically in Sign mode. To type fingerspelling, you need to switch to **Fingerspelling** mode.

**2.** To change typing modes, use the **Type** command. Type **Alt-t** for Type. This will appear:

Type | Sign Fingerspell Alphabet



**3.** Press **f** for fingerspell. The bottom of your screen now looks like this:

Select Copy Erase Find Replace Margin Quit ?

**4.** Notice the symbol  $\checkmark$  appears at the bottom left of your screen. This is the fingerspelling symbol for the letter **f**. This tells you that you are now in **Fingerspelling** mode.

**5.** Now type the English sentence: **Hello. How are you?** Fingerspelling symbols automatically appear:



## **Fingerspelling Keyboard**

**1.** Find the **keyboard card** for your country. It came with your SignWriter package in two places. First, your **keyboard card** is in the inside flap of your notebook. It can be placed next to your computer while you are working. Second, you will find the keyboards for all countries in **SignWriter-At-A-Glance** under the section entitled Keyboards.

2. Notice there are two keyboards on your keyboard card: the Sign keyboard and the Fingerspelling keyboard. Look at the Fingerspelling keyboard:



## Saving A File

**1.** To save a file, you must first leave the file. To do this, use the **Quit** command. Type **Alt-q** for Quit:



**2.** This appears on your screen:

Quit | Save Write Backup Exit

- **3.** To save the file, type **s** for Save.
- 4. You are now back at the file box:



5. When you type PgDn, or the Down-Arrow key, you will see the names of other files available to you. This is called the second File Box. You will see your new file named **myfirst** listed in the second file box.

#### Before you begin this section...

In Part 2, you started a new file named **myfirst**, in which you typed the fingerspelling sentence **Hello. How are you?** Please open the file **myfirst** before you start this lesson.

## Changing To Alphabet Mode

1. There are three typing modes: Sign, Fingerspelling and Alphabet. When a file first opens, it is automatically in Sign mode. To type English words, you need to switch to Alphabet mode.

**2.** To change typing modes, use the **Type** command. Type **Alt-t** for Type. This will appear:

#### Type | Sign Fingerspell Alphabet

**3.** Press **a** for alphabet. The bottom of your screen now looks like this:

Select Copy Erase Find Replace Margin Quit ?

**4.** Notice the letter **A** appears at the bottom left of your screen. This tells you that you are now in **Alphabet** mode.

5. Before you begin typing words, follow the instructions on the next four pages.



## Moving The Cursor

blinking cursor

**1.** When a file is first opened, the cursor is blinking in the upper left corner of your screen:

2. Look on the back of your **keyboard reference** card. Diagrams show different ways to move the cursor. As you can see, tapping on the Arrow keys can move the cursor. Now find the Arrow keys on your keyboard. Tap several times on the **Up-Arrow** key. The cursor moves up:



3. Tap several times on the **Down-Arrow** key. The cursor moves down. Try moving the cursor to the right and to the left with the **Side-Right** and **Side-Left Arrow** keys for practice. Then hold the **Alt** key down, and at the same time tap on the different **Arrow** keys. The cursor moves faster:



## Imaginary Box

**1.** There is an **Imaginary Box** surrounding every sign or fingerspelled word:



2. This **Imaginary Box** is created every time you press the space bar in either Sign mode or Fingerspelling mode.

**3.** Look closely at the fingerspelling on your screen. Notice the **tiny lines** or markers under the fingerspelled words:



**4.** These little lines mark the **beginning** of the sign or fingerspelled word. They are the **left wall** of the **Imaginary Box**:



## Typing Glosses

Typing one (or a few) English words under signs or fingerspelled words is called a **gloss**. Glosses explain what each sign or fingerspelled word means in English. To type English glosses, you must be in **Alphabet** mode. Follow this sequence:



### Typing Paragraphs

There are two ways to type paragraphs:

1. Large Spaces Between Words And Lines. If you type Alt-Space between words, the program puts one Imaginary Box around each word. You do not have to press Return to go to the next line. The program automatically word-wraps. However, there will be a large space between words, and very large spaces between lines:



2. Normal Spacing Between Words And Lines. If you press the space bar between words (the standard way of typing), the program puts one Imaginary Box around the entire paragraph. Using this method, the program will not automatically word-wrap. When you come to the end of the line, press Alt-Return:

type Alt-Return to move to the next line

For example, a topic is basically what the sentence is about. In ASL, there is a special construction in which the topic is placed at the beginning of the sentence

**Note:** An Imaginary Box cannot be longer than **one** line. If you keep typing without using Alt-Return, you will **bump into** the **right wall** of the Imaginary Box. When this happens, the screen will **blink** in the lower left corner to tell you that you can type no further. When the box blinks, the program says: **Sign too long. Press Return.** Press Return. To continue your paragraph, type **Alt-Return** and continue typing.

## Dictionary Command

**1.** To access the dictionary, use the **Dictionary** command. Type **Alt-d** for Dictionary:



2. This appears on your screen:



Dict | Enter name of sign and press Return.

3. Type the name of the sign. Press Return.



**4.** If the sign is listed in the dictionary under the **exact name** you typed, then after you press Return a box will appear with the sign in it:

C	
hello	

5. If the sign is listed in the dictionary under a **different name**, or perhaps it has a number (1) or (2) after it in the dictionary...in other words...if it is **entered differently** in the dictionary than you typed...then after you press Return a blank box will appear:

hello

**6.** The blank box does not mean that the sign does not exist in the dictionary. Press the **PgDn** key. You will see several signs with that name:



Continue to scroll until you find the version of the sign you want. To scroll down, use the **PgDn** key or **Alt-n** (Next command). To scroll up, use the **PgUp** key or **Alt-P** (Previous command).

7. When you have found the sign you want, press **Return**. The sign is pasted into your document.

#### Before you begin this section...

In Part 3, you were working in the file named **myfirst**. Please close the file, and open a new file named **mysecond**. You are now looking at a blank screen with the blinking cursor in the upper left corner.

## Pasting Sentences

1. The goal of this lesson is to complete the sentence I want to buy that car. without typing! We will paste our sentence together, sign by sign. By the way, the gloss for the sentence is That car there, want buy.

2. First, search for the sign that in the dictionary. Type Alt-d for Dictionary. Name of sign? Type that. Press Return. You will see a blank box. Do not worry...the sign for that is in the dictionary, but because there are several variations, the sign is listed in the dicitonary like this: that(1), that (2), that (3) and so forth.

**3.** Scroll down by using **Alt-n** or **PgDn**. You will see the different variations listed in the dictionary.

**4.** When you find the variation you want, press **Return**. The sign is now pasted into your sentence.

5. Repeat this process, pasting the signs car and there. Your screen now looks like this:



**6.** We now need to type a comma, or pause. Typing punctuation is taught in the next lesson.Turn to the next page to complete the sentence...

## **Typing Punctuation**



2. Continue to paste the rest of the sentence:



**3.** A period is needed at the end of our sentence. To type a period, type space z = a = m. The symbol used for a period is a thick line. Your sentence is now complete:



Note: The sentence **That car there, want buy.** starts with a Topic Marker. Topic Markers are a part of sign language grammar. They are marked by a facial expression with the eyebrows up. You will learn more about grammar later, but for the sake of accuracy, we have placed the proper facial expression in the completed sentence above.

## Changing To Sign Mode

1. There are three typing modes: Sign, Fingerspelling and Alphabet. When a file first opens, it is automatically in Sign mode.

2. If you are in the middle of a document, and you have changed to Fingerspelling mode or Alphabet mode, you may want to switch back to **Sign** mode to type signs.

**3.** To change back to Sign mode, use the **Type** command. Type **Alt-t** for Type. This will appear:

Type | Sign Fingerspell Alphabet

**4.** Press **s** for sign. The bottom of your screen now looks like this:

Select Copy Erase Find Replace Margin Quit ? Nothing at the beginning of the command line marks Sign mode

5. Notice there is a **blank space** to the bottom left of your screen. This means you are in **Sign** mode.

**6.** Before you begin typing signs, follow the instructions on the next ten pages.

## Sign Keyboard

1. Find the **keyboard card** for your country. It came with your SignWriter package in two places. First, your **keyboard card** is in the inside flap of your notebook. It can be placed next to your computer while you are working. Second, you will find the keyboards for all countries in **SignWriter-At-A-Glance** under the section entitled Keyboards.

2. Notice there are two keyboards on your keyboard card: the **Sign** keyboard and the **Fingerspelling** keyboard. Look at the Sign keyboard. It is the same for every country:



## Finger Placement

**1.** Each key on the keyboard represents a group of symbols. For example, the symbols on the **a** key are all of the handshapes that use the **Index Finger**. Press the **a** key. Ten small boxes appear at the bottom of the screen. Inside the boxes are all of the handshapes that use the index finger:





2. The ten boxes represent the home keys. The home key row is the second row of keys on your keyboard. The home keys are: asdf gh jkl;



**3.** Your fingertips should rest gently on the **home key row** while you type Sign Writing. The fingers of your left hand should rest gently on the **asdf** keys, and the fingers of your right hand should rest gently on the **jkl**; keys. This will help you type quickly.

## Special Command Keys

**1.** Now let's type one symbol for practice. Let's choose the first symbol in the box to the far left, located on the **a** key.

2. With your hands gently resting on the keyboard, it is your baby finger that rests on the a key. So press a with your baby finger. Presto! Eight rotations appear:



**3.** Which rotation do you want? Let's choose the rotation in the third box from the left. Press the **d** key with the middle finger of your left hand. The boxes disappear and your symbol is shimmering on the screen:



4. When the symbol shimmers it is selected. A selected symbol can be changed by just tapping on the five Special Command Keys located on the bottom right of your keyboard:



## Rotate Key

1. Your symbol is selected, shimmering on the screen:



**2.** Tap several times on the **Rotate** key. The symbol rotates:



**3.** Hold the **Shift** key down, and continue to tap on the **Rotate** key. The symbol rotates in the opposite direction:



## Palm Facing

1. Your symbol is selected, shimmering on the screen:



2. The **Change** key can be used to change dark and light palm facings for hands. There are six palm facings. Tap six times on the **Change** key (the fifth key from the right). The palm facings change in this sequence:



**3.** Hold the **Shift** key down, and continue to tap on the **Change** key. The palm facings change in the opposite sequence:



## Moving Symbols

1. Look on the back of your Sign Keyboard Card. Diagrams show different ways to move a symbol. Look at the top diagram to the left. As you can see, tapping on the Arrow keys can move the symbol. Now find the Arrow keys on your keyboard. Tap several times on the Up-Arrow key. The symbol moves up:



2. Tap several times on the **Down-Arrow** key. The symbol moves down. Try moving the symbol to the right and to the left with the **Side-Right** and **Side-Left Arrow** keys for practice. Then hold the **Alt** key down, and at the same time tap on the different **Arrow** keys. The symbol moves faster:



## Cursor Key

**1.** How do you stop the symbol from shimmering? Tap once on the **Cursor** key (the fourth key from the right). The symbol stops shimmering, and a cursor is placed to the right of the symbol:



2. Continue to tap on the **Cursor** key. The cursor moves around the symbol counter-clockwise. Hold down the **Shift** key and at the same time tap on the **Cursor** key. The cursor now rotates in the opposite direction:



Before you begin this section...

Type the following: e j d This will put this 2 symbol on the screen:

## Mirror Key

1. Tap several times on the **Mirror** key (the third key from the right). The symbol flops:



## Size Key

**1.** Tap several times on the **Size** key (the second key from the right). The Size key can be used to change the size of some movement symbols. Some symbols have three sizes available. Others have two sizes:



## Arrowheads

**1.** Your symbol is selected, shimmering on the screen:



2. The **Change** key can be used to change dark and light arrowheads. There are three arrowheads. Tap three times on the **Change** key (the fifth key from the right). The arrowheads change in this sequence:



**3.** Hold the **Shift** key down, and continue to tap on the **Change** key. The arrowheads change in the opposite sequence:



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