

# Lessons in SignWriting



Valerie Sutton



# Lessons in SignWriting Textbook

by  
Valerie Sutton



ISBN: 978-0-940361-00-3  
Fifth Edition

Copyright © 1990-2022  
Valerie Sutton  
All Rights Reserved



SignWriting texts by  
Lucinda O'Grady Farnady and Adam Frost

Cartoons by Frank Allen Paul  
Illustrations by Ida Candelaria and Jayne Gunderson

Hand and body photos by Adam Frost

Sign language photos of Kevin Clark,  
Lucinda O'Grady Farnady, and Adam Frost

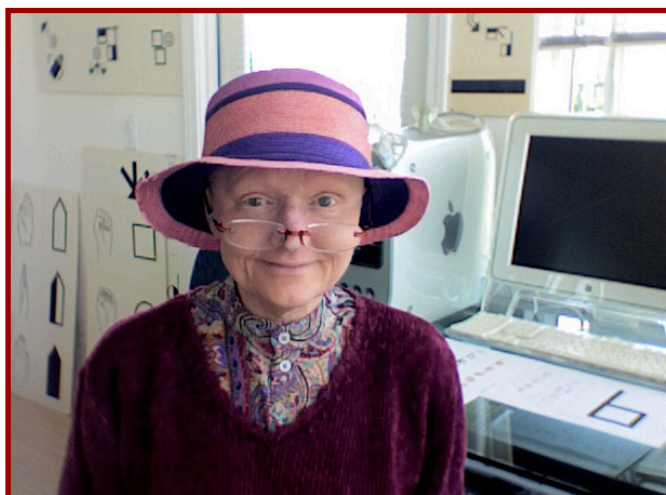
This book was prepared with SignPuddle Online.  
SignPuddle Software by Stephen E. Slevinski, Jr

Edited by Richard Gleaves

This book and the SignWriting system are free to use  
under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>



The SignWriting Press  
[www.signwriting.org](http://www.signwriting.org)

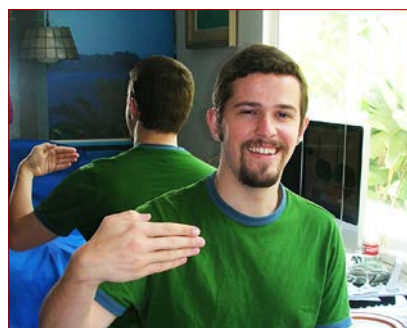


# Lessons in SignWriting Textbook by Valerie Sutton



With contributions and photos  
from members of the  
Deaf Action Committee for SignWriting  
(the DAC) including...

Adam Frost



Lucinda O'Grady Farnady



Kevin Clark



## Lessons in SignWriting Videos



You can learn SignWriting from tutorial videos, with the **Lessons In SignWriting Video Series**.

The SignWriting videos are on YouTube, on a channel named **SignWriting Channel**. This channel includes the Lessons in SignWriting videos, and other videos about SignWriting.

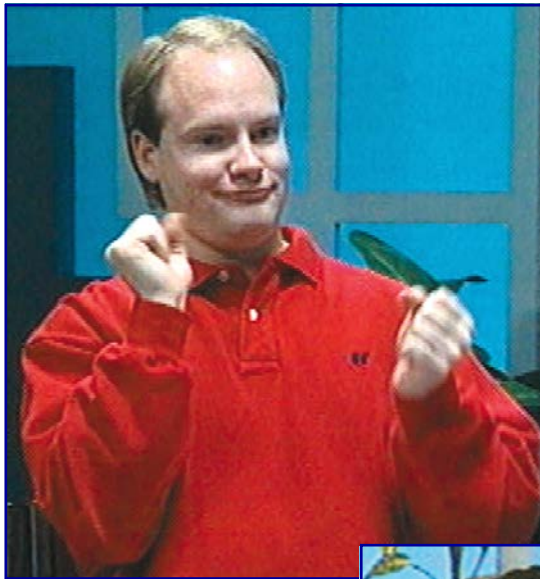
For more information on learning SignWriting go to **[www.signwriting.org](http://www.signwriting.org)**.





## Dedication

This book is dedicated to the many people who have contributed their time, effort, knowledge, and resources to the development and worldwide use of SignWriting.



## **Table of Contents**

- 1** Introduction
- 2** Viewpoints
- 3** Signing Space
- 4** Hands
- 5** Contact
- 6** Movement
- 7** Face
- 8** Head
- 9** Body
- 10** Writing Signs
- 11** Writing Sentences
- 12** Sign Text

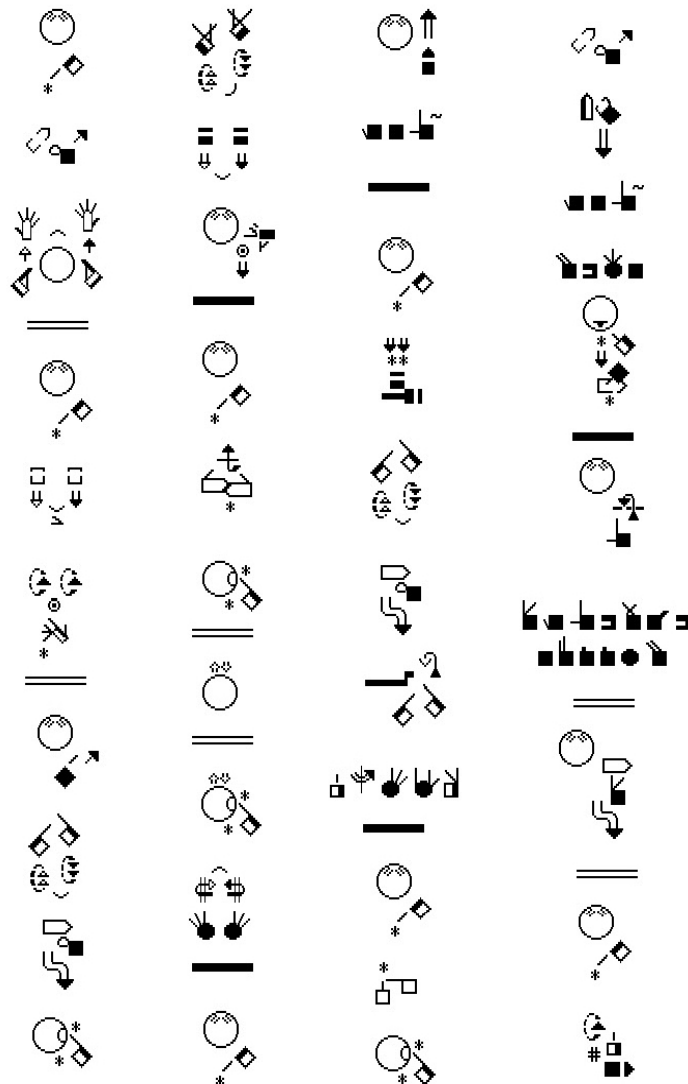


## Introduction

# SignWriting®

## A Deaf Perspective...

by Lucinda O'Grady Farnady



I am writing to tell you how strongly I feel about SignWriting and how much it can benefit Deaf people.

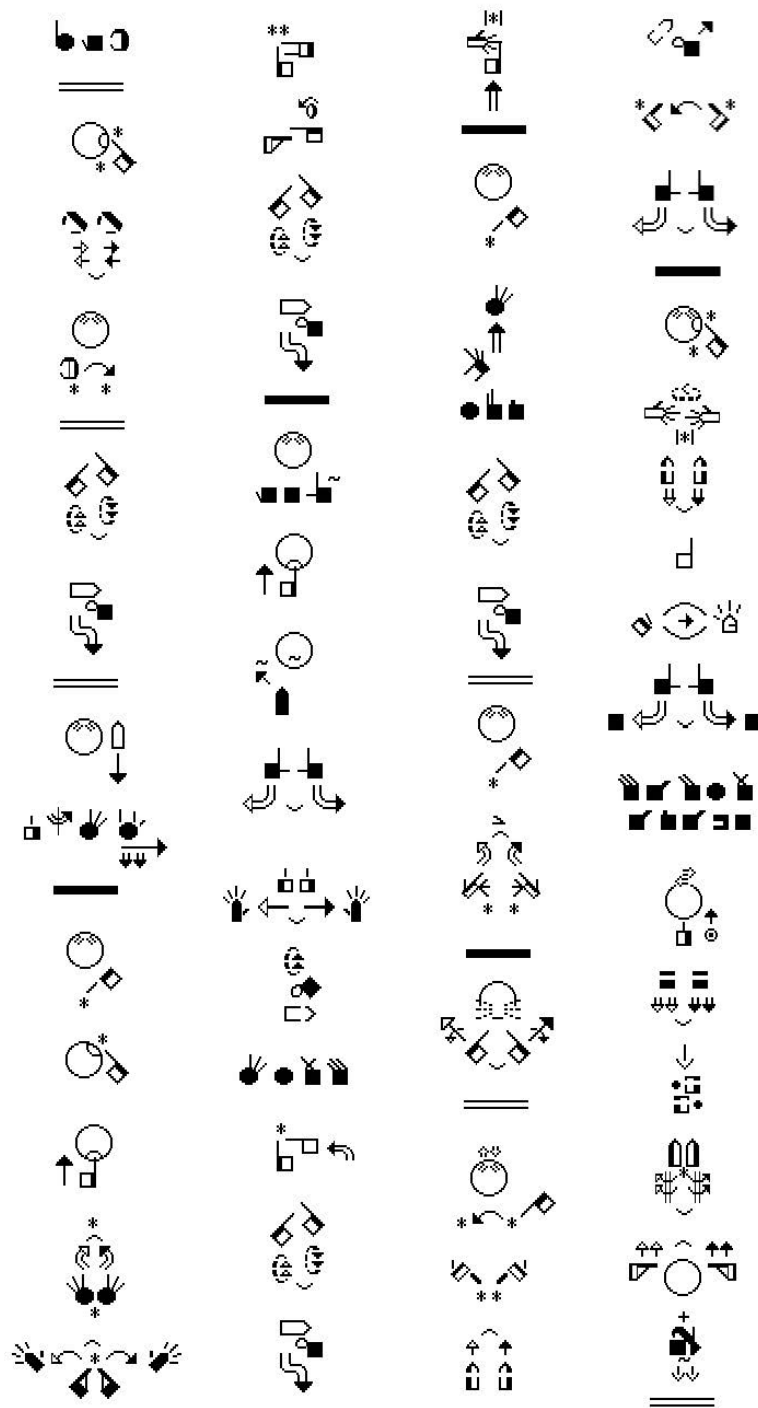
I was born Deaf to a Deaf family and I am a native American Sign Language (ASL) user. I have been working with Sign Writing since 1982. I was the first Deaf person to write articles in ASL, in SignWriting, for the SignWriter Newspaper. Later, Valerie Sutton and I established....

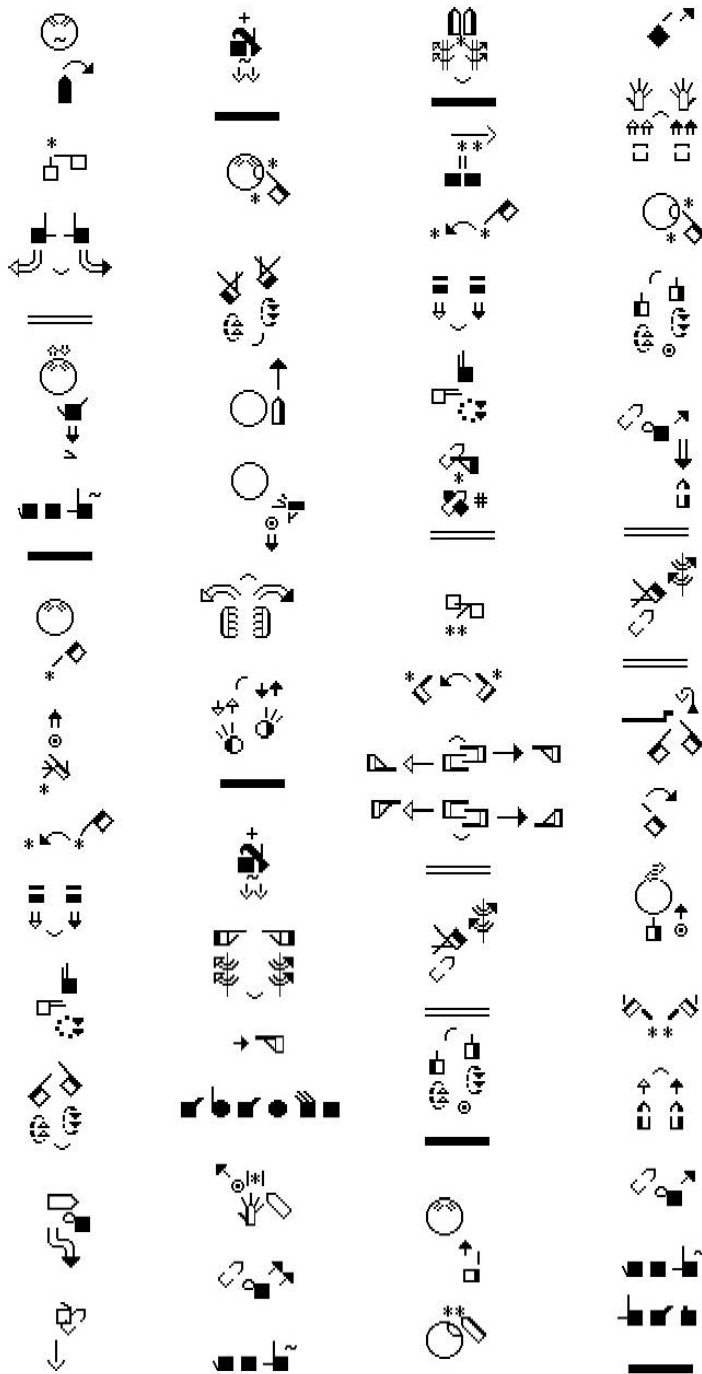


the Deaf Action Committee For SignWriting (the DAC) in 1988.

I think it is very important to spread the word about SignWriting. ASL is a language in its own right, yet until the development of SignWriting, it was a language without a written form. When I found out about Sign Writing I was thrilled to think that at last we would have a way to write our language.

Deaf Americans are one of the very few linguistic minorities that are unable to get books teaching English in





their native language. I feel that we can use SignWriting in order to learn English. Deaf people will benefit greatly from books explaining English grammar and idioms in written ASL.

We can also use it to write down and preserve our stories, poetry and plays. As you know, there are many Deaf playwrights and poets, and up until now, they have not had a way to write the ASL in their literature.



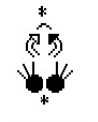


No matter what the project, SignWriting encourages us to read and write and I feel that is important.

All of us hope that you will enjoy learning SignWriting. Your interest and support is a great help to our Deaf community.



Lucinda



**What Is  
SignWriting?**



**With SignWriting,  
you can....**



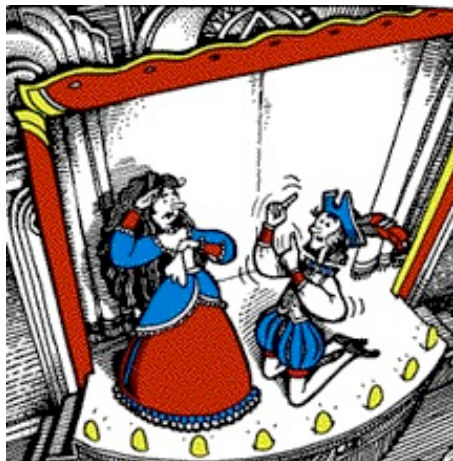
Cartoons by Frank Allen Paul



**READ**  
Sign  
Language



**WRITE**  
Sign  
Language



**PRESERVE**  
Sign Poetry  
and Theater



**LEARN**  
Sign  
Language



**TRANSCRIBE**  
Sign  
Language



**SHARE**  
Sign  
Language



**MEET**  
Other People  
Who Write  
Sign Language

# SignWriting

SignWriting is a **writing system** for the sign languages of the world (including American Sign Language, Brazilian Sign Language, Danish Sign Language, and many others).

SignWriting includes symbols which represent the handshapes and movements of sign language. It also includes symbols for the head and face, since they are also used in sign language.

SignWriting is precise enough to be used by researchers, yet simple enough to be learned by children. It is used around the world, and is the first writing system for sign language to be included in the Unicode Standard. Several software applications are available for using SignWriting.

This book presents the basic SignWriting alphabet, using examples from American Sign Language. For more information on SignWriting go to **[www.signwriting.org](http://www.signwriting.org)**.



## Signing Viewpoints

When someone is signing to you, you see the signs as an observer. The signer's right hand is on your left. This is called the **Receptive Viewpoint**.

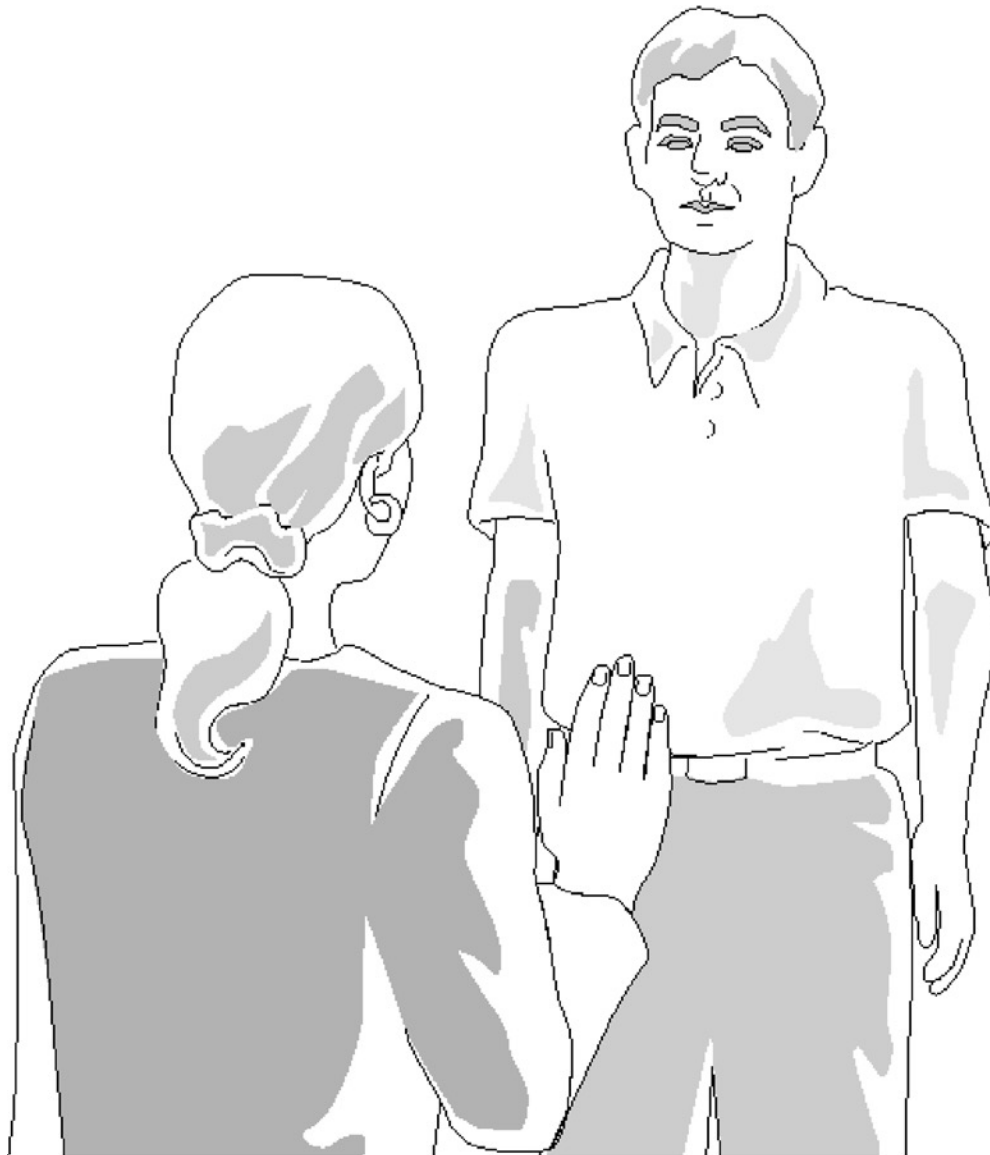


**Receptive Viewpoint**



## Signing Viewpoints

When you are signing to someone else, you see the signs from your own point of view. This is called the **Expressive Viewpoint**.



### **Expressive Viewpoint**

# Which Viewpoint Are Signs Written In?

Are signs written in the **Expressive Viewpoint**?

Or the **Receptive Viewpoint**?



# Signs are Written In The Expressive Viewpoint



Signs are written in the **Expressive Viewpoint**. You see the signs from your own point of view.

Deaf signers strongly prefer to write expressively.



## The Expressive Viewpoint

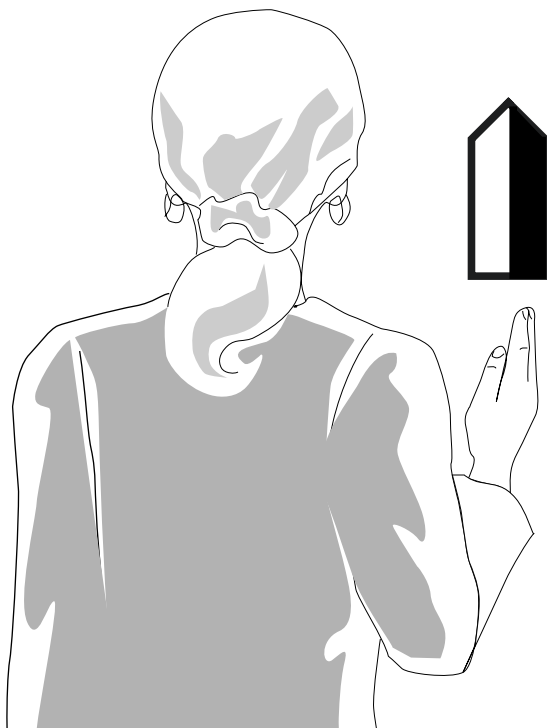
When you think in sign language, you see your own hands signing. When you read or write SignWriting, you do the same thing.



## Palm Facing

When you see **the palm of your hand** while you are signing, the symbol for the hand is a light, hollowed-out symbol.

The palm of the hand is always written with a light symbol.



## Palm Facing

When you see **the side of your hand** while you are signing, the symbol for the hand is partly filled-in, so it is half light and half dark.

The light part of the symbol shows which way the palm of the hand faces. The dark part indicates the back of the hand.



## Palm Facing

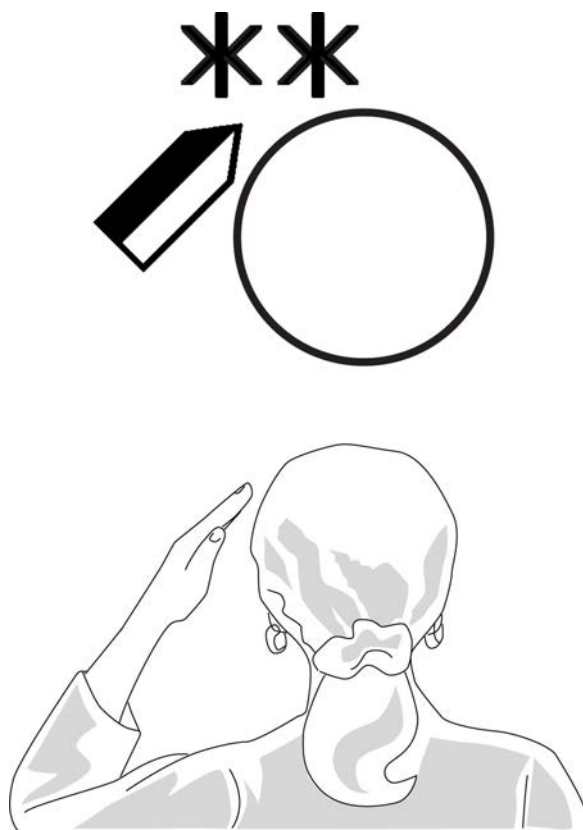
When you see **the back of your hand** while you are signing, the symbol for the hand is a dark, filled-in symbol.

The back of the hand is always written with a dark symbol.

## Writing The Head

The head symbol is written with a circle. It represents your head as seen **from behind you**.

Because signs are written expressively, when your left hand is near the left side of your head, the hand symbol is placed **to the left** of the head symbol.



**know**  
(hand on the left side)

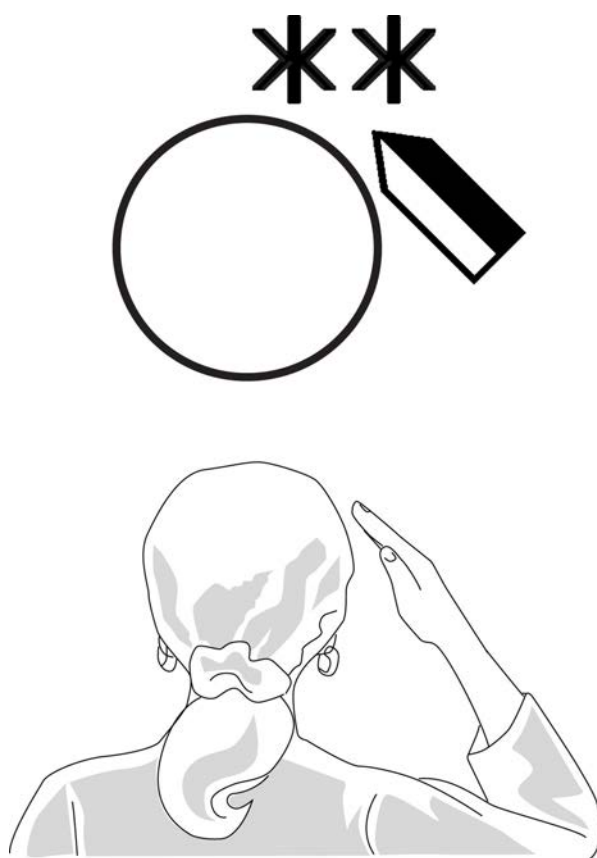
Note: The asterisk symbol means **touch**.  
Two asterisks mean **touching twice**.



## Writing The Head

The head symbol is written with a circle. It represents your head as seen **from behind you**.

Because signs are written expressively, when your right hand is near the right side of your head, the hand symbol is placed **to the right** of the head symbol.



**know**  
(hand on the right side)

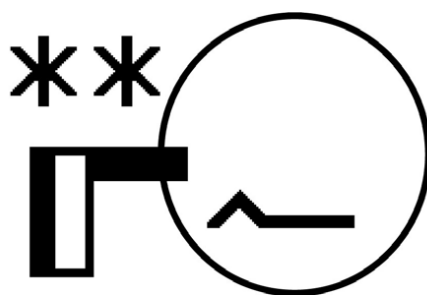
Note: The asterisk symbol means **touch**.  
Two asterisks mean **touching twice**.

## Writing The Face

In face symbols your head is transparent, so you can see your facial expressions (and any hands contacting them) through the back of your head.

Because signs are written expressively, you write how **your face** feels to you, not how it looks to someone else.

Your face  
(seen from behind)  
**feels** like this

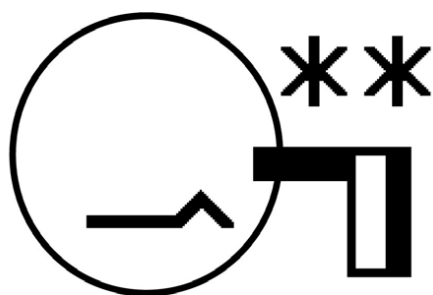


**know**  
(mouth pushed up  
on left side)

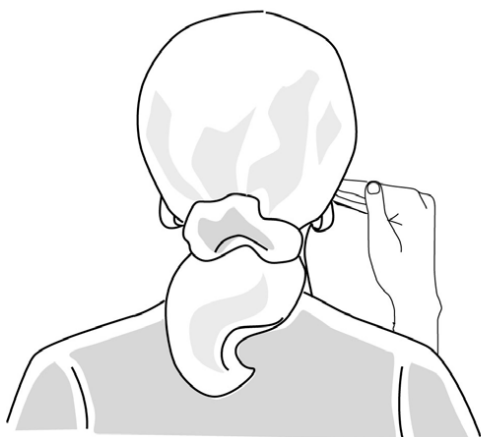
## Writing The Face

In face symbols your head is transparent, so you can see your facial expressions (and any hands contacting them) through the back of your head.

Because signs are written expressively, you write how **your face** feels to you, not how it looks to someone else.

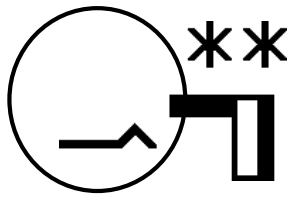


Your face  
(seen from behind)  
**feels** like this



**know**  
(mouth pushed up  
on right side)

# Writing The Face



**know**  
(mouth pushed up  
on right side)



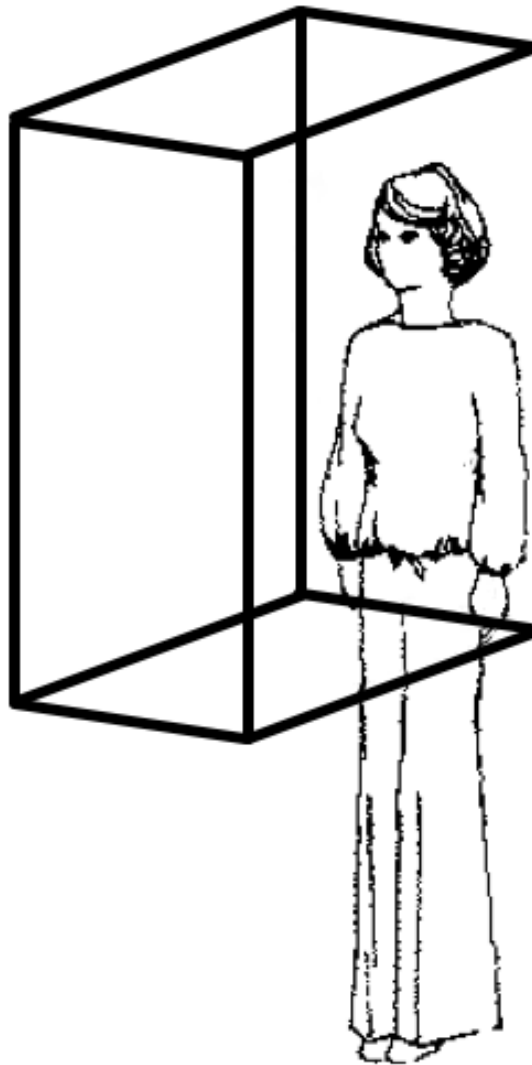


 **Signing Space**

# Signing Space

**Signing Space** is the area around you which you sign in.

The SignWriting symbols are used to show the **position and movement** of your hands in the signing space.



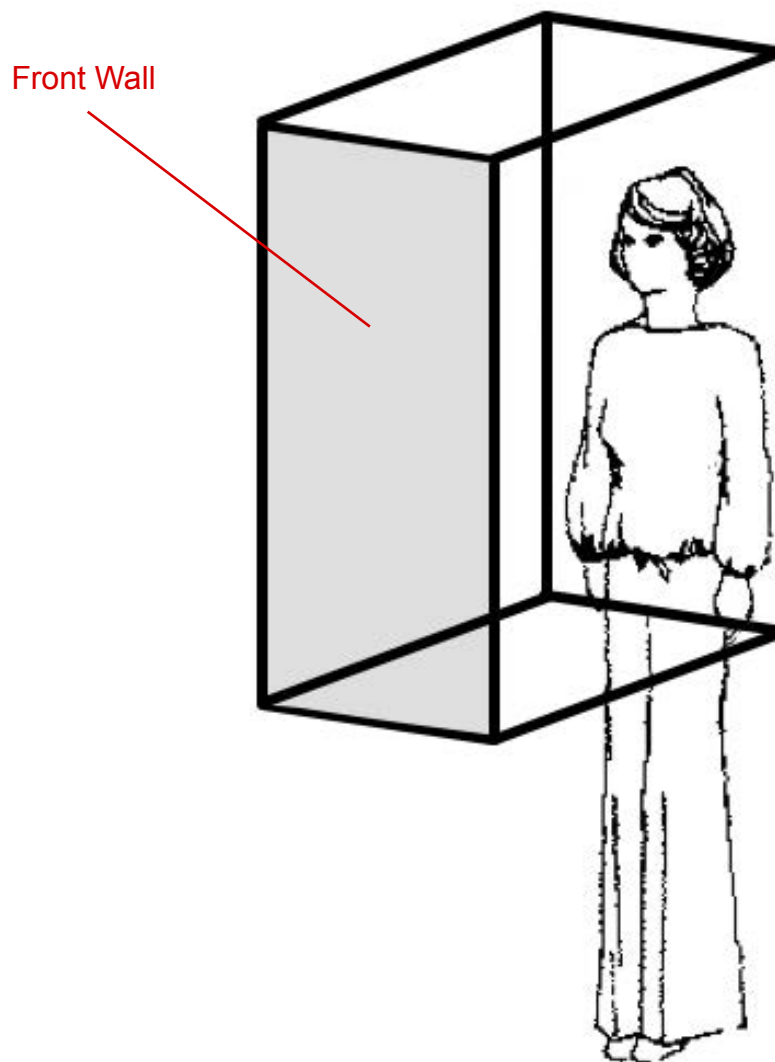
**Signing Space**



# Signing Space

The SignWriting symbols show two kinds of positions and movements in the signing space:

- Positions and movements that are **parallel to the Front Wall**
- Positions and movements that are parallel to the Floor

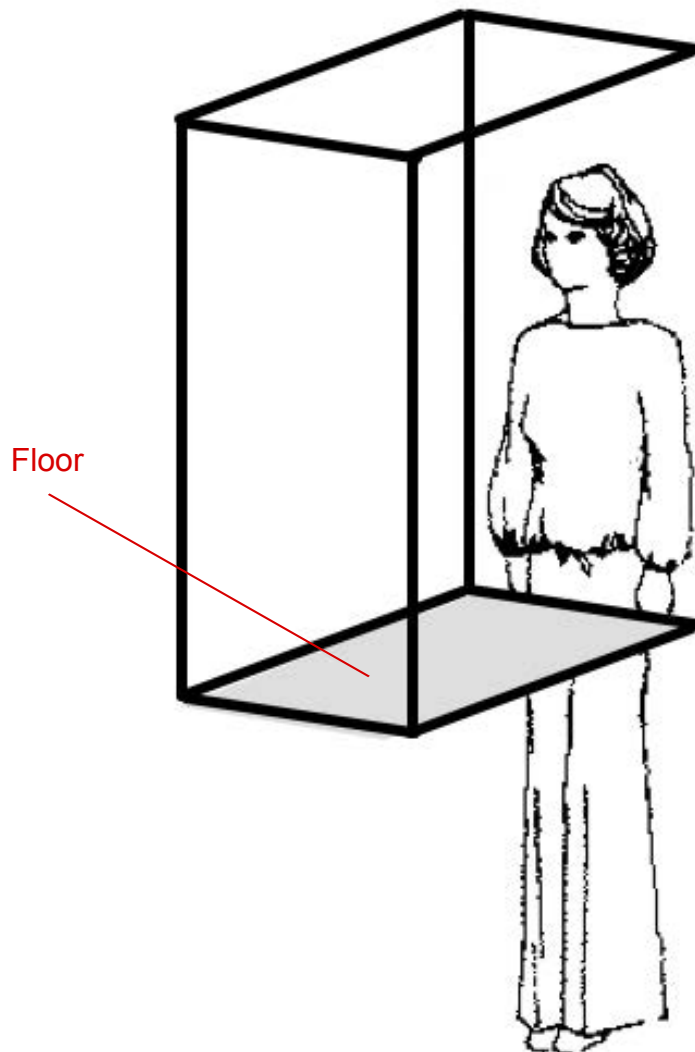


**Front Wall**

# Signing Space

The SignWriting symbols show two kinds of positions and movements in the signing space:

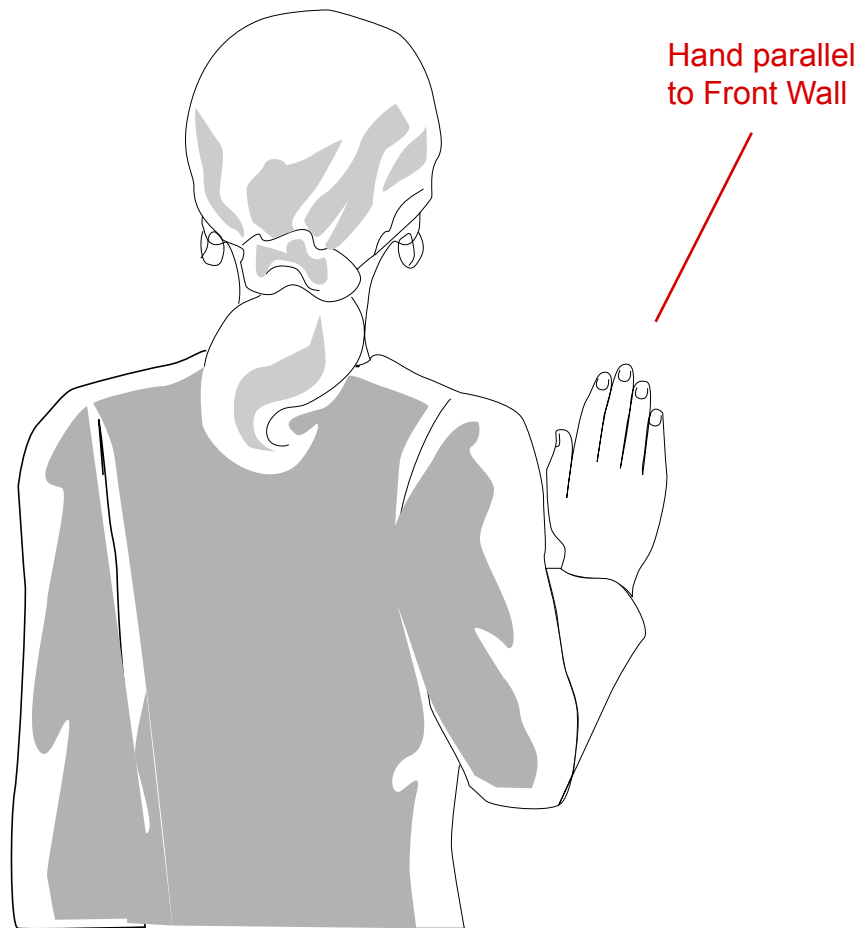
- Positions and movements that are parallel to the Front Wall
- Positions and movements that are **parallel to the Floor**



**Floor**

# Signing Space

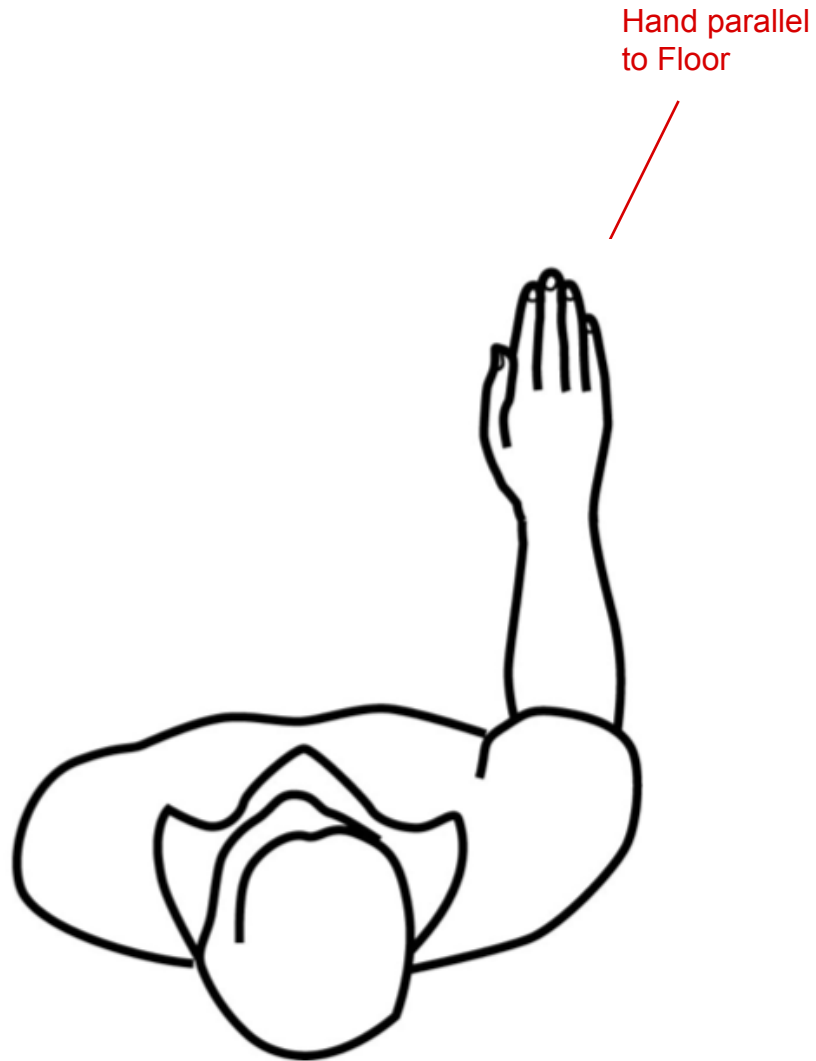
Positions and movements that are **parallel to the Front Wall** of the signing space are always shown in **Front View**, which shows the signing space from your point of view.



**Front View**

# Signing Space

Positions and movements that are **parallel to the Floor** of the signing space are always shown in **Top View**, which shows the signing space as seen from above you.













**Top View**



**Hands**

# Hand Symbols

**Hand symbols** show the handshapes and position of your hands while you are signing.

	<b>Fist</b>	Closed fist
	<b>Circle</b>	Open fist
	<b>Flat</b>	Flat hand
	<b>Curlicue</b>	Open fist, with fingers touching base of thumb
	<b>Oval</b>	Open fist, with circle flattened out
	<b>Cup</b>	Four fingers and thumb in cup shape
	<b>Claw</b>	Four fingers and thumb in claw shape
	<b>Hinge</b>	Four fingers and thumb in hinge shape
	<b>Angle</b>	Hinge, with thumb tip touching fingers
	<b>Hook</b>	Hinge, with fingers bent at middle joint

These are the basic hand symbols in SignWriting. All the other hand symbols are based on them.

# Basic Handshapes

## Closed Fist

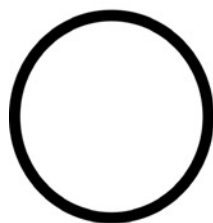


The hand symbol **Fist** represents a closed fist, where the fingertips touch the palm of the hand.

It is written with a square.

---

## Open Fist

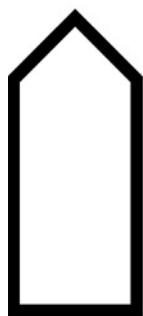


The hand symbol **Circle** represents an open fist, where the fingertips touch the tip of the thumb.

It is written with a circle.

---

## Flat Hand

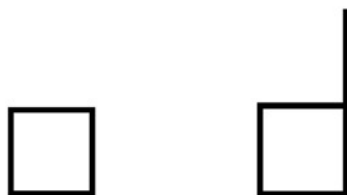


The hand symbol **Flat** represents a flat hand where the fingers extend straight up, while touching each other.

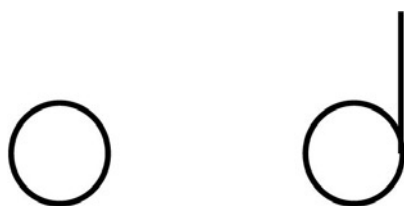
It is written as a rectangle with a tip at one end.



## Related Handshapes

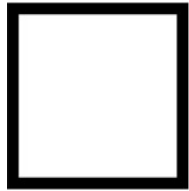


In ASL, the letter S and the number 1 are both written with a square, because both handshapes are based on a **closed fist**.

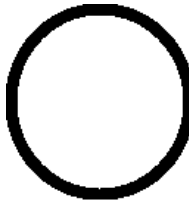
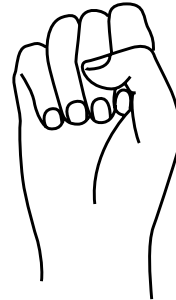


In ASL, the letter O and the letter D are both written with a circle, because both handshapes are based on an **open fist**.

# Basic Symbols



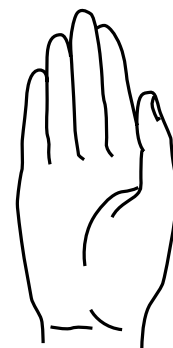
**Fist**



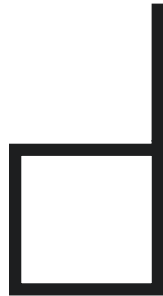
**Circle**



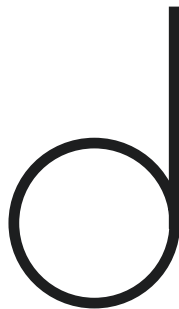
**Flat**



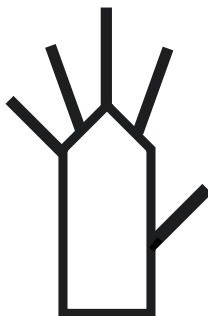
## Symbols with Fingers



**Index**



**Index  
on  
Circle**



**Five  
Fingers  
Spread**



## Symbols with Fingers



**Fist**



**Index**



**Index Middle**

## Symbols with Fingers



**Circle**

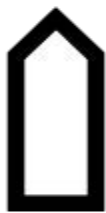


**Index  
on Circle**



**Index Middle  
on Circle**

## Symbols with Fingers



**Flat**



**Flat,  
Thumb  
Side**



**Five  
Fingers  
Spread**

# Action Fingers

The fingers on a hand symbol are called **action fingers**.

When reading SignWriting, a hand symbol's action fingers are more important than the rest of the symbol. To recognize a hand symbol, readers first look at its action fingers.

Hand symbols with action fingers are different hand symbols from the original basic hand symbol.



**Index**



**Index Middle Cross on Circle**



**Index Middle Bent**



**Middle Thumb Circle, Index Up**



**Claw**



**Angle**

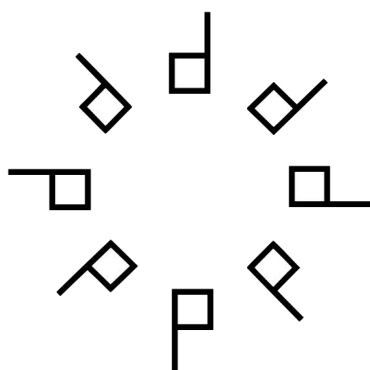


**Five Fingers Spread, Four Bent**

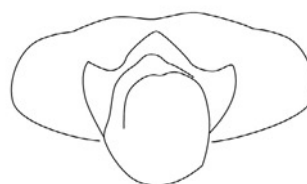
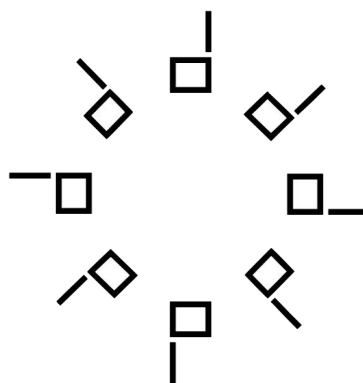


## Hand Directions

Hand symbols can point in eight different **directions**, to show which way your hand is pointing in the signing space.



**Front View**

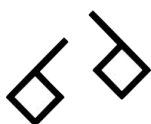


**Top View**

---

## Mirror

Hand symbols can be **mirrored** to show the left- and right-hand versions of a handshape.





**Palm Facing**

## Palm Facing

The hand is parallel to the front wall, and is shown in **Front View**.



When you see the **palm of your hand** while signing, the hand symbol is light and hollowed-out.

The palm of the hand is always written with a light symbol.



When you see the **side of your hand** while signing, the hand symbol is partly filled-in, so it is half light and half dark.

The light part of the symbol shows which way the palm of the hand faces. The dark part indicates the back of the hand.



When you see the **back of your hand** while signing, the hand symbol is dark and filled-in.

The back of the hand is always written with a dark symbol.

# Palm Facing

The hand is parallel to the floor, and is shown in **Top View**.

The **gap in the symbol** means the hand is parallel to the floor.



When you see the **palm of your hand** while signing, the hand symbol is light and hollowed-out.

The palm of the hand is always written with a light symbol.



When you see the **side of your hand** while signing, the hand symbol is partly filled-in, so it is half light and half dark.

The light part of the symbol shows which way the palm of the hand faces. The dark part indicates the back of the hand.

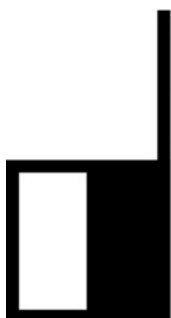
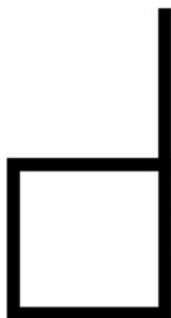


When you see the **back of your hand** while signing, the hand symbol is dark and filled-in.

The back of the hand is always written with a dark symbol.

## Index

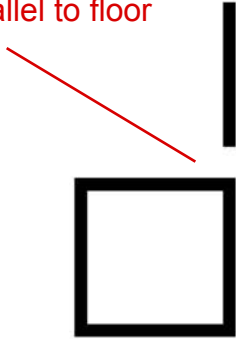
The hand is parallel to the front wall, and is shown in **Front View**.



# Index

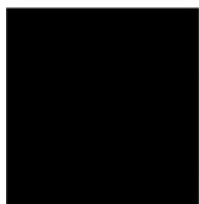
The hand is parallel to the floor, and is shown in **Top View**.

Gap in symbol means  
hand is parallel to floor



# Fist

The hand is parallel to the front wall, and is shown in **Front View**.

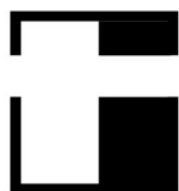
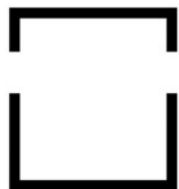




# Fist

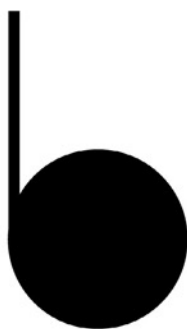
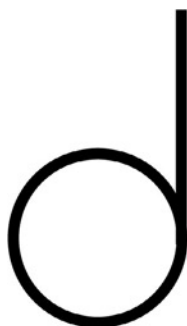
The hand is parallel to the floor, and is shown in **Top View**.

Gap in symbol means  
hand is parallel to floor



## Index on Circle

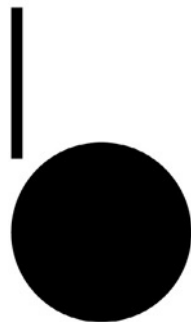
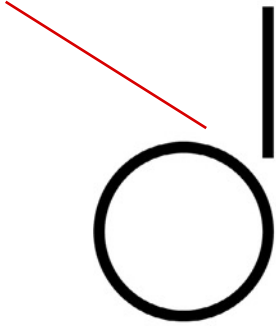
The hand is parallel to the front wall, and is shown in **Front View**.



## Index on Circle

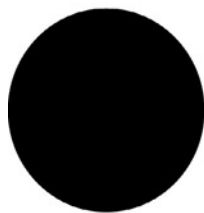
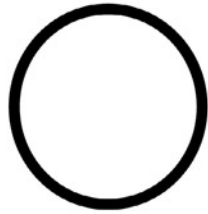
The hand is parallel to the floor, and is shown in **Top View**.

Gap in symbol means  
hand is parallel to floor



# Circle

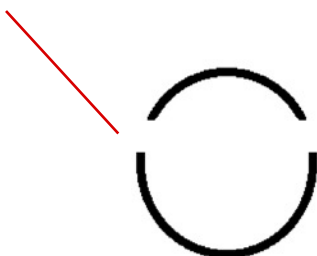
The hand is parallel to the front wall, and is shown in **Front View**.



# Circle

The hand is parallel to the floor, and is shown in **Top View**.

Gap in symbol means  
hand is parallel to floor



## Five Fingers Spread

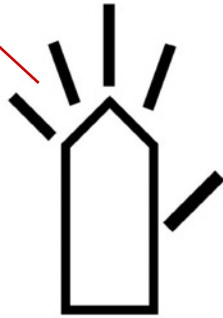
The hand is parallel to the front wall, and is shown in **Front View**.



## Five Fingers Spread

The hand is parallel to the floor, and is shown in **Top View**.

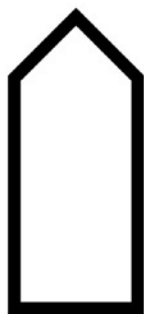
Gaps in symbol mean  
hand is parallel to floor





# Flat

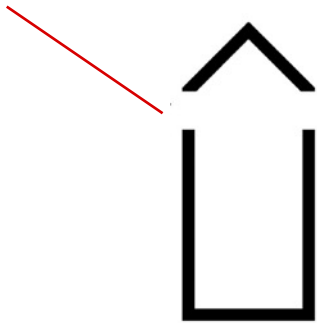
The hand is parallel to the front wall, and is shown in **Front View**.



# Flat

The hand is parallel to the floor, and is shown in **Top View**.

Gap in symbol means  
hand is parallel to floor









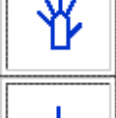



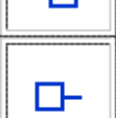

## Symbol Groups

# Symbol Groups





























The SignWriting hand symbols are organized into **ten groups**. The symbols are grouped by their action fingers.

The ten hand symbol groups can be referred to by either their group name, or their group number.

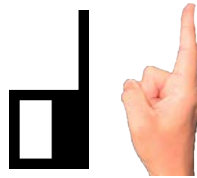
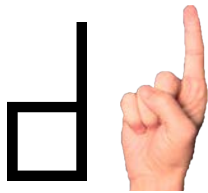
Click on symbol  
to jump to  
symbol group

	Symbol Group 1: <b>Index</b>
	Symbol Group 2: <b>Index Middle</b>
	Symbol Group 3: <b>Index Middle Thumb</b>
	Symbol Group 4: <b>Four Fingers</b>
	Symbol Group 5: <b>Five Fingers</b>
	Symbol Group 6: <b>Baby Finger</b>
	Symbol Group 7: <b>Ring Finger</b>
	Symbol Group 8: <b>Middle Finger</b>
	Symbol Group 9: <b>Index Thumb</b>
	Symbol Group 10: <b>Thumb</b>

## Symbol Group 1 (Index)

		Index
		Index on Circle
		Index on Cup
		Index on Oval
		Index on Hinge
		Index on Angle
		Index Bent
		Index Bent on Circle
		Index Bent on Fist Thumb Under
		Index Raised Knuckle
		Index Cup
		Index Hinge on Fist
		Index Hinge on Fist Low
		Index Hinge on Circle

## Front View

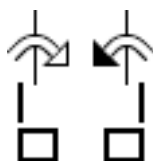
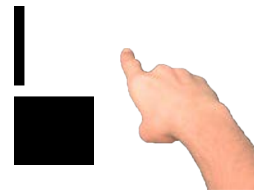
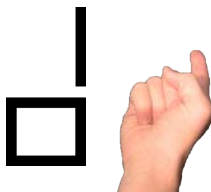


one-half

Deaf

where

## Top View

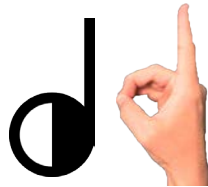


happen

you

also

## Front View



dinner

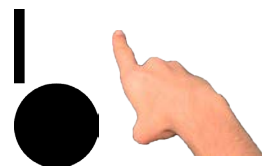


dating



democracy

## Top View



do-do?





























dessert



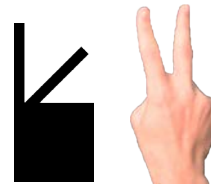
doctor

## Symbol Group 2 (Index Middle)

		Index Middle
		Index Middle on Circle
		Index Middle Bent
		Index Middle Raised Knuckles
		Index Middle Hinge
		Index Up, Middle Hinge
		Index Hinge, Middle Up
		Index Middle Unit
		Index Middle Unit, Index Bent
		Index Middle Unit, Middle Bent
		Index Middle Unit, Cup
		Index Middle Unit, Hinge
		Index Middle Cross



## Front View



see

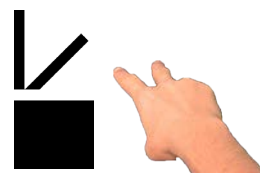


two minutes



stupid

## Top View



two of them





























read



twenty-two













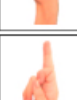













# Symbol Group 3 (Index Middle Thumb)

## Part 1

		Index Middle Thumb
		Index Middle Thumb on Circle
		Index Middle Straight, Thumb Bent
		Index Middle Bent, Thumb Straight
		Index Middle Thumb Bent
		Index Middle Hinge Spread, Thumb Side
		Index Up, Middle Hinge, Thumb Side
		Index Up, Middle Hinge, Thumb Unit
		Index Hinge, Middle Up, Thumb Side
		Index Middle Up Spread, Thumb Forward
		Index Middle Thumb Cup
		Index Middle Thumb Circle
		Index Middle Thumb Hook

























# Symbol Group 3 (Index Middle Thumb)

## Part 2

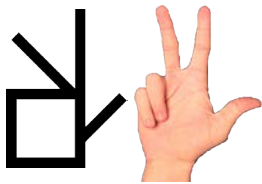
		Index Middle Thumb Hinge
		Thumb Between Index Middle Straight
		Index Middle Unit, Thumb Side
		Index Middle Unit, Thumb Side Unit
		Index Middle Unit, Thumb Side Bent
		Middle Thumb Hook, Index Up
		Index Thumb Hook, Middle Up
		Index Middle Unit Hinge, Thumb Side
		Index Middle Cross, Thumb Side
		Index Middle Unit, Thumb Forward
		Index Middle Unit Cup, Thumb Forward
		Middle Thumb Cup, Index Up
		Index Thumb Cup, Middle Up

# Symbol Group 3 (Index Middle Thumb)

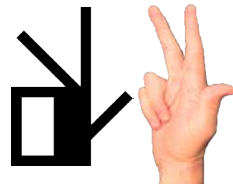
## Part 3

		Middle Thumb Circle, Index Up
		Middle Thumb Circle, Index Hinge
		Index Thumb Angle Out, Middle Up
		Index Thumb Angle In, Middle Up
		Index Thumb Circle, Middle Up
		Index Middle Thumb, Unit Hinge
		Index Middle Thumb, Angle Out
		Index Middle Thumb, Angle
		Middle Thumb Angle Out, Index Up
		Middle Thumb Angle Out, Index Crossed
		Middle Thumb Angle, Index Up
		Index Thumb Hook, Middle Hinge

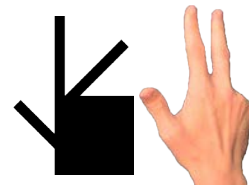
## Front View



Denmark



third



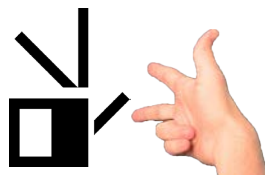
\$3.00



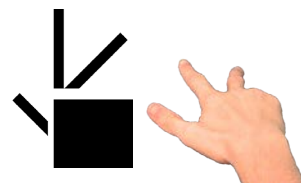
## Top View



three of them



















vehicle

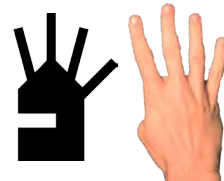
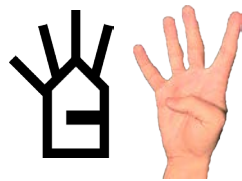


awkward

## Symbol Group 4 (Four Fingers)

		Four Fingers
		Four Fingers Bent
		Four Fingers Hinge
		Four Fingers Unit
		Four Fingers Unit Split
		Four Fingers Unit Claw
		Four Fingers Unit Bent
		Four Fingers Unit Hinge

## Front View



list



talk



\$4.00

## Top View



four of them



talk-talk-talk



forty-four

# Symbol Group 5 (Five Fingers)































## Part 1

		Five Fingers Spread
		Five Fingers Spread Heel
		Five Fingers Spread, Four Bent
		Five Fingers Spread, Four Bent Heel
		Five Fingers Spread Bent
		Five Fingers Spread Bent Heel
		Five Fingers Spread, Thumb Forward
		Five Fingers Spread Cup
		Five Fingers Spread Cup Open
		Five Fingers Spread Hinge Open
		Five Fingers Spread Oval
		Five Fingers Spread Hinge
		Five Fingers Spread Hinge, Thumb Side
		Five Fingers Spread Hinge, No Thumb
		Flat
























# Symbol Group 5 (Five Fingers)

## Part 2

		Flat, Between Palm Facings
		Flat Heel
		Flat, Thumb Side
		Flat, Thumb Side Heel
		Flat, Thumb Bent
		Flat, Thumb Forward
		Flat Split Index, Thumb Side
		Flat Split Center
		Flat Split Center, Thumb Side
		Flat Split Center, Thumb Side Bent
		Flat Split Baby
		Claw
		Claw, Thumb Side
		Claw, No Thumb
		Claw, Thumb Forward

















# Symbol Group 5 (Five Fingers)

## Part 3

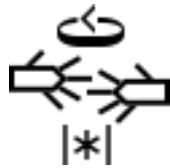
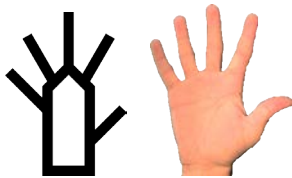
		Hook Curlicue
		Hook
		Cup Open
		Cup
		Cup Open, Thumb Side
		Cup, Thumb Side
		Cup Open, No Thumb
		Cup, No Thumb
		Cup Open, Thumb Forward
		Cup, Thumb Forward
		Curlicue Open
		Curlicue
		Circle
		Oval
		Oval, Thumb Side
		Oval, No Thumb

# Symbol Group 5 (Five Fingers)

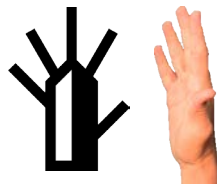
## Part 4

		Oval, Thumb Forward
		Hinge Open
		Hinge Open, Thumb Forward
		Hinge
		Hinge Small
		Hinge Open, Thumb Side
		Hinge, Thumb Side
		Hinge Open, No Thumb
		Hinge, No Thumb
		Hinge, Thumb Side Touches Index
		Hinge, Thumb Between Middle Ring
		Angle

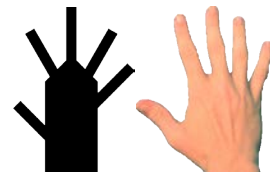
## Front View



America



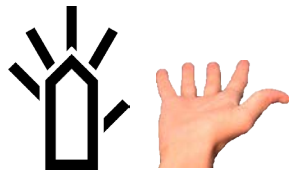
cool (very fine)



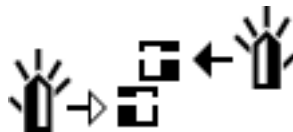
hello

---

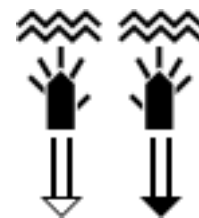
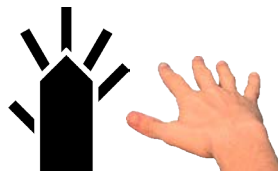
## Top View



wait



condense

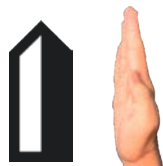


snow

## Front View



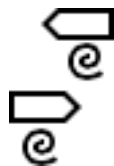
appreciate



hello



yours



## Top View



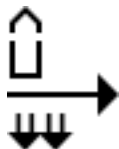
things



street





























children













# Symbol Group 6 (Baby Finger)

## Part 1

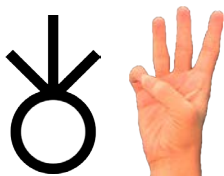
		Index Middle Ring
		Index Middle Ring on Circle
		Index Middle Ring on Hinge
		Index Middle Ring on Angle
		Baby Hinge
		Index Middle Ring, Bent
		Index Middle Ring, Unit
		Index Middle Ring, Unit Hinge
		Baby Down
		Baby Down, Ripple Straight
		Baby Down, Ripple Curved
		Baby Down, Others Circle
		Baby Up

# Symbol Group 6 (Baby Finger)

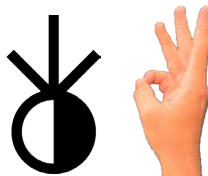
## Part 2

		Baby Up on Fist Thumb Under
		Baby Up on Circle
		Baby Up on Oval
		Baby Up on Angle
		Baby Raised Knuckle
		Baby Bent
		Baby Touches Thumb
		Baby Thumb
		Baby Thumb on Hinge
		Baby Index Thumb
		Baby Index Thumb on Hinge
		Baby Index Thumb, Index Thumb Angle Out
		Baby Index Thumb, Index Thumb Angle
		Baby Index
		Baby Index on Circle
		Baby Index on Hinge
		Baby Index on Angle

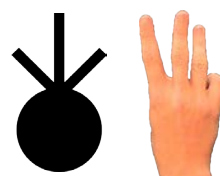
## Front View



sixteen



six hours



six thousand



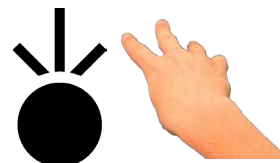
## Top View



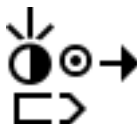
six of them



six weeks






















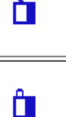






sixty-six























# Symbol Group 7 (Ring Finger)

## Part 1

		Index Middle Baby
		Index Middle Baby on Circle
		Index Middle Baby on Hinge
		Ring Hinge
		Index Middle Baby on Angle
		Index Middle Cross with Baby
		Index Middle Cross with Baby on Circle
		Ring Down
		Ring Down, Index Thumb Hook, Middle Hinge
		Ring Down, Middle Thumb Angle, Index Cross
		Ring Up
		Ring Raised Knuckle
		Ring Baby

# Symbol Group 7 (Ring Finger)

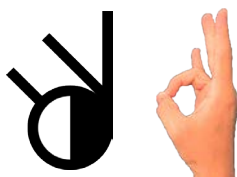
## Part 2

		Ring Baby on Circle
		Ring Baby on Oval
		Ring Baby on Angle
		Ring Middle
		Ring Middle Unit
		Ring Middle Raised Knuckles
		Ring Index
		Ring Thumb
		Ring Thumb Hook

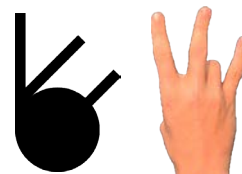
## Front View



seventeen



seven hours



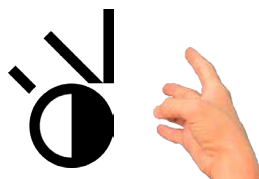
seven thousand



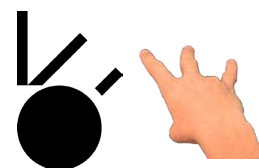
## Top View



seven of them



seven weeks



seventy-seven






# Symbol Group 8 (Middle Finger)

## Part 1

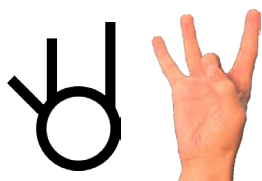
		Index Ring Baby
		Index Ring Baby on Circle
		Index Ring Baby on Curlicue
		Index Ring Baby on Hook Out
		Index Ring Baby on Hook In
		Index Ring Baby on Hook Under
		Index Ring Baby on Cup
		Index Ring Baby on Hinge
		Index Ring Baby on Angle Out
		Index Ring Baby on Angle
		Middle Down
		Middle Hinge

# Symbol Group 8 (Middle Finger)

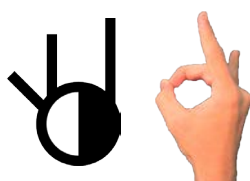
## Part 2

		Middle Up
		Middle Up on Circle
		Middle Raised Knuckle
		Middle Up, Thumb Side
		Middle Thumb Hook
		Middle Thumb Baby
		Middle Baby

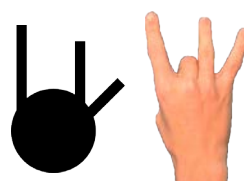
## Front View



**eighteen**



**eight hours**



**eight thousand**



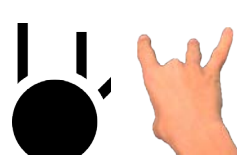
## Top View



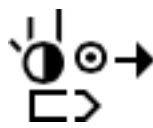
**eight of them**



**eight weeks**



























**eighty-eight**





























# Symbol Group 9 (Index Thumb)

## Part 1

		Middle Ring Baby
		Middle Ring Baby on Circle
		Middle Ring Baby on Curlicue
		Middle Ring Baby on Cup
		Middle Ring Baby on Hinge
		Middle Ring Baby on Angle Out
		Middle Ring Baby on Angle In
		Middle Ring Baby on Angle
		Middle Ring Baby Bent
		Middle Ring Baby Unit on Claw
		Middle Ring Baby Unit on Claw Side
		Middle Ring Baby Unit on Hook Out

# Symbol Group 9 (Index Thumb)































## Part 2

		Middle Ring Baby Unit on Hook In
		Middle Ring Baby Unit on Hook
		Index Hinge
		Index Thumb Side
		Index Thumb Side on Hinge
		Index Thumb Side, Thumb Diagonal
		Index Thumb Side, Thumb Unit
		Index Thumb Side, Thumb Bent
		Index Thumb Side, Index Bent
		Index Thumb Side, Both Bent
		Index Thumb Side, Index Hinge
		Index Thumb Forward, Index Straight
		Index Thumb Forward, Index Bent

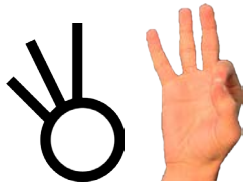


# Symbol Group 9 (Index Thumb)

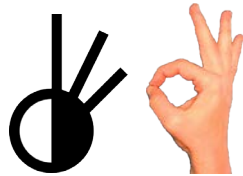
## Part 3

		Index Thumb Hook
		Index Thumb Curlicue
		Index Thumb Curve, Thumb Inside
		Index Thumb Curve, Thumb Inside on Claw
		Index Thumb Curve, Thumb Under
		Index Thumb Circle
		Index Thumb Cup
		Index Thumb Cup Open
		Index Thumb Hinge Open
		Index Thumb Hinge Large
		Index Thumb Hinge
		Index Thumb Hinge Small
		Index Thumb Angle Out
		Index Thumb Angle In
		Index Thumb Angle

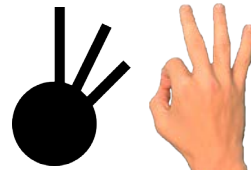
## Front View



**Fridays**



**interpret**



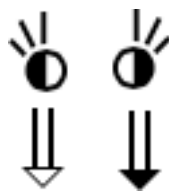
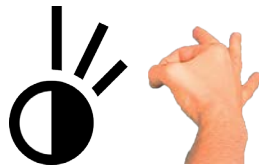
**form**

---

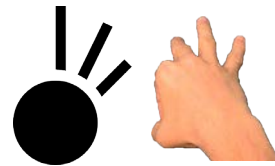
## Top View



**nine of them**

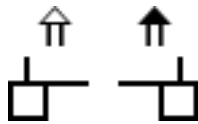
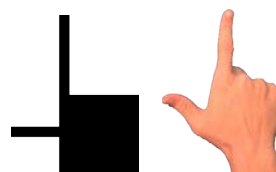
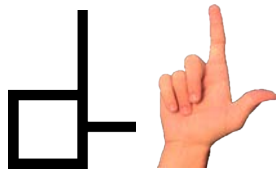


**decide**



**ninety-nine**

## Front View



life



law

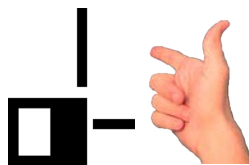


library

## Top View



both of us



































little

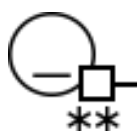
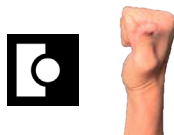
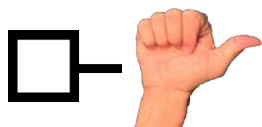


language

## Symbol Group 10 (Thumb)

		Thumb
		Thumb Heel
		Thumb Side Diagonal
		Thumb Side Unit
		Thumb Side Bent
		Thumb Forward
		Thumb Between Index Middle
		Thumb Between Middle Ring
		Thumb Between Ring Baby
		Thumb Under Two Fingers
		Thumb Over Two Fingers
		Thumb Under Three Fingers
		Thumb Under Four Fingers
		Thumb Over Four Raised Knuckles
		Fist
		Fist Heel

## Front View



**dentist**

**India**

**drunk**

## Top View



**other**

**ahead**

**remember**



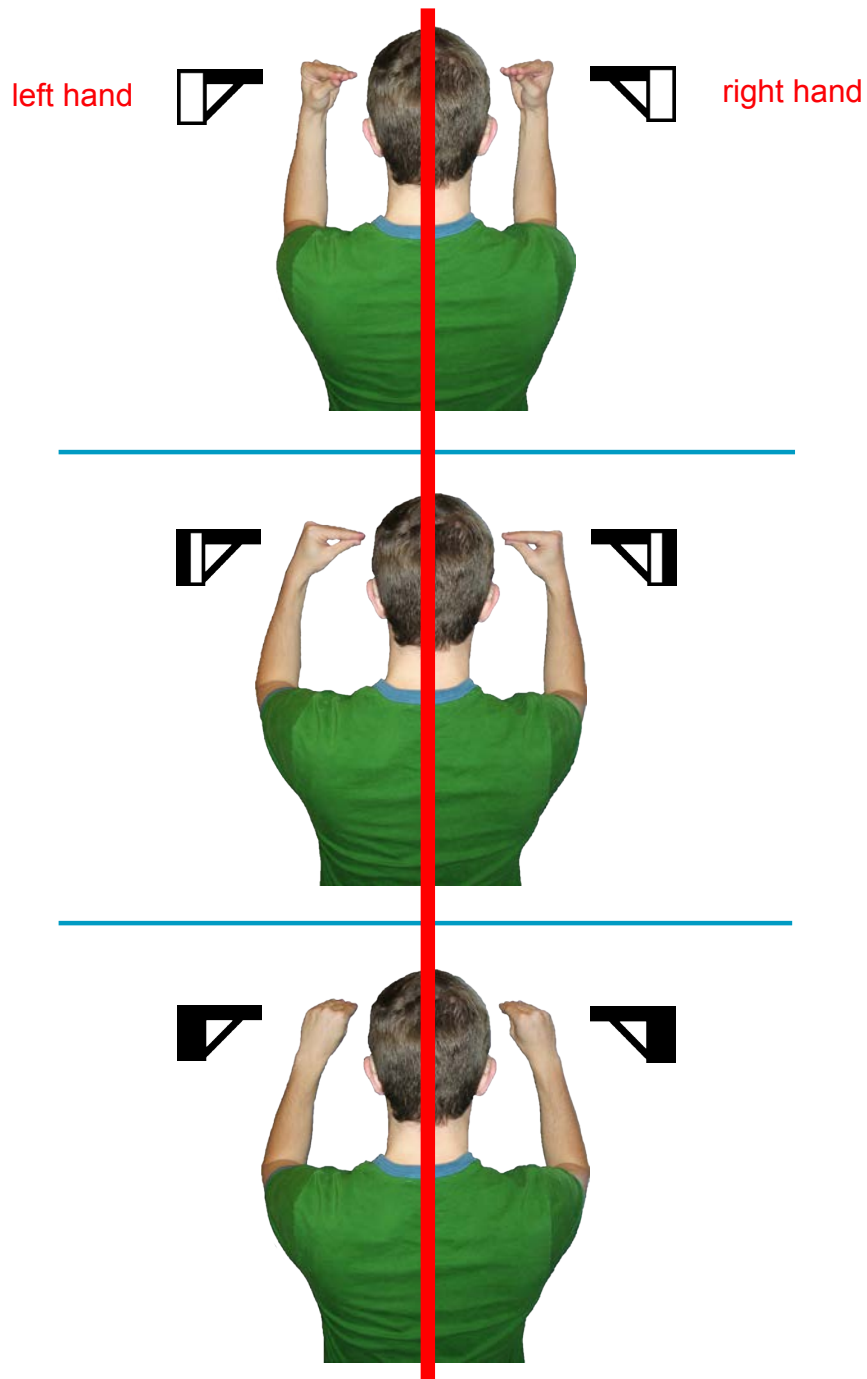
## Writing Hands

## Hands Relate to Center

Hand symbols are written to relate to the **center of the body**.

On most hand symbols, the action fingers point towards the center.

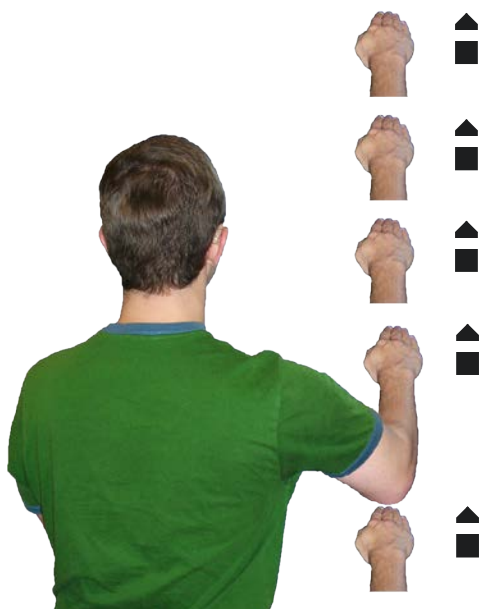
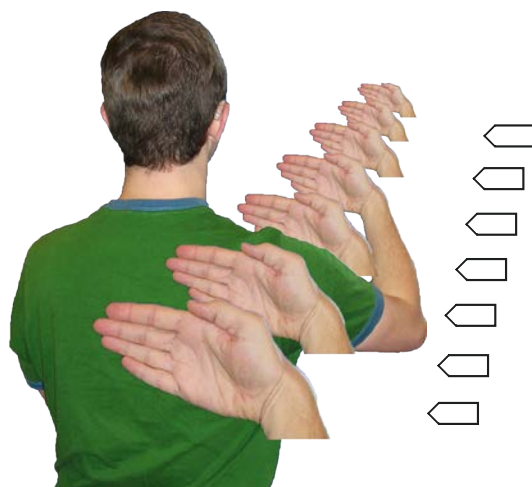
Left hands are written to the left of the center. Right hands are written to the right of the center.



# Hand Positions

The same hand symbol is used to write a hand in any position (high, low, near, far, behind).

The palm facing for a hand is written the same way for all hand positions. Even if you cannot see the palm, you can feel the direction of its palm facing.

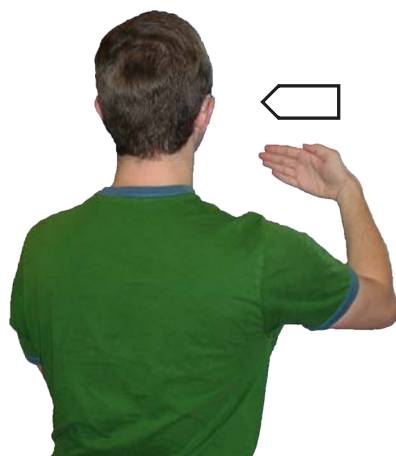




## Hands Pointing to Side

Hands can be positioned so their fingers point straight to the side. A hand in this position can be written two ways: either parallel to the front wall, or parallel to the floor.

While both ways of writing this hand are correct, **write it to be parallel to the front wall**. This form is easier to read.



**Write It This Way**



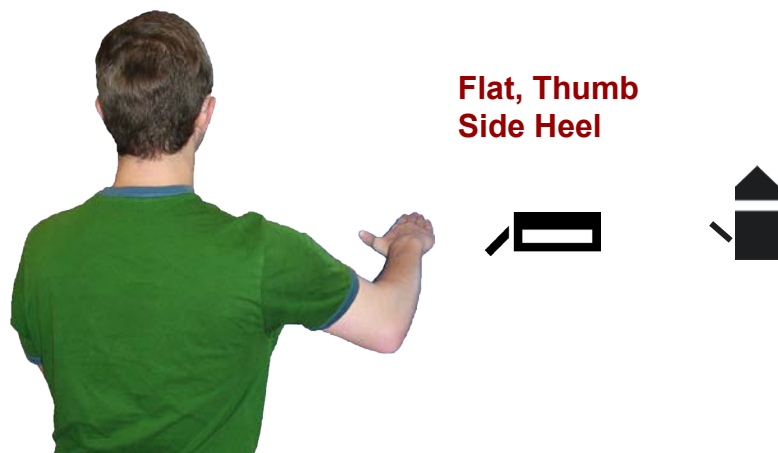
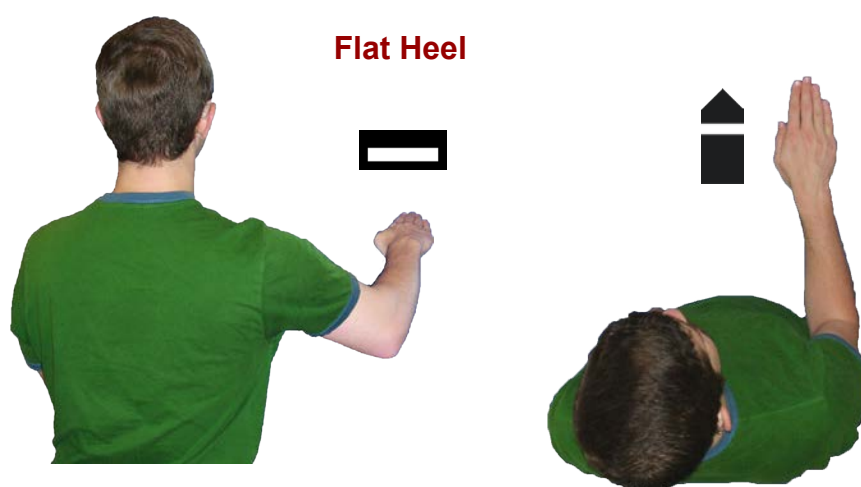
**Harder To Read**

## Flat Hand Pointing Forward

The Flat Hand handshapes can be positioned so the five fingers point forward.

A hand in this position can be written two ways: either with a standard **Flat** symbol, or with a **Flat Heel** symbol, which shows the hand from the wrist's point of view (Wrist View).

**Both ways of writing this handshape are correct.**



## Flat Hand Pointing Forward



## Fist Pointing Forward

The Fist handshape can be positioned so the knuckles point forward.

A hand in this position can be written two ways: either with a standard **Fist** symbol, or with a **Fist Heel** symbol, which shows the hand from the wrist's point of view (Wrist View).

**Both ways of writing this handshape are correct.**



**Fist Heel**



**Thumb Heel**

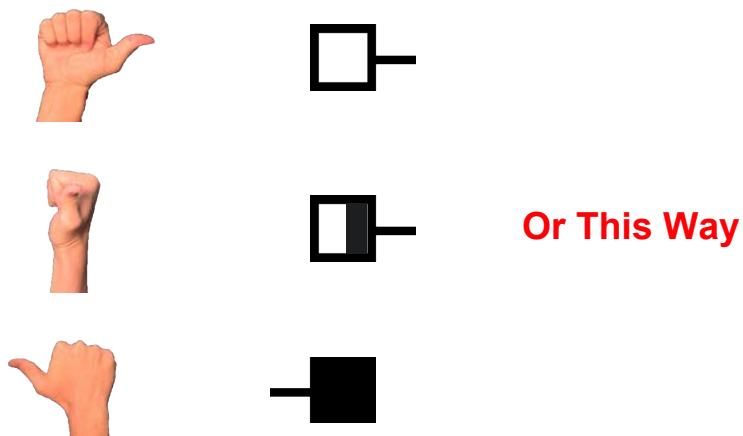
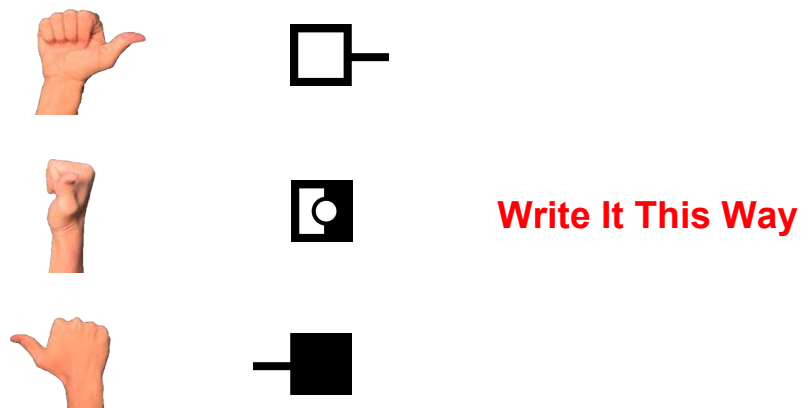


# Thumb Pointing Back

The Thumb handshape can be positioned so the thumb points back at you.

A hand in this position can be written two ways: either with the **Thumb** symbol in sideways palm facing, or by adding a finger to the **Fist** symbol in sideways palm facing.

**Both ways of writing this handshape are correct.**

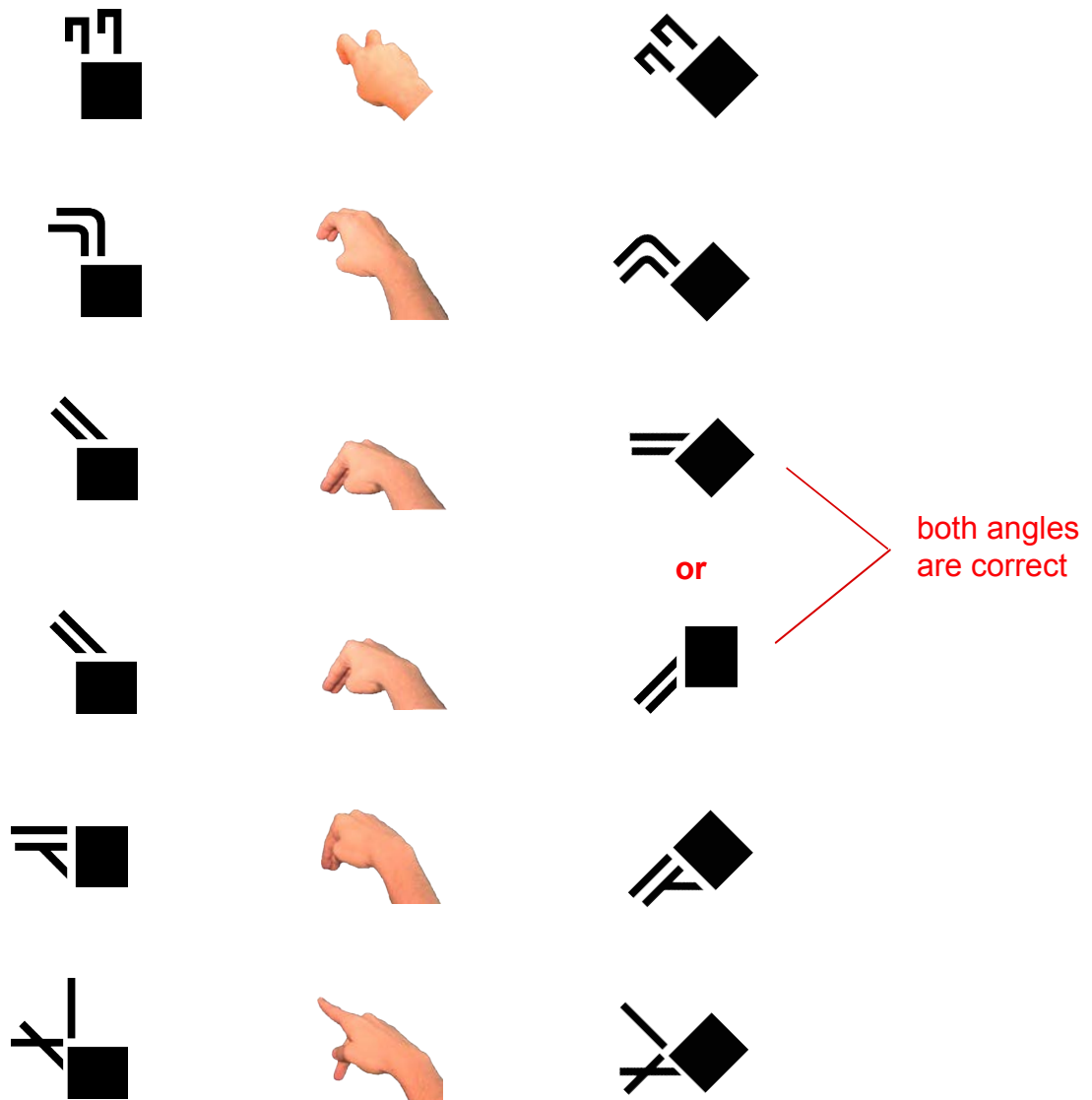


## Fingers Pointing Down

In certain handshapes, the fingers point downward when the hand points forward.

In these cases the hand symbols **can be written at an angle**, so the symbol's action fingers also point downward.

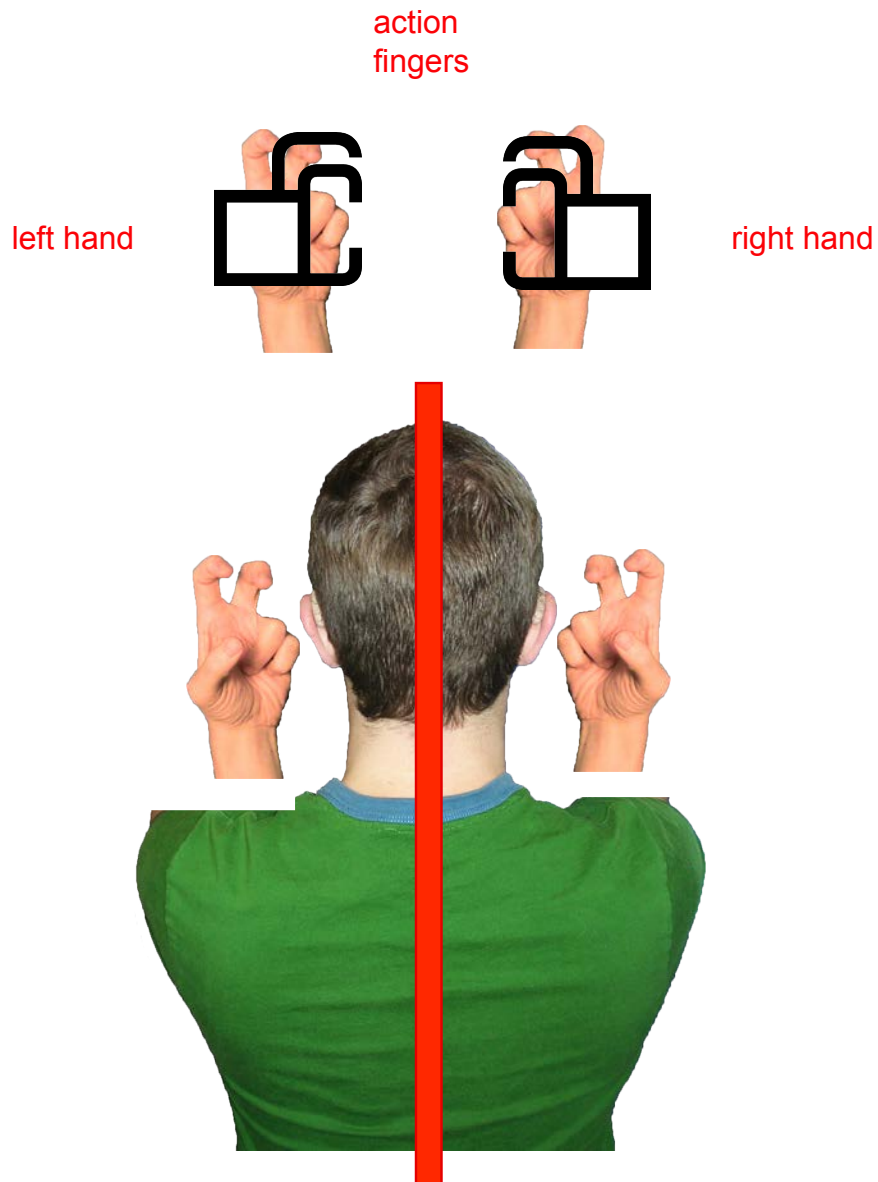
**Both ways of writing these handshapes are correct.**



# Fingers Pointing Back

In certain handshapes, the fingers point back at you when the hand points upward.

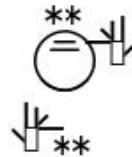
In these cases the hand symbols are written so **the action fingers point towards the center of the body**. The palm facing on these symbols shows the palm facing back at you.



# Fingers Pointing Back



**glass**



**illness**



**oral**



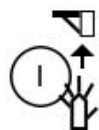
**lucky**



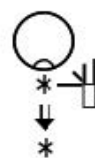
**no-to-me**



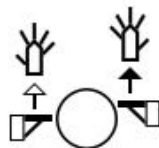
**prefer**



**wolf**



**birthday**



**information**



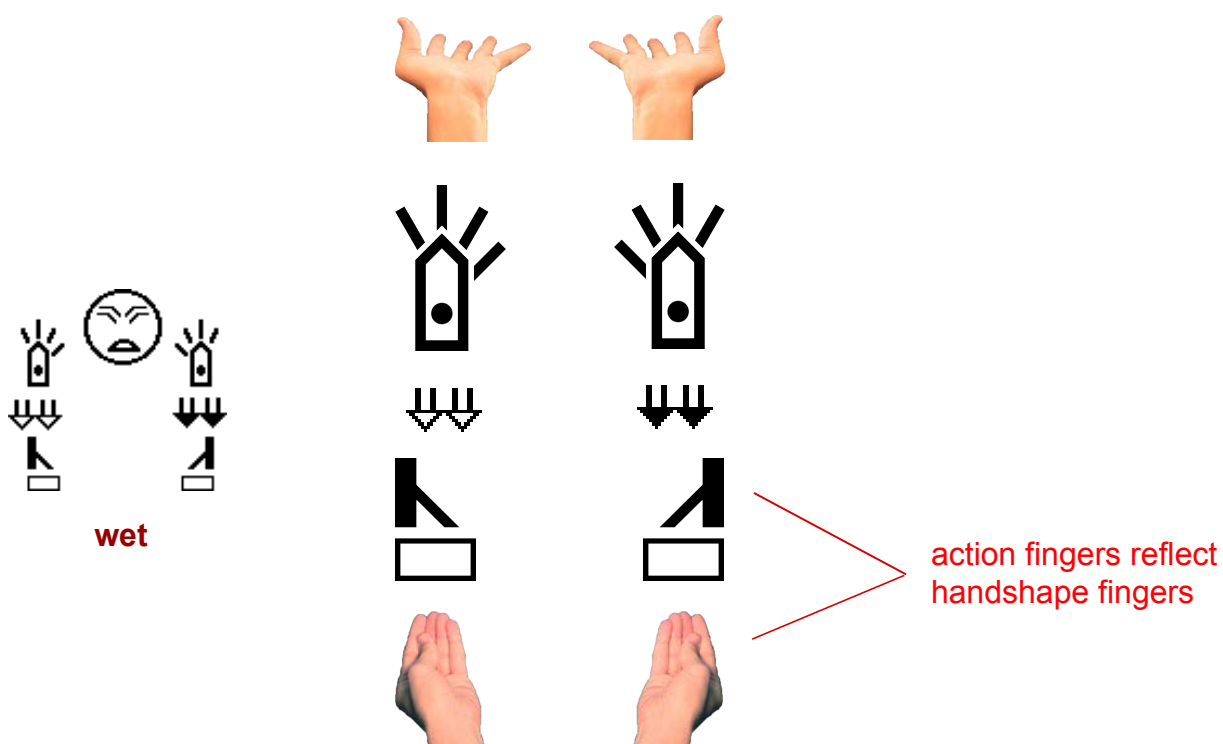
**eat**



## Fingers Pointing Up

Angle handshapes can be positioned so their fingers point upward.

In this case the **Angle** hand symbols are written so **the action fingers also point upward**. The palm facing on these symbols shows the palm facing upward.



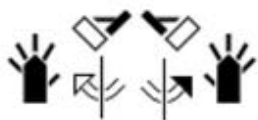
# Fingers Pointing Up



**give to you**



**money**



**lose**



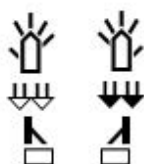
**poor**



**grow**



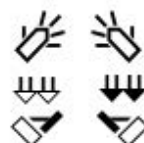
**waste**



**soft**



**dissolve**



**soft**



**twelve**

## Fingers Pointing Away

In most signs, the hands point towards the center of the body.



























But in a few signs the hands point away from the center. In this case the hand symbols are written so **the action fingers also point away from the center.**



action fingers point  
away from center

fairy godmother

## The American Manual Alphabet

	a		n
	b		o
	c		p
	d		q
	e		r
	f		s
	g		t
	h		u
	i		v
	j		w
	k		x
	l		y
	m		z



**Contact**

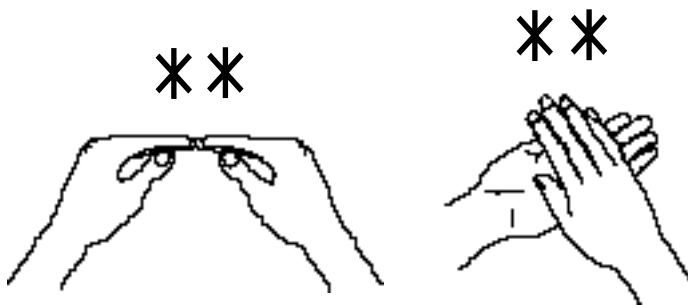
# Contact Symbols

**Contact symbols** show different kinds of contact between your hands, or between your hand and another part of your body.

*	<b>Touch</b>
+	<b>Grasp</b>
*	<b>Between</b>
#	<b>Strike</b>
⊙	<b>Brush</b>
Ⓢ	<b>Rub</b>

Repeated contact is written by placing multiple contact symbols next to each other in a sign.

---



  
**Touch**

The contact symbol **Touch** is written with an asterisk.

It shows the hand gently contacting another part of the body.

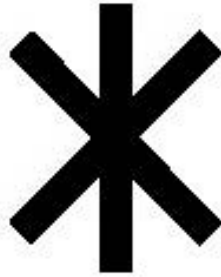


**more**



**school**

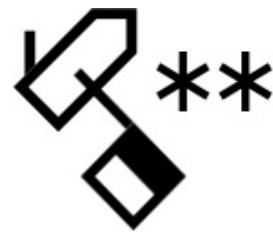
## Touch Contact



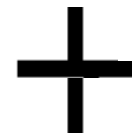
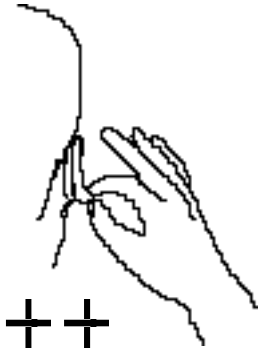
**dating**



**Deaf**



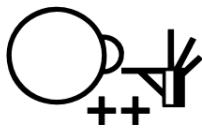
**owe**



## Grasp

The contact symbol **Grasp** is written with a plus symbol.

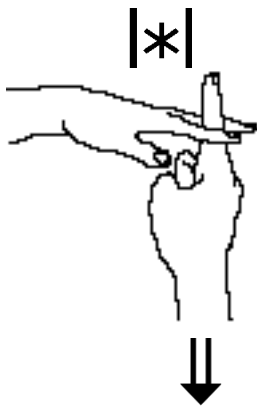
It shows the hand grasping or pinching a part of the body or a prop, such as clothing.



earring



congratulations



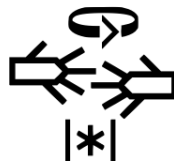
## Between

The contact symbol **Between** is written with an asterisk between two lines.

It shows contact between two fingers or other parts of the body.

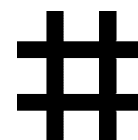
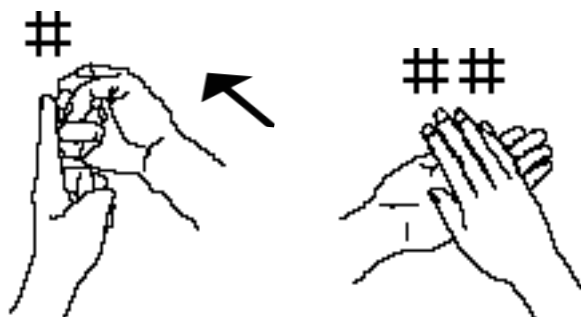


disappear



America





## Strike

The contact symbol **Strike** is written with a hashtag.

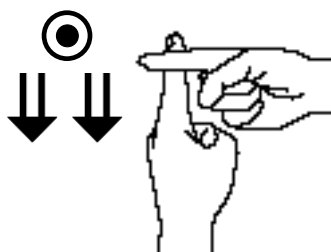
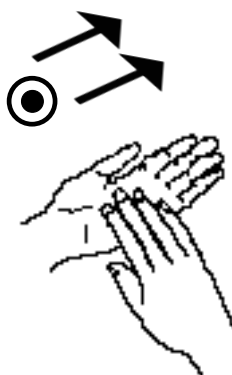
It shows the hand contacting a surface **with force**.



hit



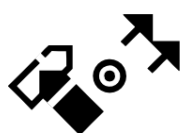
clap



## Brush

The contact symbol **Brush** is written with a circle containing a dot.

It shows movement that first contacts and then **moves off** the surface.

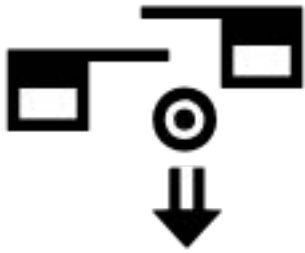


excuse me



monthly

## Brush Contact



cannot



easy



light



## Circular Rub

The contact symbol **Circular Rub** is written with a spiral symbol.

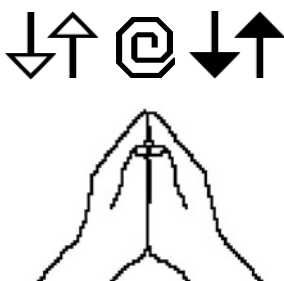
It shows contact that **moves in a circle** while **remaining** on the surface.



coffee



chocolate



## Straight Rub

The contact symbol **Circular Rub** can show rubbing in a **straight line** (rather than a circle).

Straight rub contact is written by placing movement symbols next to the rub symbol.

The contact moves in the direction of the movement symbols.



neat



eager

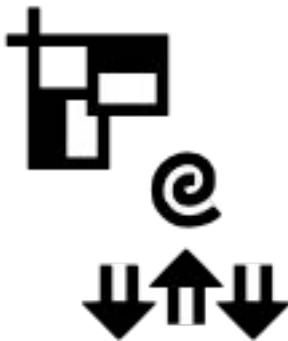
Rub Contact



coin



consider



temperature



**Movement**

# Movement Symbols

**Movement symbols** show the movements you make in the signing space.



Straight Movement



Curved Movement



Rotation Movement



Circle Movement



Wrist Movement



Finger Movement



Face Movement



Head Movement



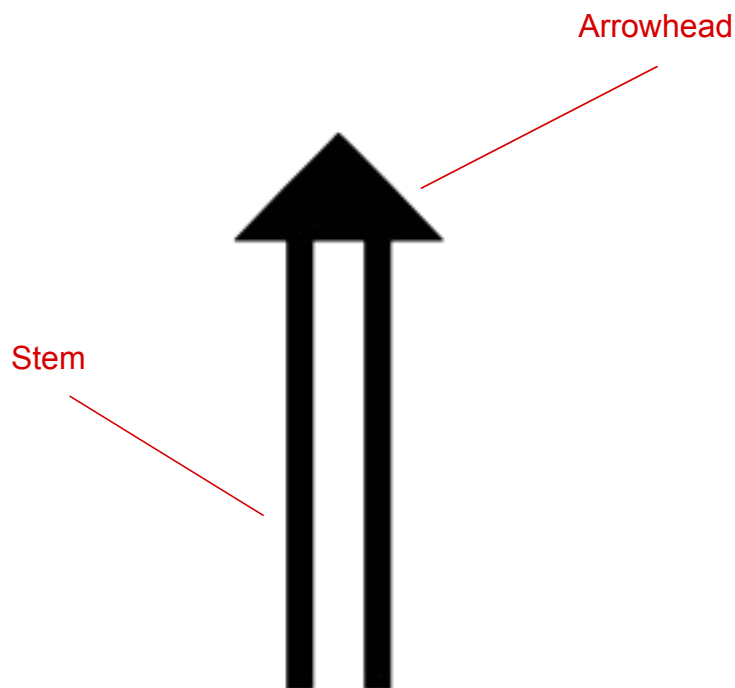
Body Movement

This chapter introduces the movement symbols. The symbols are described in detail in the following chapters (including the **Face**, **Head**, and **Body** chapters).

# Movement Symbol

A movement symbol has the following parts:

- The **arrowhead** shows which hand is moving (or for the face, head, and body, general movement).
- The **stem** shows the direction of the movement, and its path through the signing space.



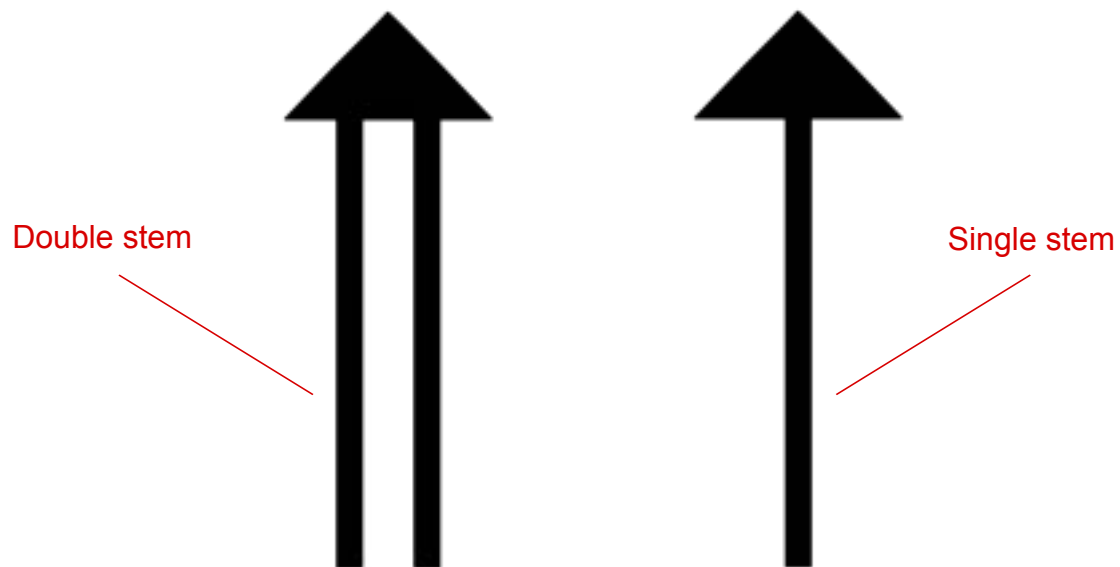
## Movement Symbol

# Movement Symbol

## Movement Stem

Movement symbols with a **double stem** show movements that are parallel to the Front Wall.

Movement symbols with a **single stem** show movements that are parallel to the Floor.



## Movement Stem

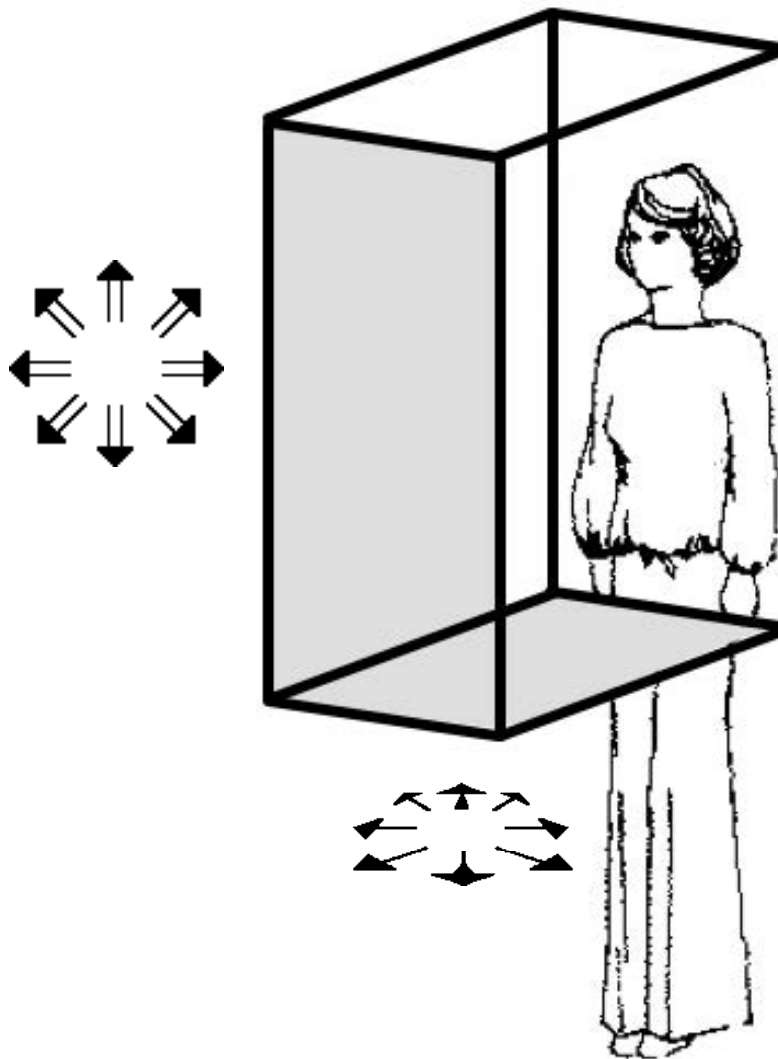


# Movement Symbol

## Movement Stem

Movement symbols with a double stem show movements that are parallel to the **Front Wall**.

















Movement symbols with a single stem show movements that are parallel to the **Floor**.



## Movement Stem

# Movement Symbol

## Movement Stem

		Straight Movement
		Curved Movement
		Rotation Movement
		Circle Movement
		Wrist Movement
		Face Movement
		Head Movement
		Body Movement

# Movement Symbol

## Movement Arrowhead

The **arrowhead** on a movement symbol identifies what is moving:

- A **hollow** arrowhead shows your **left** hand moving.
- A **solid** arrowhead shows your **right** hand moving.
- An **open** arrowhead shows **both** hands moving, on the same movement path. For face, head, and body movements, this arrowhead shows the general movement of these features.

**Hollow  
Arrowhead**



**Solid  
Arrowhead**



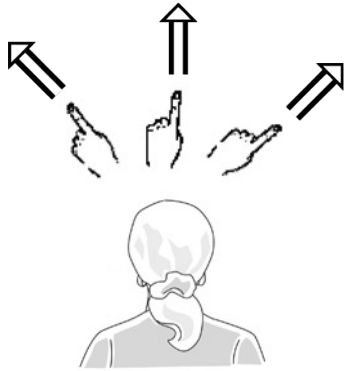
**Open  
Arrowhead**



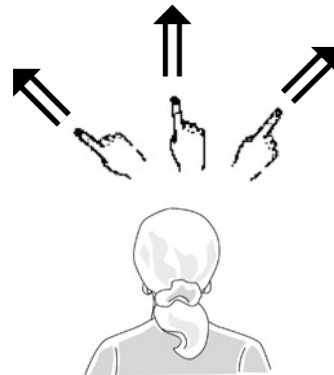
## Movement Arrowhead

# Movement Symbol

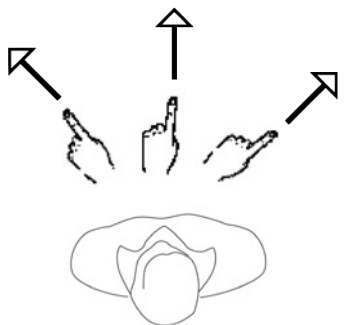
## Movement Arrowhead



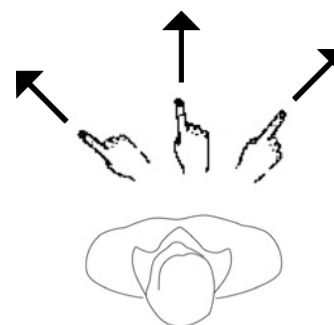
Left Hand



Right Hand



Left Hand



Right Hand



house



way

# Movement Symbol

## Movement Arrowhead

For hand movements, a movement symbol defines a **path** through the signing space which the hand follows as it moves.

A hand movement symbol with an **open** arrowhead shows **both** your hands sharing the same movement path.

Hands sharing the same movement path either stay in contact as they move, or remain close to each other.



I help you



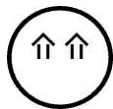
follow



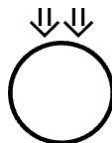
plan

For face, head, and body movements, an **open** arrowhead shows movement of the specified part of the face, head, or body.

Because it is used to show several types of movement, the open arrowhead is called a **General Arrowhead**.



look up

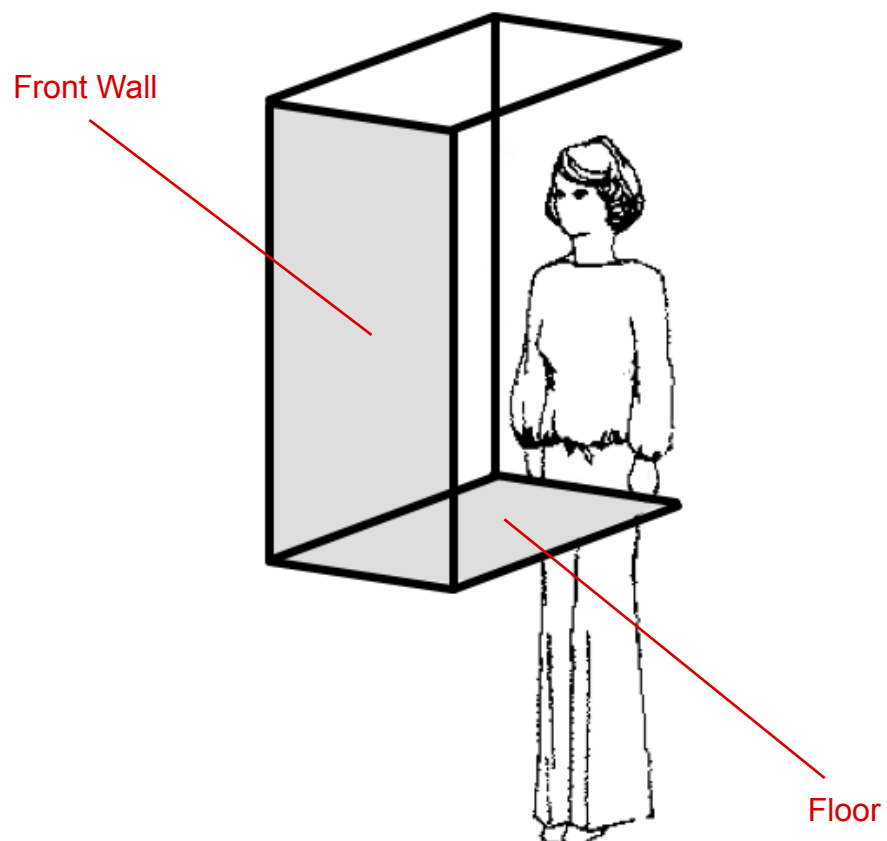


nod yes



shrug

# Movement Planes



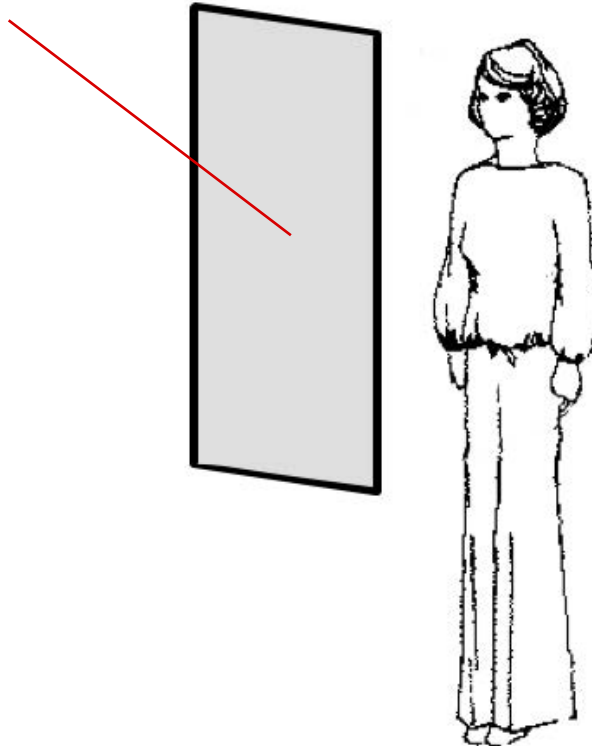
## Signing Space

# Movement Planes

The Front Wall of the signing space is called the **Wall Plane**.

SignWriting symbols that show movement parallel to the Wall Plane include the term "Wall Plane" in their symbol names.

Wall Plane



Wall Plane Straight

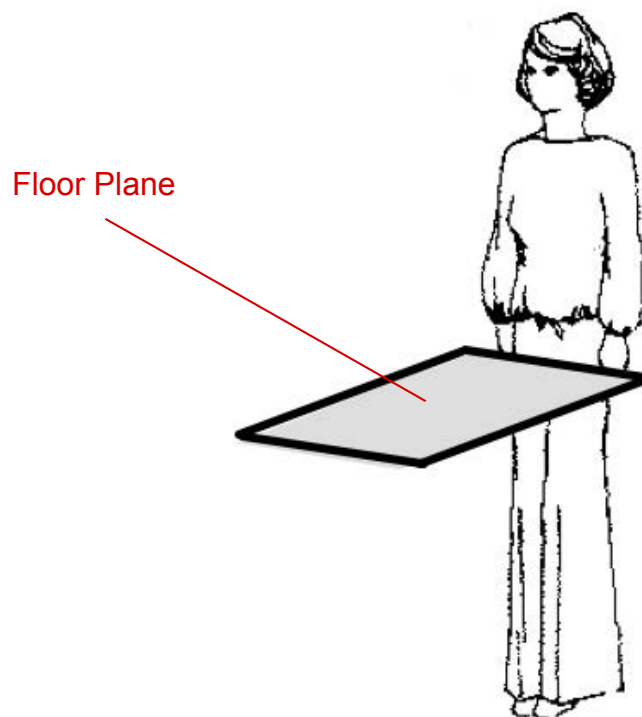


Wall Plane Corner

# Movement Planes

The Floor of the signing space is called the **Floor Plane**.

SignWriting symbols that show movement parallel to the Floor Plane include the term "Floor Plane" in their symbol names.



**Floor Plane Straight**



**Floor Plane Corner**



## Mirror

Movement symbols can be **mirrored** to show the left- and right-hand versions of a movement.



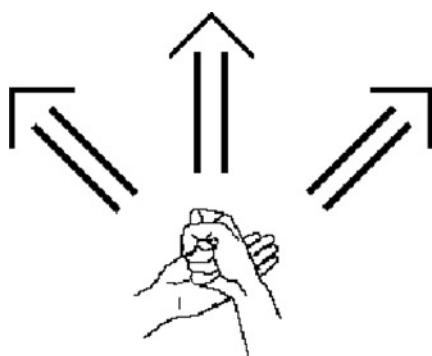
house



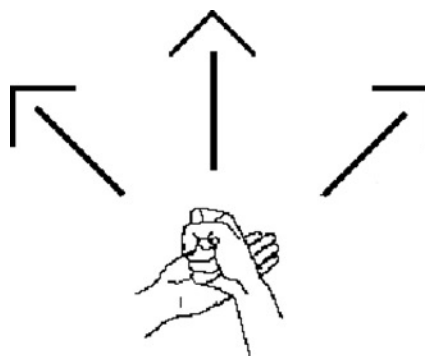
spaghetti

---

## Review – Movement



**Double-stemmed**  
movement symbols  
show movement parallel  
to the **Wall Plane**.



**Single-stemmed**  
movement symbols  
show movement parallel  
to the **Floor Plane**.



## **Straight Movement**

# Straight Movement Symbols

**Straight Movement symbols** show straight movements in the signing space.



Straight Movement Up



Straight Movement Forward



Straight Movement Diagonal Up-Forward



Straight Movement Diagonal Down-Back

## Basic Movement Symbols



one half

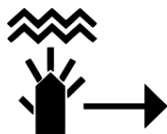


disappear



The movement symbol **Wall Plane Straight** is written with a double-stemmed arrow.

It shows straight movement which is parallel to the Wall Plane.



fingerspell



hit



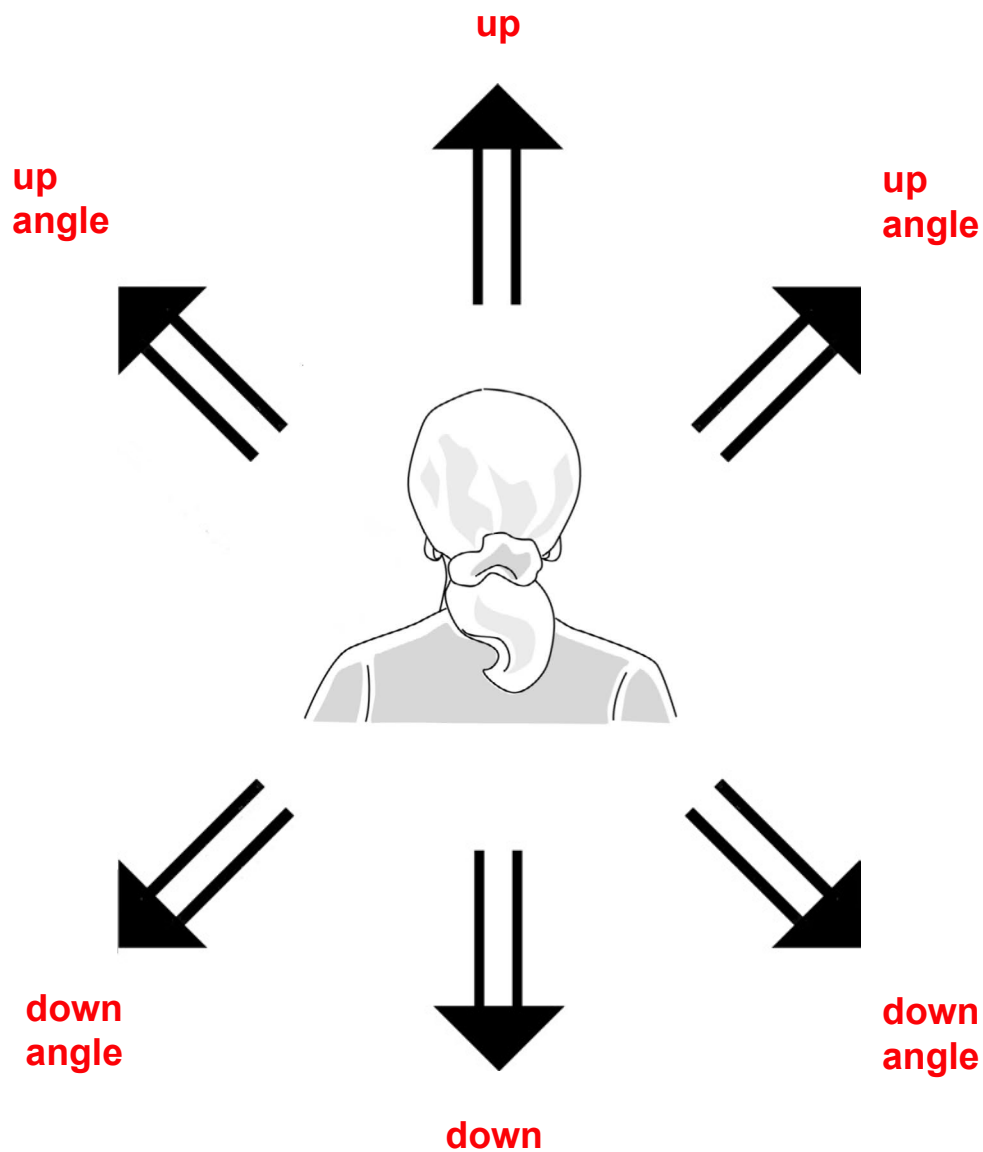
The movement symbol **Floor Plane Straight** is written with a single-stemmed arrow.

It shows straight movement which is parallel to the Floor Plane.

# Straight Movement

## Wall Plane

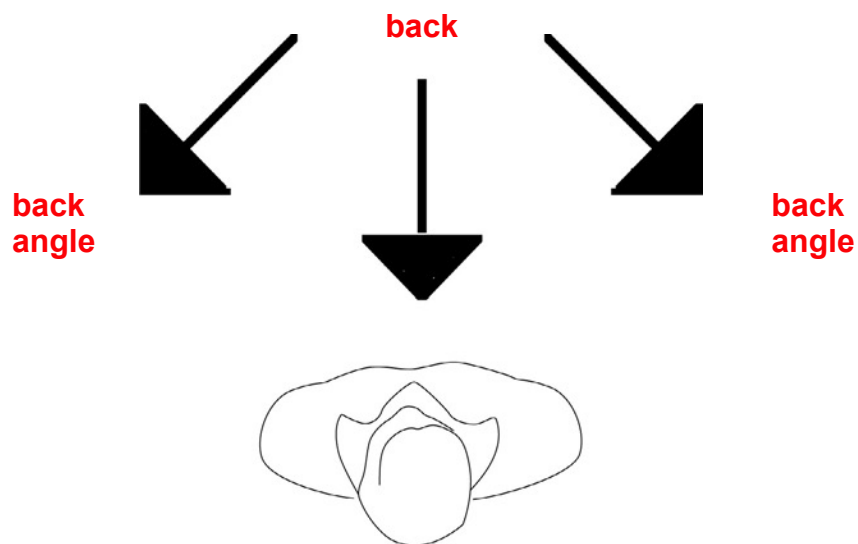
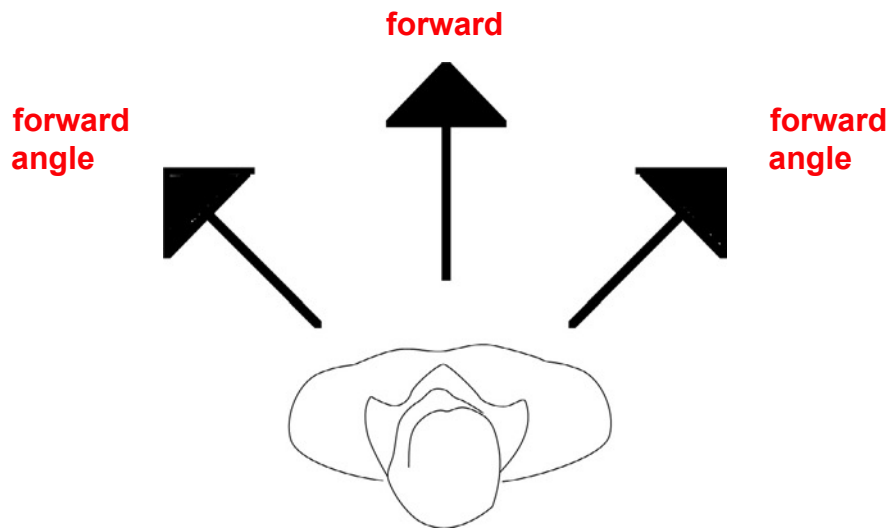
Straight movement symbols can point in eight different **directions**, to show the path of the movement through the signing space.



## Front View

# Straight Movement

Floor Plane

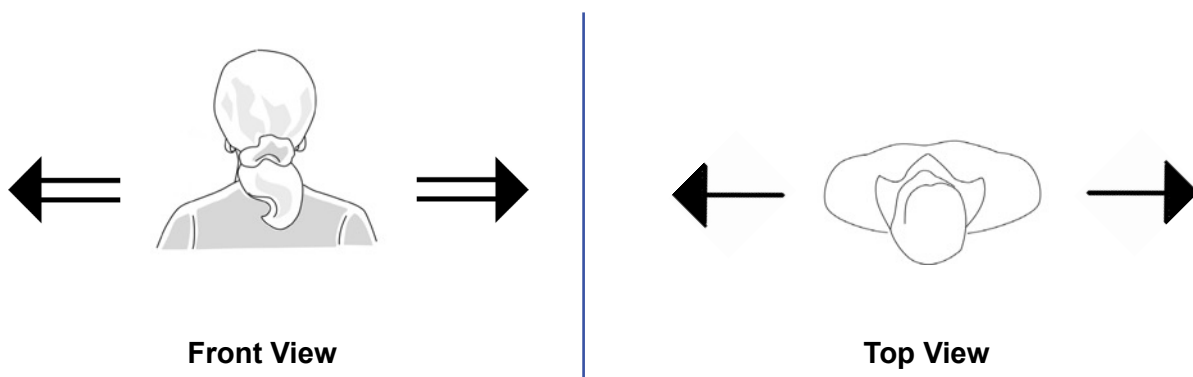


**Top View**

## Side Movement

Movements can point **straight to the side** of the signer.

Movement to the side is the same from both the Front View and Top View of the signing space. It can be written with **double-stemmed** or **single-stemmed** arrows.

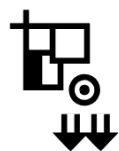


---

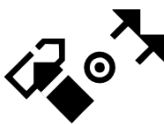
## Multiple Movements

Movement symbols can show **multiple movements** of a hand, which are either repeated or alternating movements.

Multiple movement is written by placing multiple movement symbols next to each other in a sign.



monthly



excuse me



eager

# Straight Movement

## Wall Plane



### Wall Plane Straight

Movement From Elbow



### Wall Plane Double

Small, Quick Movement



### Wall Plane Double Alternating

Small, Quick Movement



### Wall Plane Cross

Cross One Way, Then Other



### Wall Plane Triple

Small, Quick Movement



### Wall Plane Triple Alternating

Small, Quick Movement



### Wall Plane Bend

Angle-Straight



### Wall Plane Corner

Straight-Corner



### Wall Plane Check

Angle-Corner-Straight



### Wall Plane Box

Straight-Corner-Straight



### Wall Plane Zigzag

Straight-Corner-Angle



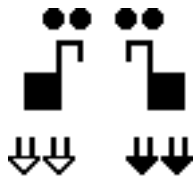
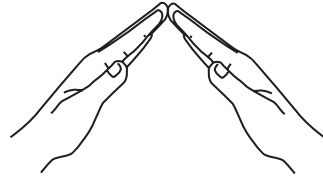
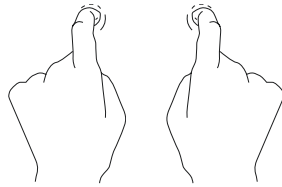
### Wall Plane Peaks

Mountain Tops



# Straight Movement

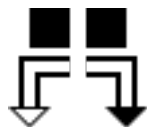
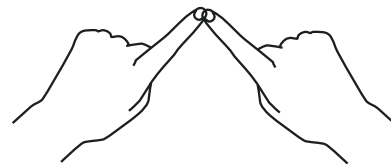
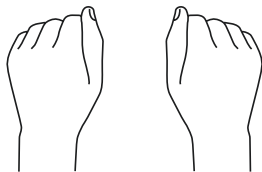
## Wall Plane



**exam, test**



**house**



**system**



**square**

# Straight Movement

## Floor Plane



### Floor Plane Straight

Movement From Elbow



### Floor Plane Double

Small, Quick Movement



### Floor Plane Double Alternating

Small, Quick Movement



### Floor Plane Cross

Cross One Way, Then Other



### Floor Plane Triple

Small, Quick Movement



### Floor Plane Triple Alternating

Small, Quick Movement



### Floor Plane Bend

Angle Straight



### Floor Plane Corner

Straight-Corner



### Floor Plane Check

Angle-Corner-Straight



### Floor Plane Box

Straight-Corner-Straight



### Floor Plane Zigzag

Straight-Corner-Angle

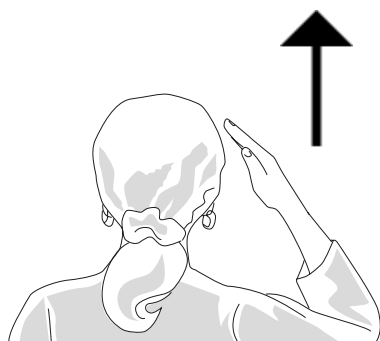


### Floor Plane Peaks

Mountain Tops

# Straight Movement

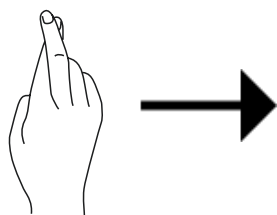
## Floor Plane



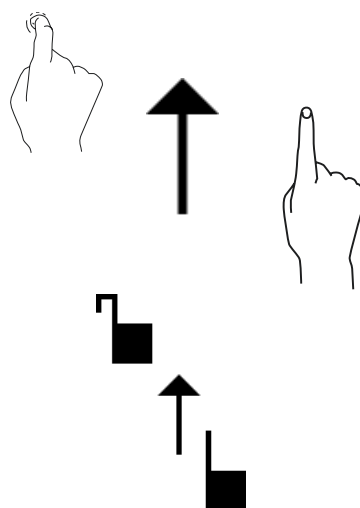
hello



nothing



right (direction)

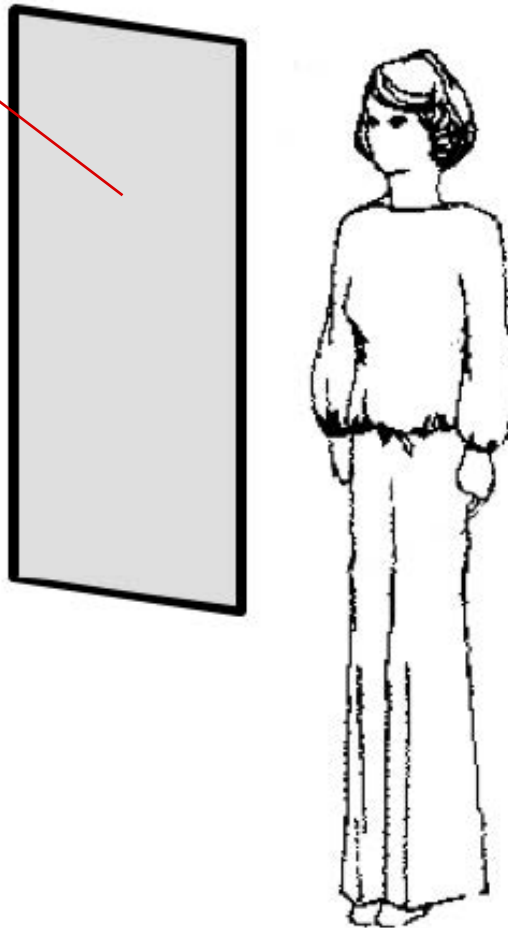


ask a question

## Review – Wall Plane

The **Front Wall** of the signing space is called the **Wall Plane**.

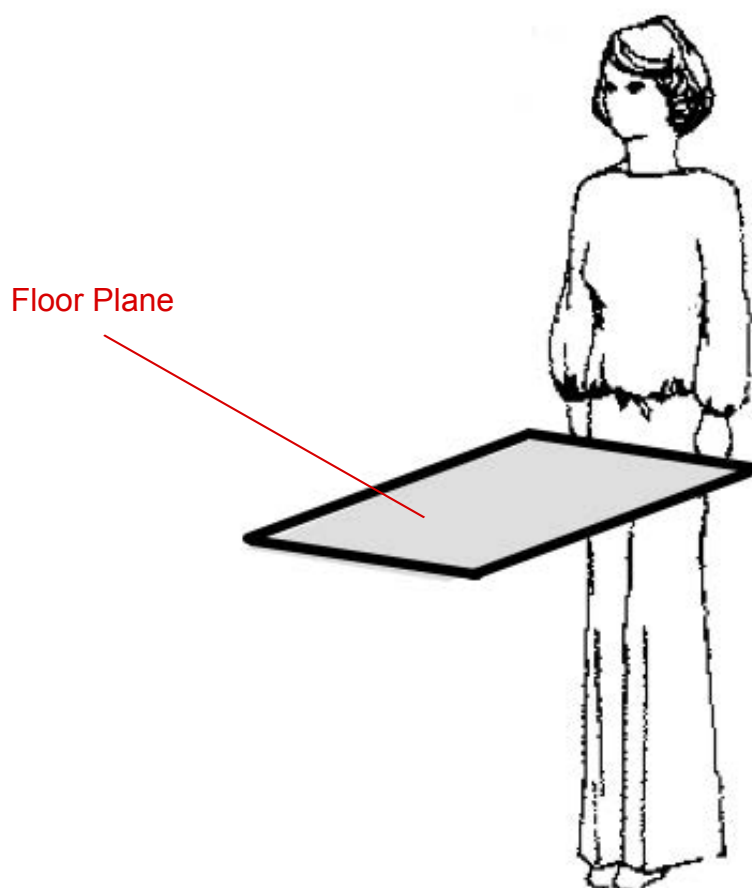
Wall Plane



**Wall Plane**

## Review – Floor Plane

The **Floor** of the signing space is called the **Floor Plane**.

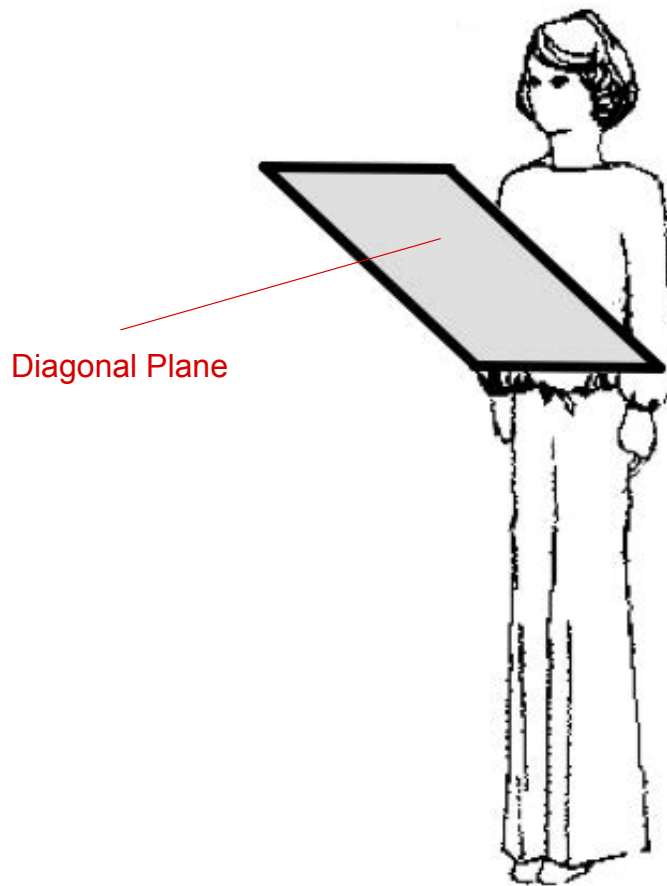


**Floor Plane**

# Diagonal Plane

In addition to the **Wall** and **Floor** planes, SignWriting defines a **Diagonal Plane**.

This plane is used to show diagonal movements in the signing space.

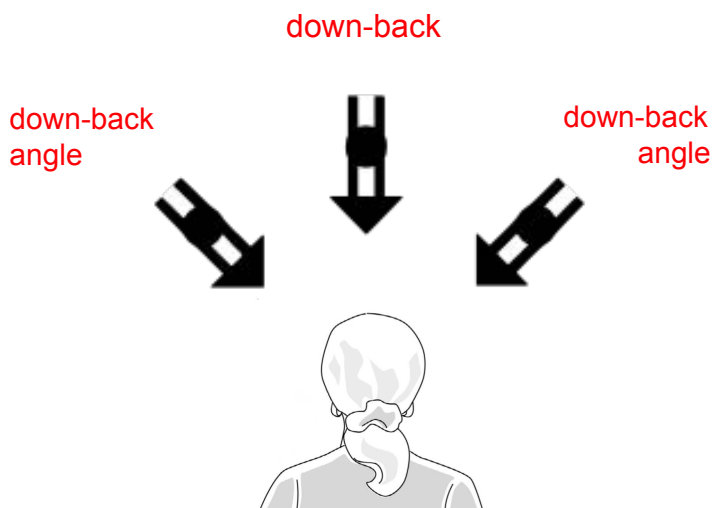
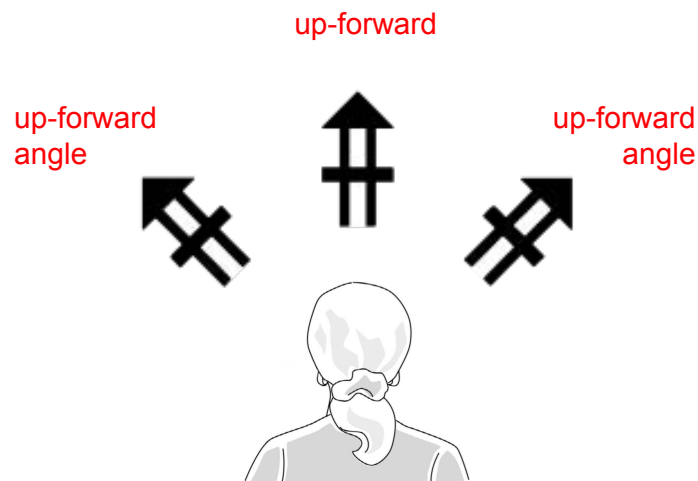


## Diagonal Plane

# Diagonal Movement

Straight movements parallel with the **Diagonal Plane** are written with symbols that show diagonal movement. These symbols have a **line** or **dot** on their movement stems to indicate that the movement is diagonal.

The **line** on a movement stem indicates diagonal movement up and forward. The **dot** indicates diagonal movement down and back.



**Front View**

# Straight Movement

## Diagonal Plane



Diagonal Plane Up-Forward



Diagonal Plane Down-Back



airplane takes off



airplane lands

---

## Review – Straight Movement



up



up-forward



forward



down



down-back



back





## Curved Movement

## Curved Movement Symbols

**Curved Movement symbols** show curved movements in the signing space.



Curved Movement Up and to the Side



Curved Movement Forward, Up and Over



Curved Movement Back, Up and Over



Curved Movement Forward, Down and Under



Curved Movement Back, Down and Under



Curved Movement Forward and to the Side



Curved Movement Back and to the Side



Curved Movement to the Side, Forward, and to the Side Again



Curved Movement to the Side, Back, and to the Side Again

# Curved Movement

## Wall Plane



Curve Up-Side



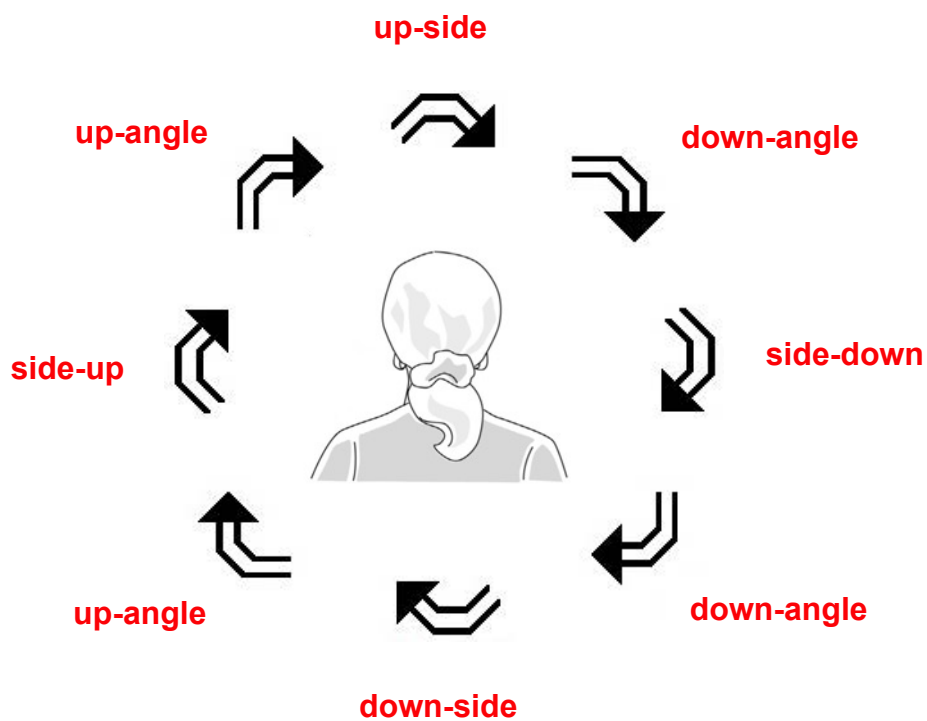
Curve Up-Up



Curve Up-Down-Up

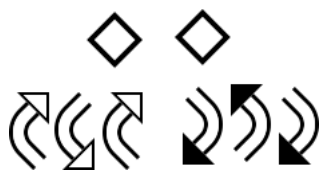
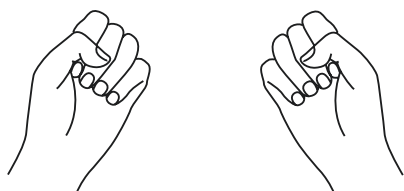


Curve Up-Loop-Up

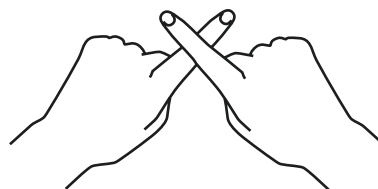


# Curved Movement

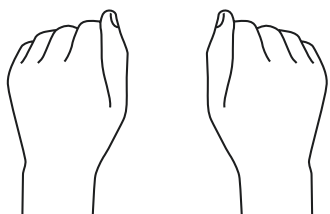
## Wall Plane



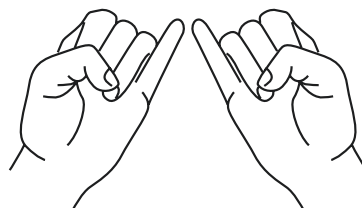
**drive**



**but**



**shape, figure**

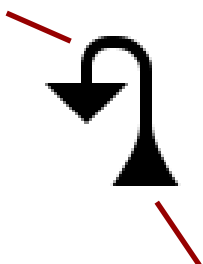


**spaghetti**

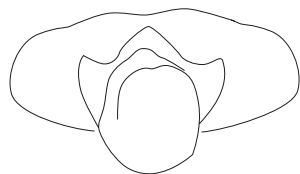
# Curved Movement

## Floor Plane

The thinner section means **farther** from the body.



The thicker, dark section means **closer** to the body.



### Close & Far Perspective

Like looking down a road,  
**closer** is wider and darker.



**Forward-Over**



**Forward-Over-Over**



**Forward-Loop-Over**



**Forward-Over-Under**



**Back-Over**



**Back-Over-Over**



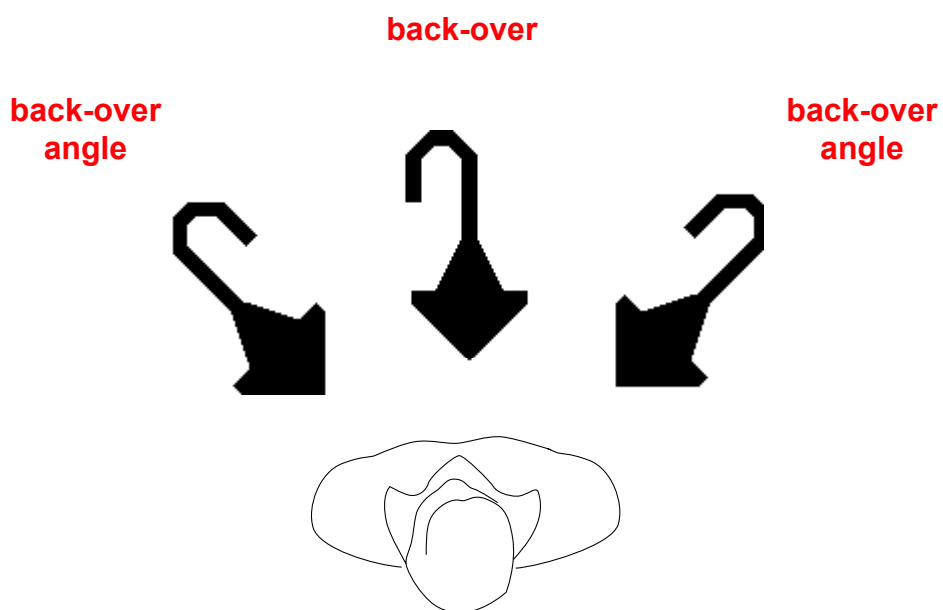
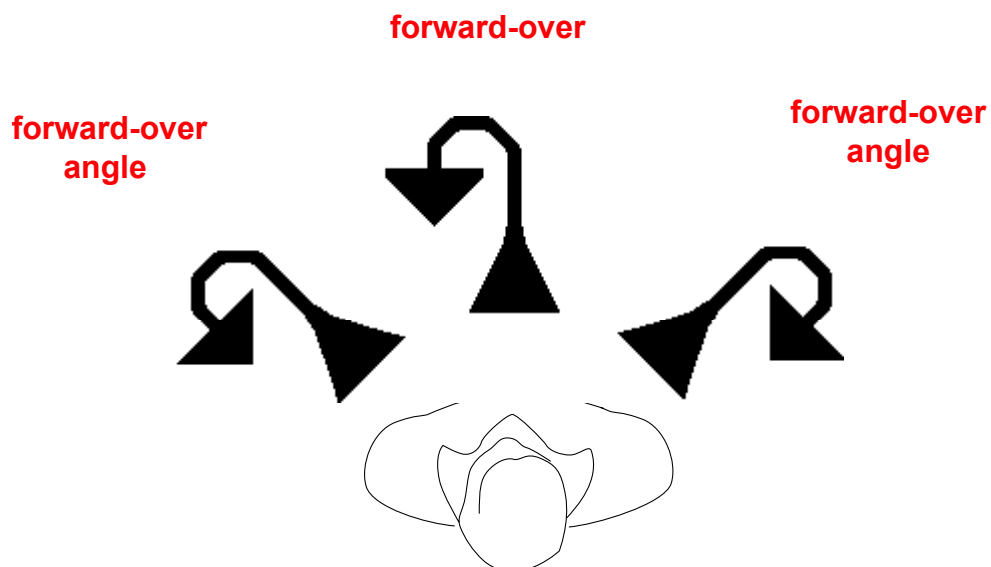
**Back-Loop-Over**



**Back-Under-Over**

# Curved Movement

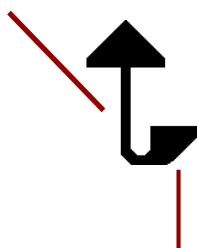
## Floor Plane



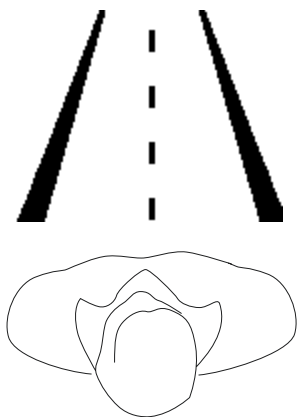
# Curved Movement

## Floor Plane

The thinner section means **farther** from the body.



The thicker, dark section means **closer** to the body.



### Close & Far Perspective

Like looking down a road,  
**closer** is wider and darker.



**Forward-Under**



**Forward-Under-Under**



**Forward-Loop-Under**



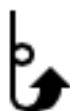
**Forward-Under-Over**



**Back-Under**



**Back-Under-Under**



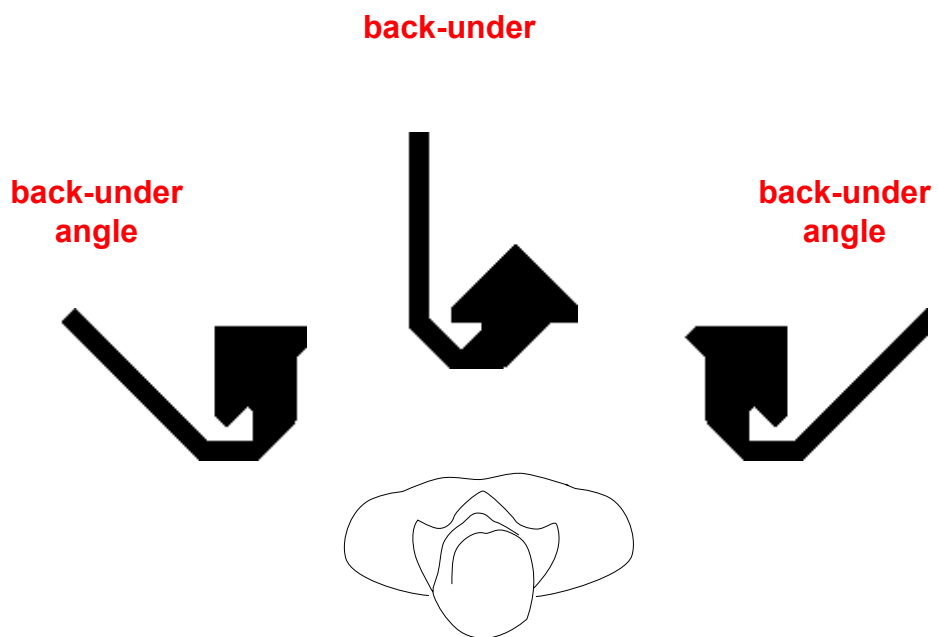
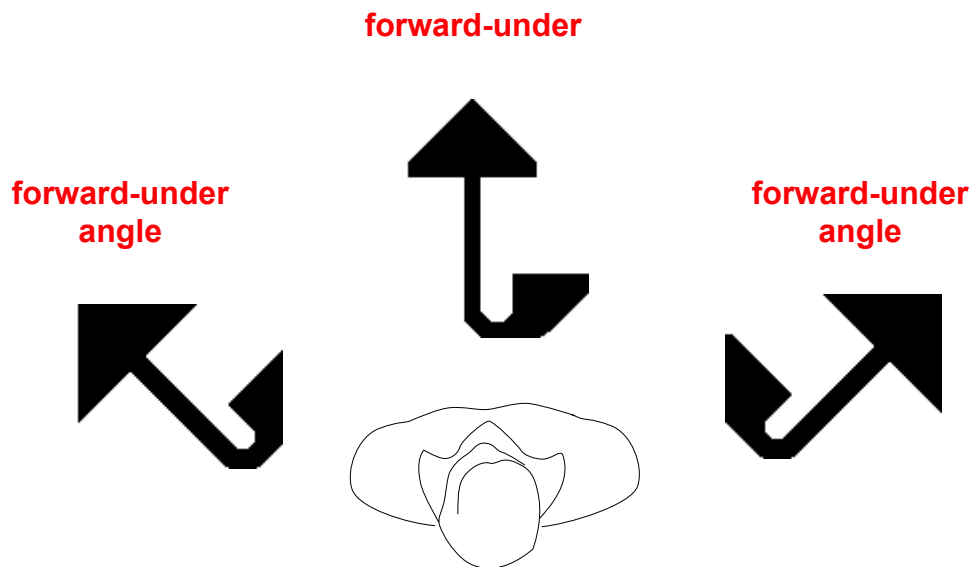
**Back-Loop-Under**



**Back-Over-Under**

# Curved Movement

## Floor Plane





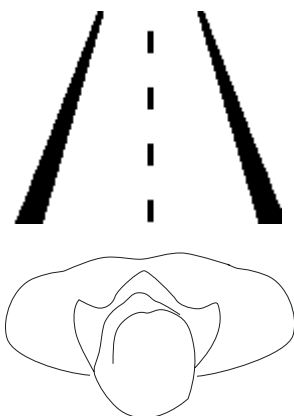
# Curved Movement

## Floor Plane

The thinner section means **farther** from the body.



The thicker, dark section means **closer** to the body.



### Close & Far Perspective

Like looking down a road, **closer** is wider and darker.



**Forward-Side**



**Forward-Side-Side**



**Forward-Loop-Side**



**Forward-Side-Back-Side**



**Back-Side**



**Back-Side-Side**



**Back-Loop-Side**

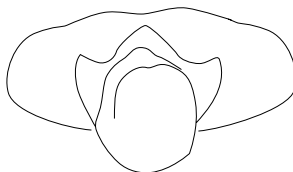


**Back-Side-Forward-Side**

# Curved Movement

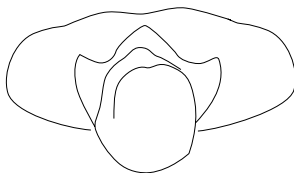
## Floor Plane

**forward-side**



---

**back-side**



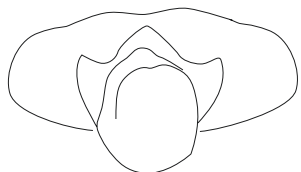
# Curved Movement

## Floor Plane

The thinner section means **farther** from the body.



The thicker, dark section means **closer** to the body.



### Close & Far Perspective

Like looking down a road, **closer** is wider and darker.



**Side-Forward-Side**



**Side-Forward-Side Twice**



**Side-Forward-Side Loop**



**Side-Forward-Side Snake**



**Side-Back-Side**



**Side-Back-Side Twice**



**Side-Back-Side Loop**

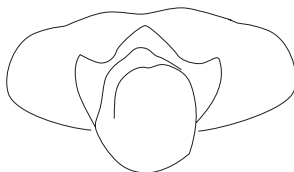


**Side-Back-Side Snake**

# Curved Movement

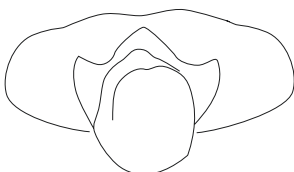
## Floor Plane

**side-forward-side**



---

**side-back-side**



# Curved Movement

## Floor Plane

across



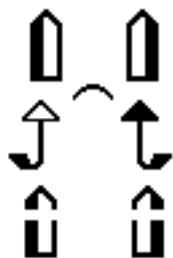
we

grandmother



us

allow



workshop

announce



area



## Rotation Movement

# Rotation Movement Symbols

**Rotation Movement symbols** show rotation movements made with your forearm.



Rotation Movement



Traveling Rotation Movement



Shaking Rotation Movement

## Rotation Movement

Rotation movement symbols show **rotation** movements made with your **forearm**. The forearm rotates while staying in the same place.



Rotation symbols include a line representing the forearm, and a curved movement symbol.

The forearm line (also called the **axis-line**) shows the direction of the forearm. A double line shows the forearm is parallel to the front wall. A single line shows the forearm is parallel to the floor. A single horizontal line shows the forearm is to the side.

The movement symbol shows the **direction** and **type** of rotation. The movement symbol's arrowhead shows which forearm is rotating.

---

## Push and Pull Rotations

These two rotation symbols highlight **different parts of the same rotation** movement:



Baby finger rotates forward and to the side.



Thumb rotates back (towards the chest) and to the side.

The choice of symbol to use depends on which finger is leading the rotation (in this case, either the thumb or baby finger).

In some signs the leading finger **pushes** the hand through the rotation movement. In other signs the leading finger **pulls** the hand through the rotation.



# Rotation Movement

## Forearm Up



The double line shows the forearm is parallel to the **front wall**. The movement symbol shows a single rotation in the **counterclockwise** direction. The arrowhead shows the right forearm is rotating.



Baby finger rotates forward and to the side.



Thumb rotates back and to the side.



Baby finger rotates to the side, forward, and to the side again.



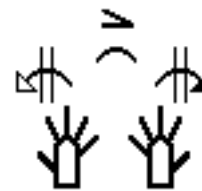
Thumb rotates to the side, back, and to the side again.



**class**



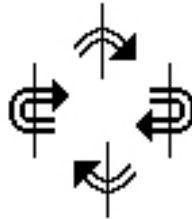
**close**



**finish**

# Rotation Movement

## Forearm Forward



The single line shows the forearm is parallel to the **floor**. The movement symbol shows a single rotation in the **clockwise** direction. The arrowhead shows the right forearm is rotating.



Thumb rotates up and to the side.



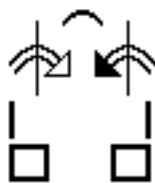
Baby finger rotates down and to the side.



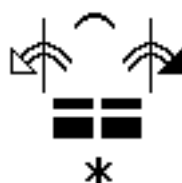
Baby finger rotates to the side, down, and to the side again.



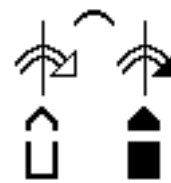
Thumb rotates to the side, up, and to the side again.



**happen**



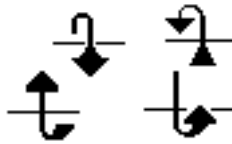
**break**



**dead**

# Rotation Movement

## Forearm Side



The single horizontal line shows the forearm is pointing to the **side**. The movement symbol shows a single rotation in the indicated direction. The arrowhead shows the right forearm is rotating.



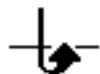
Thumb rotates forward, up and over.



Thumb rotates back, up and over.



Baby finger rotates forward, down and under.



Baby finger rotates back, down and under.



**third**



**apple**



**begin**

# Rotation Movement

## Forearm Up



**Forward-Side  
Single Rotation**



**Side-Forward-Side  
Single Rotation**



**Forward-Side  
Double Rotation**



**Side-Forward-Side  
Double Rotation**



**Forward-Side  
Alternating Rotation**



**Side-Forward-Side  
Alternating Rotation**



**Back-Side  
Single Rotation**



**Side-Back-Side  
Single Rotation**



**Back-Side  
Double Rotation**



**Side-Back-Side  
Double Rotation**



**Back-Side  
Alternating Rotation**



**Side-Back-Side  
Alternating Rotation**



**blue**



**comparison**



**books**

# Rotation Movement

## Forearm Forward



**Side-Over  
Single Rotation**



**Side-Under  
Single Rotation**



**Side-Over  
Double Rotation**



**Side-Under  
Double Rotation**



**Side-Over  
Alternating Rotation**



**Side-Under  
Alternating Rotation**



**Side-Down-Side  
Single Rotation**



**Side-Up-Side  
Single Rotation**



**Side-Down-Side  
Double Rotation**



**Side-Up-Side  
Double Rotation**



**Side-Down-Side  
Alternating Rotation**



**Side-Up-Side  
Alternating Rotation**



**aerobics**



**baptism**



**broom**

# Rotation Movement

## Forearm Side



**Forward-Over  
Single Rotation**



**Forward-Under  
Single Rotation**



**Forward-Over  
Double Rotation**



**Forward-Under  
Double Rotation**



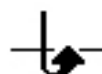
**Forward-Over  
Alternating Rotation**



**Forward-Under  
Alternating Rotation**



**Back-Over  
Single Rotation**



**Back-Under  
Single Rotation**



**Back-Over  
Double Rotation**



**Back-Under  
Double Rotation**



**Back-Over  
Alternating Rotation**



**Back-Under  
Alternating Rotation**



**apple**



**bald**



**weight**

# Traveling Rotation

SignWriting includes movement symbols which show the forearm moving through the signing space as it rotates.

This **traveling movement** is shown by the movement arrowhead that is added to the symbol's forearm line. The resulting line serves as both a forearm line showing the axis of rotation, and a movement symbol showing the direction of the traveling movement.



**Wall Plane Twist  
Straight With Rotation**



**Floor Plane Twist  
Straight With Rotation**



**Wall Plane Twist-Twist  
Straight With Rotation**



**Floor Plane Twist-Twist  
Straight With Rotation**



**Wall Plane Twist-Shake  
Straight With Rotation**



**Floor Plane Twist-Shake  
Straight With Rotation**

---

# Shaking Rotation

A few rotation movement symbols show **shaking rotation**. This type of rotation does not specify how many rotations your arm makes. Instead, it indicates a fast shaking motion.

The shaking rotation symbol can be written with or without a movement arrowhead. When **no** arrowhead is added, the shaking rotation symbol is placed next to a hand symbol to show the hand shaking.



**Shaking Movement  
Forearm Parallel with Wall Plane**



**Shaking Movement  
Forearm Parallel with Floor Plane**



## Circle Movement



## Circle Movement Symbols

**Circle Movement symbols** show circle movements made with your forearm.



Arm Circle Movement, Up and to the Side



Arm Circle Movement, Forward and Back

## Circle Movement

Circle movement symbols show **circle** movements made with your **forearm**.



Arm Circle Movement, Up and to the Side



Arm Circle Movement, Forward and Back

The movement symbol shows the direction of the circle. A double-stemmed symbol shows **side-to-side** circle movement (which is parallel to the front wall). A thicker, single-stemmed symbol shows **forward-back** circle movement (which is parallel to the floor or side of the signing space).

The movement symbol's arrowhead shows the number of circles. It also shows which arm moves, and the **starting position** in the circle where the movement begins.



Arm Circles Once, Starts Up



Arm Circles Twice, Starts Down

Depending on the forearm direction, **forward-back** circle movements can be parallel to the floor or side of the signing space. Unlike side-to-side circle movements, forward-back circle movements have only two starting positions: **near** and **far**.



Arm Circles Once, Starts Far



Arm Circles Twice, Starts Near

# Circle Movement

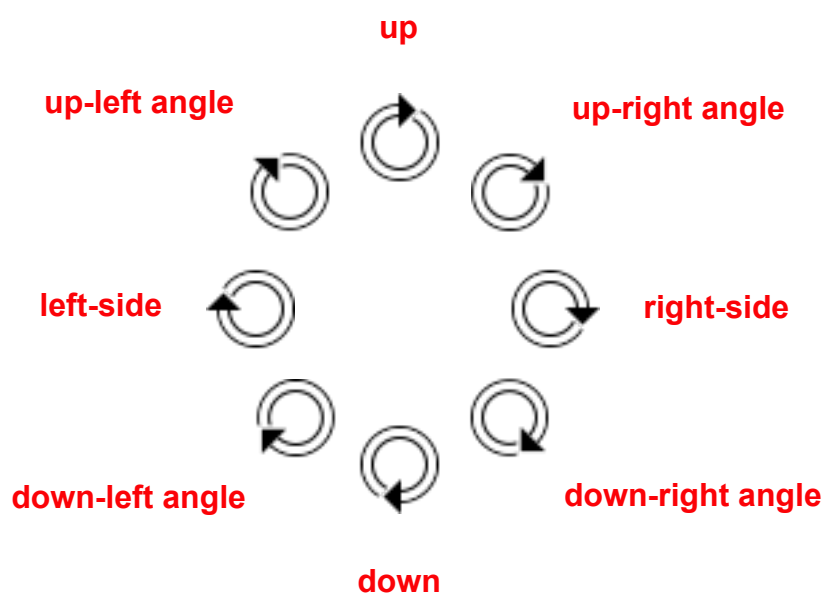
## Side-to-Side



Arm Circles Once  
Starts Up



Arm Circles Twice  
Starts Up



who



use



worried

# Circle Movement

## Forward-Back



**Arm Circles Once  
Starts Far**



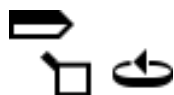
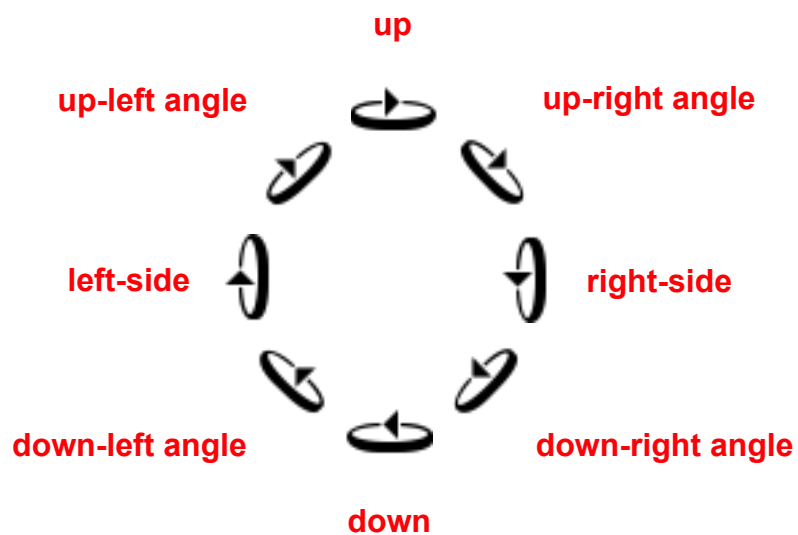
**Arm Circles Once  
Starts Near**



**Arm Circles Twice  
Starts Far**



**Arm Circles Twice  
Starts Near**



**inferior**



**festival**



**ideas**



## Wrist Movement

# Wrist Movement Symbols

**Wrist Movement symbols** show the movements made with your wrist.



Wrist Circle Movement, Up and to the Side



Wrist Circle Movement, Forward and Back



Wrist Flex Movement

# Circle Movement

## Wrist

Wrist circle movement symbols show **circle** movements made with your **wrist**.



Wrist Circle Movement, Up and to the Side



Wrist Circle Movement, Forward and Back

The curved movement symbol shows the direction of the circle. A double-stemmed movement symbol shows **side-to-side** circle movement (which is parallel to the front wall). A single-stemmed movement symbol shows **forward-back** circle movement (which is parallel to the floor or side of the signing space).

The movement symbol's arrowhead shows the number of circles. It also shows which wrist moves, and the **starting position** in the circle where the movement begins.



Wrist Circles Once, Starts Up



Wrist Circles Twice, Starts Down

Depending on the wrist direction, **forward-back** circle movements can be parallel to the floor or side of the signing space. Unlike side-to-side circle movements, forward-back circle movements have only two starting positions: **near** and **far**.



Wrist Circles Once, Starts Near



Wrist Circles Twice, Starts Far

# Circle Movement

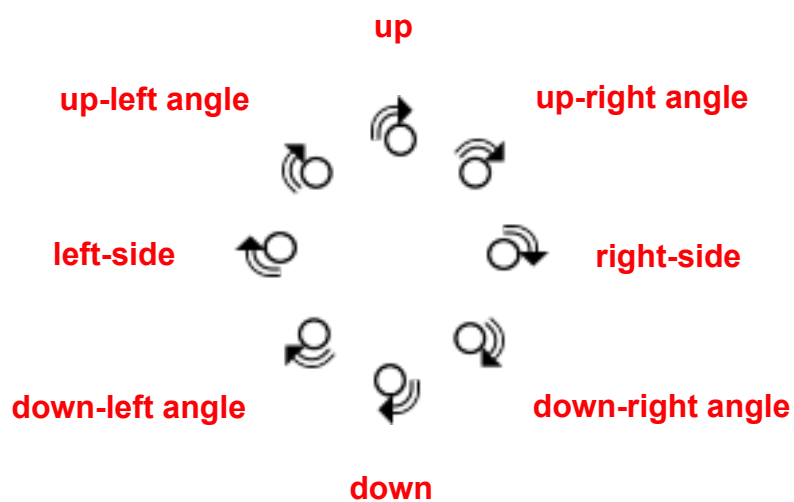
## Wrist



Wrist Circles Once  
Starts Up



Wrist Circles Twice  
Starts Up



who



beautiful



meditate



# Circle Movement

## Wrist



**Wrist Circles Once  
Starts Far**



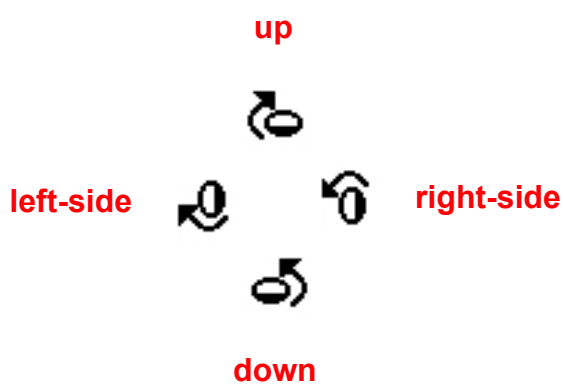
**Wrist Circles Once  
Starts Near**



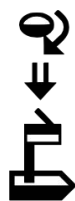
**Wrist Circles Twice  
Starts Far**



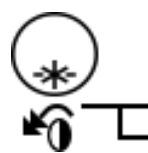
**Wrist Circles Twice  
Starts Near**



**Spain**



**center**



**hearing person**

# Flex Movement

## Wrist

Wrist flex movement symbols show **flex** movements made with your **wrist**. The hand moves in different directions while the wrist stays in the same place.

Wrist-flexing symbols include a horizontal line representing the wrist, and a straight movement symbol (single, double, alternating).

The **wrist line** shows the axis of motion.

The movement symbol shows which wrist flexes, and the direction and type of movement.



**Wall Plane Flex**



**Floor Plane Flex**



**Wall Plane Flex Double**



**Floor Plane Flex Double**



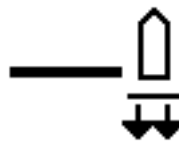
**Wall Plane Flex Alternating**



**Floor Plane Flex Alternating**



**chat**



**before**



**basketball**



## Finger Movement

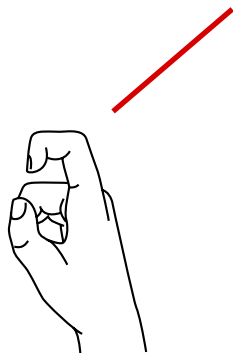
# Finger Movement Symbols

Finger Movement symbols show the movement of your fingers.

- Finger Bends in Middle
  - Finger Straightens in Middle
  - ∨ Finger Bends at Knuckle
  - ∧ Finger Straightens at Knuckle
  - ⋈ Fingers Bend and Straighten Together at Knuckles
  - ⋈ Fingers Alternately Bend and Straighten at Knuckles
- 



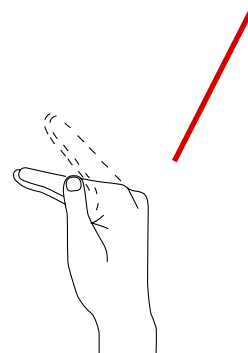
## Finger Bends and Straightens in Middle



Finger bend and straighten movements in the **middle** of a finger are called **Squeeze** and **Flick** movements.



## Finger Bends and Straightens at Knuckle



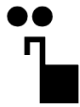
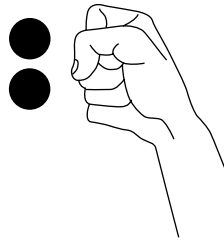
Finger bend and straighten movements at the **knuckle** are called **Hinge** and **Trill** movements.



## Finger Bends in Middle

This symbol is written with a **dark dot**. It shows a finger bending in the middle, like a claw. It is also called a **Squeeze** movement.

This symbol is placed near the finger that bends. Two of these symbols represent two bends of the finger.



huh?



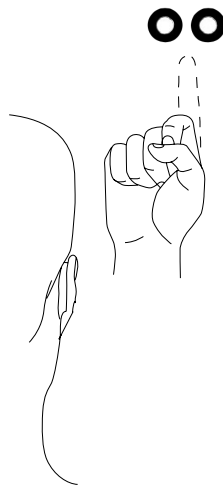
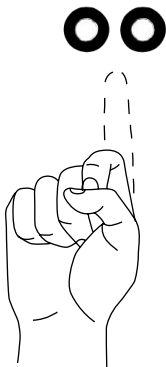
milk



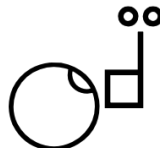
## Finger Straightens in Middle

This symbol is written with a **light dot**. It shows a finger bent in the middle, straightening out. It is also called a **Flick** movement.

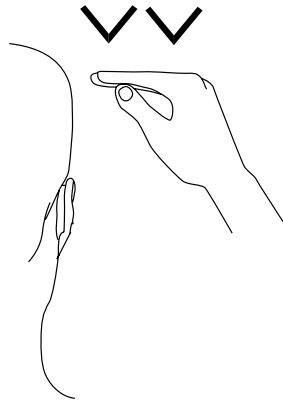
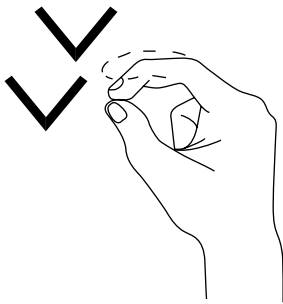
This symbol is placed near the finger that straightens. Two of these symbols represent two straightenings of the finger.



eleven



understand



## Finger Bends at Knuckle

This symbol is written with a **down arrow**. It shows a finger bending at the knuckle, like the hinge on a door. It is also called a **Hinge** movement.

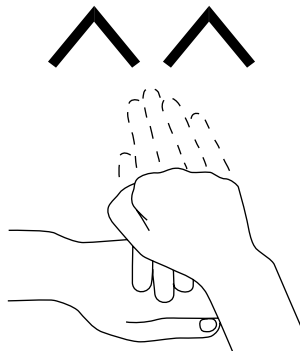
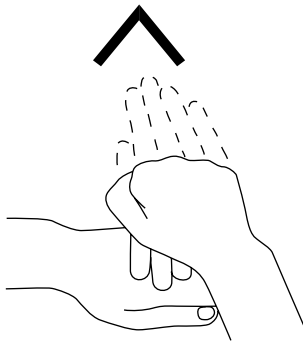


twenty



boy

This symbol is placed near the finger that bends. Two of these symbols represent two bends of the finger.



## Finger Straightens at Knuckle

This symbol is written with an **up arrow**. It shows a finger bent at the knuckle straightening out, like the hinge on a door. It is also called a **Hinge** movement.

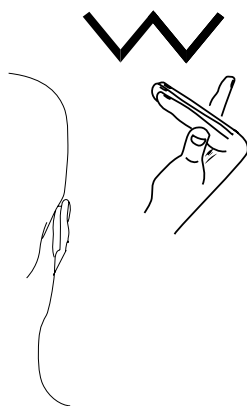
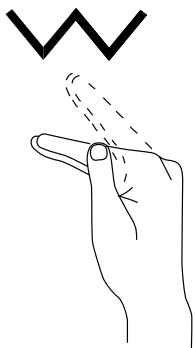


send



send-send

This symbol is placed near the finger that straightens. Two of these symbols represent two straightenings of the finger.



goodbye



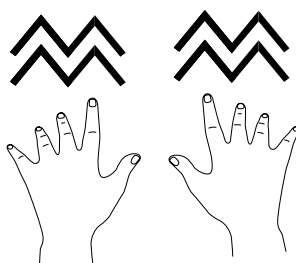
why



## Fingers Bend and Straighten Together at Knuckles

This symbol is written with a row of connected **down arrows**. It shows that all four fingers bend and straighten together as a unit, at the knuckles, like the hinge on a door. It is also called a **Hinge** movement.

This symbol is placed near the fingers that bend and straighten together.



fingerspell



typing



## Fingers Alternately Bend and Straighten at Knuckles

This symbol is written with a double row of connected **up arrows**. It shows that all four fingers bend and straighten independently, at the knuckles, like typing on a keyboard. It is also called a **Trill** movement.

This symbol is placed near the fingers that alternately bend and straighten.

## Writing Finger Movement

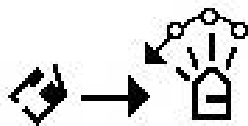
In certain signs, the fingers of a hand bend or straighten one after the other, in a specific order.

This finger movement is shown by writing several **Finger Bends** or **Straightens in Middle** symbols on top of a curved movement symbol.



In this example the fingers on the hand bend in sequence, changing the handshape from **Five Fingers Spread** to **Thumb Side Diagonal**.

The order of the finger movement follows the direction of the movement symbol. Movement begins at the stem of the movement symbol, and ends at its arrowhead.



few



(name sign)





# Face Symbols

**Face symbols** show facial expressions.

The face symbols are organized into **ten groups**. The symbols are grouped by the parts of the face.



Symbol Group 1: **Forehead**



Symbol Group 2: **Eyebrows**



Symbol Group 3: **Eyes and Eyegaze**



Symbol Group 4: **Ears and Cheeks**



Symbol Group 5: **Breathing and Nose**



Symbol Group 6: **Mouth**



Symbol Group 7: **Tongue**



Symbol Group 8: **Teeth**



Symbol Group 9: **Chin**



Symbol Group 10: **Other**

# Face Symbols



**Neutral  
Face**

## Forehead



**Neutral  
Forehead**



**Wrinkled  
Forehead**

# Face

## Eyebrows



**Eyebrows Up**



**Right Eyebrow Up**



**Left Eyebrow Up**



**Eyebrows Neutral**



**Right Eyebrow Neutral**



**Left Eyebrow Neutral**



**Eyebrows Down**



**Right Eyebrow Down**



**Left Eyebrow Down**



**Eyebrows Down Inside**



**Right Eyebrow Down Inside**



**Left Eyebrow Down Inside**



**Eyebrows Up Inside**



**Right Eyebrow Up Inside**



**Left Eyebrow Up Inside**



**Eyebrows Down Outside**



**Right Eyebrow Down Outside**



**Left Eyebrow Down Outside**



**Eyebrows Up Outside**



**Right Eyebrow Up Outside**



**Left Eyebrow Up Outside**

# Face

## Eyes and Eyegaze



Eyes Open



Bug Eyes



Right Eye Open



Eyes Half Open



Left Eye Open



Right Eye Half Open



Eyes Squint



Left Eye Half Open



Right Eye Squints



Eyes Half Shut



Left Eye Squints



Right Eye Half Shut



Eyes Closed



Left Eye Half Shut



Right Eye Closed



Eyelashes



Left Eye Closed



Right Eyelash



















Eyes Squeezed  
Tightly Together



Left Eyelash

# Face

## Eyes and Eyegaze

	<b>Eyegaze Up</b>		<b>Eyegaze Forward</b>
	<b>Eyegaze Up Angle</b>		<b>Eyegaze Forward Angle</b>
	<b>Eyegaze Side</b>		<b>Eyegaze Side</b>
	<b>Eyegaze Down Angle</b>		<b>Eyegaze Back Angle</b>
	<b>Eyegaze Down</b>		<b>Eyegaze Back</b>
	<b>Eyegaze Down Angle</b>		<b>Eyegaze Back Angle</b>
	<b>Eyegaze Side</b>		<b>Eyegaze Side</b>
	<b>Eyegaze Up Angle</b>		<b>Eyegaze Forward Angle</b>

## Ears and Cheeks

		
<b>Ears</b>	<b>Right Ear</b>	<b>Left Ear</b>

# Face

## Ears and Cheeks



**Cheeks Filled With Air**



**Right Cheek Filled With Air**



**Left Cheek Filled With Air**



**Cheeks Without Air**



**Right Cheek Without Air**



**Left Cheek Without Air**



**Cheeks Sucked-In**



**Right Cheek Sucked-In**



**Left Cheek Sucked-In**



**Cheeks Tense High**



**Right Cheek Tense High**



**Left Cheek Tense High**



**Cheeks Tense Middle**



**Right Cheek Tense Middle**



**Left Cheek Tense Middle**



**Cheeks Tense Low**



**Right Cheek Tense Low**



**Left Cheek Tense Low**



**Whole Face Over To The Right**



**Whole Face Over To The Left**

# Face

## Breathing and Nose



**Air Out**



**Air In**



**Exhale**



**Inhale**



**Neutral  
Nose**



**Contact  
Tip of Nose**



**Wrinkle  
Nose**



**Wiggle  
Nose**

## Mouth



**Mouth Neutral  
Straight Closed**



**Closed Mouth  
Protrudes Forward**



**Closed Smile**



**Closed Smile with  
Pressure on Sides  
of Mouth**



**Open Smile,  
Half Straight**



**Closed Frown**



**Closed Frown with  
Pressure on Sides  
of Mouth**



**Half Frown  
Half Straight**



**Open Mouth**



**Open Mouth  
Protrudes Forward**



**Open Mouth  
Wrinkles Around  
Sides of the Mouth**



# Face

## Mouth



**Oval Open Mouth  
Horizontal**



**Rectangular Open Mouth  
Horizontal**



**Oval Open Mouth  
Vertical (Yawn)**



**Rectangular Open Mouth  
Vertical**



**Kiss**



**Kiss Protrudes Forward**



**Lips Sucked In  
Pressed Together**



**Upper Lip Over  
Lower Lip**



**Lower Lip Over  
Upper Lip**



**Double Wrinkles  
Around Mouth**



**Double Wrinkles  
Right Side Mouth**



**Double Wrinkles  
Left Side Mouth**



**Single Wrinkles  
Around Mouth**



**Single Wrinkle  
Right Side Mouth**



**Single Wrinkle  
Left Side Mouth**



**Tense Lips**



**Tense Lips  
Protrude Forward**



**Tense Lips  
Sucked Back**



**Lip Corners  
Both Up**



**Lip Corner  
Up Right**



**Lip Corner  
Up Left**



**Upper Lip Up  
In the Middle**

# Face

## Tongue



**Tongue Sticks  
Outside Up**



**Tongue Sticks  
Outside  
Up Angle**



**Tongue Sticks  
Outside Side**



**Tongue Sticks  
Outside  
Down Angle**



**Tongue Sticks  
Outside Down**



**Tongue Sticks  
Outside  
Down Angle**



**Tongue Sticks  
Outside Side**



**Tongue Sticks  
Outside  
Up Angle**



**Tongue Sticks  
Outside Straight  
Center Mouth**



**Tongue Sticks  
Outside Curled  
Center Mouth**



**Tongue Licks Lip  
Outside Up**



**Tongue Licks Lip  
Outside  
Up Angle**



**Tongue Licks Lip  
Outside Side**



**Tongue Licks Lip  
Outside  
Down Angle**



**Tongue Licks Lip  
Outside Down**



**Tongue Licks Lip  
Outside  
Down Angle**



**Tongue Licks Lip  
Outside Side**



**Tongue Licks Lip  
Outside  
Up Angle**

# Face

## Tongue



**Tongue Tip Touches  
Inside Up**



**Tongue Inside  
Rests Roof Mouth**



**Tongue Tip Touches  
Inside Up Angle**



**Tongue Inside  
Rests Up Angle**



**Tongue Tip Touches  
Inside Side Left**



**Tongue Inside  
Rests Left Side**



**Tongue Tip Touches  
Inside Down Angle**



**Tongue Inside  
Rests Down Angle**



**Tongue Tip Touches  
Inside Down**



**Tongue Inside  
Rests Bottom**



**Tongue Tip Touches  
Inside Down Angle**



**Tongue Inside  
Rests Down Angle**



**Tongue Tip Touches  
Inside Side Right**



**Tongue Inside  
Rests Right Side**











**Tongue Tip Touches  
Inside Up Angle**











**Tongue Inside  
Rests Up Angle**

# Face

## Teeth

-  **Teeth Neutral  
Mouth Open**
-  **Upper Teeth  
Touch Tongue**
-  **Lower Teeth  
Touch Tongue**
-  **Upper Teeth  
Touch Lower Lip**
-  **Lower Teeth  
Touch Upper Lip**
-  **Teeth Bite Lip**
-  **Teeth Bite Right  
Side of Lip**
-  **Teeth Bite  
Left Side of Lip**

## Chin

-  **Chin Up**
-  **Chin  
Up Angle**
-  **Chin Side**
-  **Chin  
Down Angle**
-  **Chin Down**
-  **Chin  
Down Angle**
-  **Chin Side**
-  **Chin  
Up Angle**

# Face

## Chin



**Chin Forward**



**Chin Forward Angle**



**Chin Side**



**Chin Back Angle**



**Chin Back**



**Chin Back Angle**



**Chin Side**



**Chin Forward Angle**

## Other



**Question Face**



**Neck**



**Excited**



**Hair**



# Head Symbols

**Head symbols** show locations on the head, and head movement and positions.



Head



Back of the Head



Side of the Head



Top of the Head



Location on the Head



Relating to the Head



Head Movement



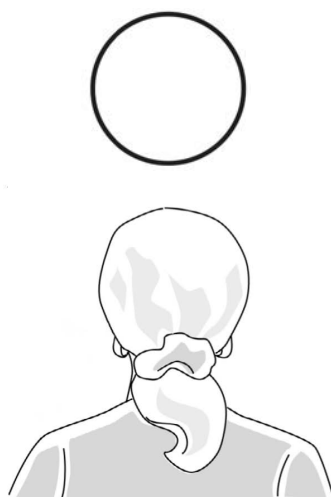
Head Position

# Basic Head Symbol

The **Head** symbol is the basic head symbol in SignWriting. All the other head symbols (and face symbols) are based on it.

Symbols based on the Head symbol are different symbols from the Head symbol.

The one exception is the face symbol **Neutral Face**. This is the Head symbol, but with an **alias** symbol name.



**Head**



**Top of  
Head**



**Eyebrows  
Down**



**Neutral  
Face**



# Head Views

The head symbols can show the head from several **viewpoints**.

Different parts of the head are visible from each viewpoint.

## Front View



**Head**

## Top View



**Top of Head**

## Back View



**Back of Head**



**Top of Head  
Facing Left**



**Top of Head  
Facing Right**

## Side View



**Side of Head, Right**



**Side of Head, Left**

## Locations on the Head

The **small half-circles** inside some head symbols show the location on the head where contact occurs.

These head symbols are used to specify **locations on the head** that are **visible** from the symbol's viewpoint. Locations on the head that are *not* visible from the viewpoint must be written another way (see "Edge of the Head").

### Front View



### Back View



## Locations on the Head

### Top View



**Top of Head  
Back**



**Top of Head  
Back Angle**



**Top of Head  
Side**



**Top of Head  
Forward Angle**



**Top of Head  
Forward**



**Top of Head  
Forward Angle**



**Top of Head  
Side**



**Top of Head  
Back Angle**

### Side View



**Side of Head  
Under Ear**



**Side of Head  
Low Angle**



**Side of Head  
Towards Nose**



**Side of Head  
High Angle**



**Side of Head  
Over Ear**



**Side of Head  
High Angle**



**Side of Head  
Towards Back**



















**Side of Head  
Low Angle**

## Edge of the Head

**Contact symbols** are placed outside head symbols to show contact with the **edge** of the head, which is **not visible** from the head symbol's viewpoint.

The head symbol **Relating To** also specifies the edge of the head. But it is used only to **reference** the edge of the head, and not to show actual contact with it.

### Front View

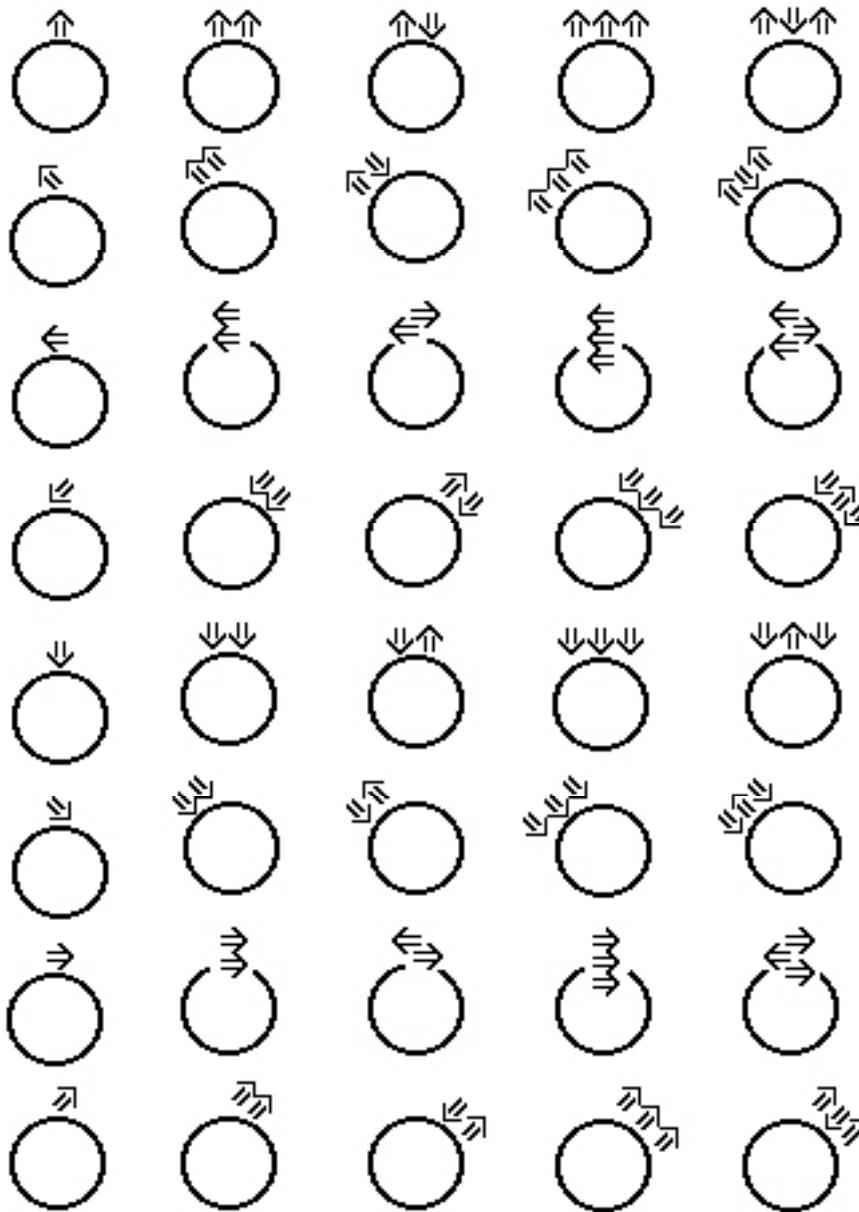
	<b>Relating To Under Chin</b>		<b>Touch Under Chin</b>
	<b>Relating To Side of Head Down Angle</b>		<b>Touch Side of Head Down Angle</b>
	<b>Relating To Side of Head</b>		<b>Touch Side of Head</b>
	<b>Relating To Side of Head Up Angle</b>		<b>Touch Side of Head Up Angle</b>
	<b>Relating To Top of Head</b>		<b>Touch Top of Head</b>
	<b>Relating To Side of Head Up Angle</b>		<b>Touch Side of Head Up Angle</b>
	<b>Relating To Side of Head</b>		<b>Touch Side of Head</b>
	<b>Relating To Side of Head Down Angle</b>		<b>Touch Side of Head Down Angle</b>

# Head Movement

## Wall Plane

Head symbols with **double-stemmed** movement symbols show head movement where your face changes direction.

For instance, **nodding** your head up and down ("yes"), or **shaking** your head from side to side ("no").



# Head Movement

## Wall Plane



**Head Movement Wall Plane Straight**



**Head Movement Wall Plane Double**



**Head Movement Wall Plane Double Alternating**



**Head Movement Wall Plane Triple**



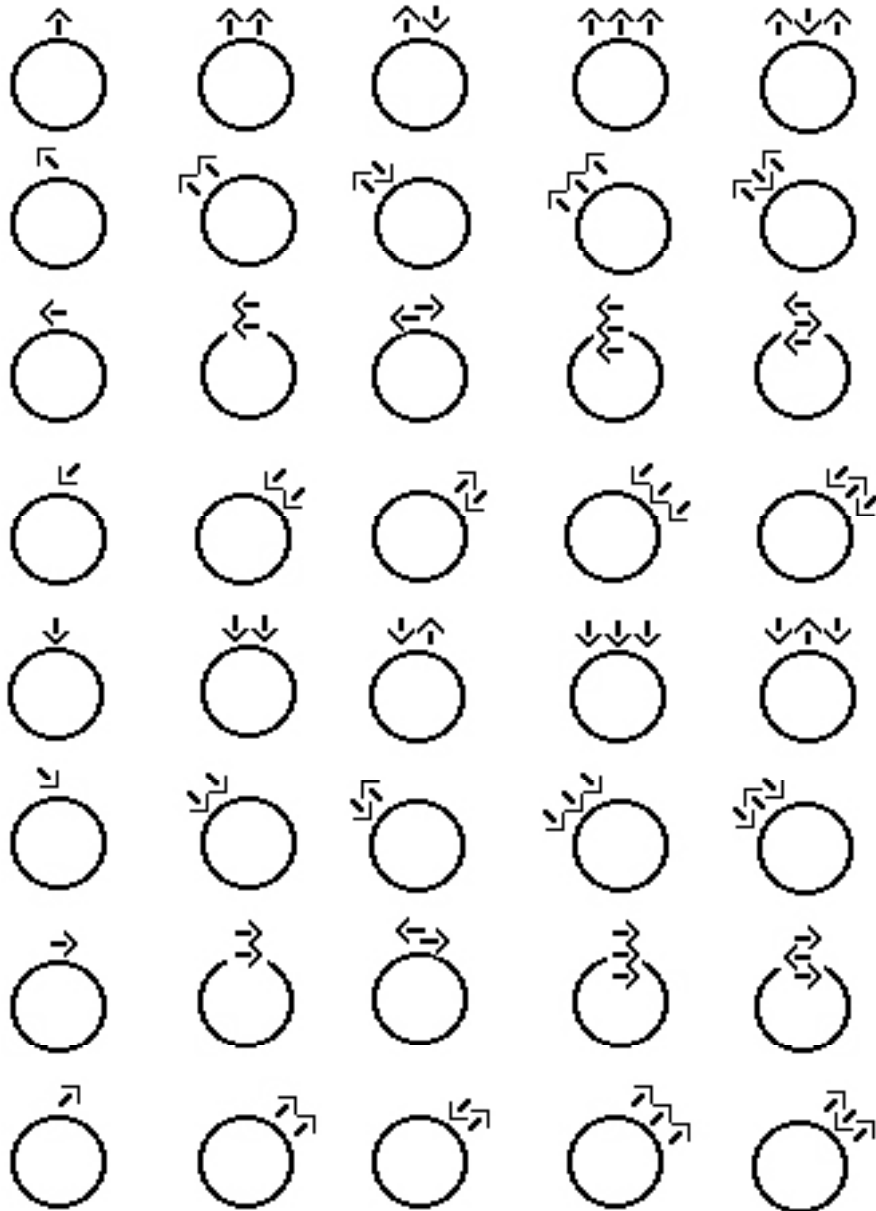
**Head Movement Wall Plane Triple Alternating**

# Head Movement

## Floor Plane

Head symbols with **single-stemmed** movement symbols show head movement where your face stays in the same direction.

For instance, **craning** your neck forward to look at something more closely.



# Head Movement

## Floor Plane



**Head Movement Floor Plane Straight**



**Head Movement Floor Plane Double**



**Head Movement Floor Plane Double Alternating**



**Head Movement Floor Plane Triple**

















**Head Movement Floor Plane Triple Alternating**



# Head Positions

These symbols show the **position of your face** (looking up or down; looking left or right; tilted to the left or right).

The vertical line represents the position of your **nose** as it relates to the horizontal line of your **shoulders**.

	Face Direction, Center
	Face Direction, Center, Tilt Right
	Face Direction, Center, Tilt Left
	Face Direction, Side Right, Center
	Face Direction, Side Left, Center
	Face Direction, Side Right, Tilt Right
	Face Direction, Side Right, Tilt Left
	Face Direction, Center Up
	Face Direction, Center Up, Tilt Right
	Face Direction, Side Right, Up
	Face Direction, Side Right, Up, Tilt Right
	Face Direction, Side Right, Up, Tilt Left
	Face Direction, Center Down
	Face Direction, Center Down, Tilt Right
	Face Direction, Side Right, Down
	Face Direction, Side Right, Down, Tilt Right



# Body Symbols

**Body symbols** show positions and movement of the shoulders, and movement of the upper body.



Shoulder Position



Shoulder Movement



Torso Movement



Chest Tilt



Upper Body Tilt

# Shoulders

The **Shoulder** symbols show positions and movement of the shoulders.  
The symbols without movement symbols show **positions**.



**Shoulders**



**Right Shoulder Up**



**Both Shoulders Up**



**Right Shoulder Down**



**Both Shoulders Down**



**One Shoulder Up, One Shoulder Down**



**Shoulder Moves Up**



**Shoulder Moves Up-Angle**



**Shoulder Moves Down-Angle**



**Shoulder Moves Down**



**Shoulder Moves Forward**



**Shoulder Moves Forward-Angle**



**Shoulder Moves Back-Angle**



**Shoulder Moves Back**



**Shoulder Moves Up & Down Shoulder**



**Moves Forward & Back**

# Torso Movement

The **Torso** symbols show movement of the torso. The axis of motion is the **hips**.



**Torso Pulls Up**



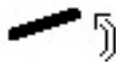
**Torso Sinks Down**



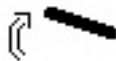
**Torso Moves Left in Arc**  
Remains Level



**Torso Moves Right in Arc**  
Remains Level



**Torso Bends Left**  
Pushed Up & Side



**Torso Bends Right**  
Pushed Up & Side



**Torso Twists Left**  
Pushed Forward & Side



**Torso Twists Right**  
Pushed Forward & Side

# Chest Tilt

The **Chest Tilt** symbols show the chest tilting, or rocking back and forth, in the specified direction. The axis of motion is the **spine**. No other part of the body moves.



**Chest Tilts Forward**



**Chest Tilts Forward at Angle**



**Chest Tilts Side**



**Chest Tilts Back at Angle**



**Chest Tilts Back**



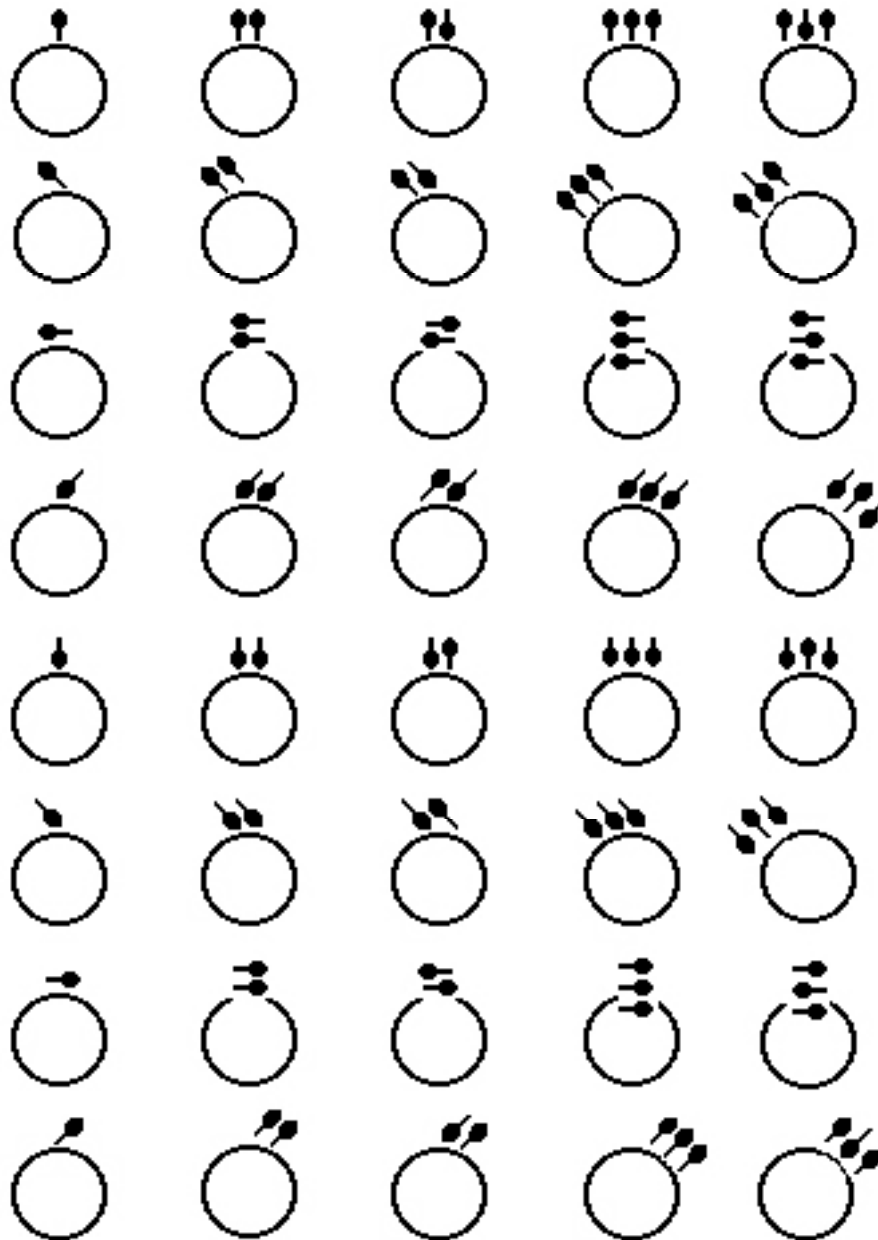
**Rocking Motion From Chest  
Chest Tilts Back-Forward**



**Rocking Motion From Chest  
Chest Tilts Back-Forward-Back**

## Upper Body Tilt

The **Upper Body Tilt** symbols show the upper body **tilting**, or rocking back and forth, in the specified direction. The axis of motion is the **hips**. The neck and upper body do not bend – they remain straight, moving in a unit from the hips.



# Upper Body Tilt



**Upper Body Tilt Straight**



**Upper Body Tilt Double**



**Upper Body Tilt Double Alternating**



**Upper Body Tilt Triple**



**Upper Body Tilt Triple Alternating**



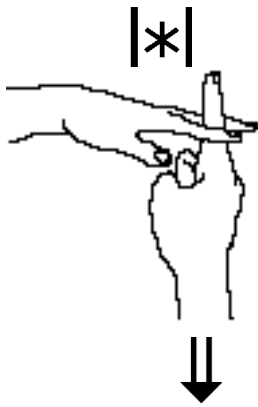


## Writing Signs

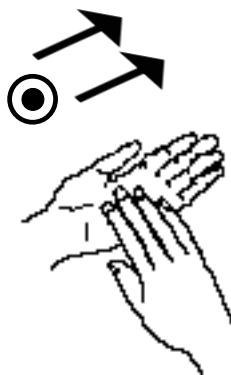
# Writing Signs

**Hand symbols** in a sign are written in the same arrangement as the hands have in the signing space.

The hand symbols may **touch** or even **overlap** to represent contact between the hands.



disappear



excuse me



I help you

## Writing Signs

**Movement symbols** are usually written next to a hand symbol, to make it clear which movements belong to which hands.

But in some signs the hand symbol placement (**left** or **right**) determines which movements belong to which hands.



disappear

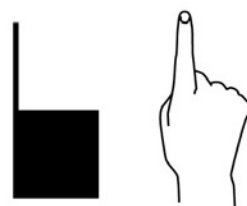
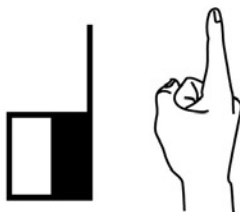
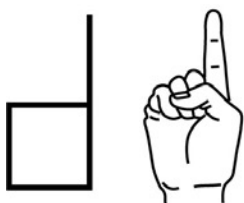


window



hit

# Writing Signs



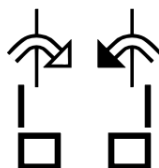
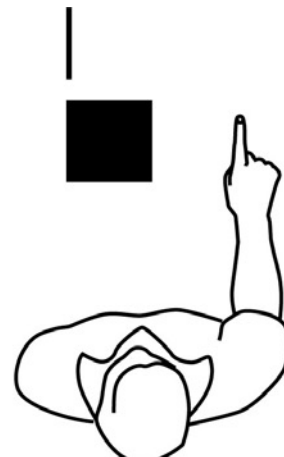
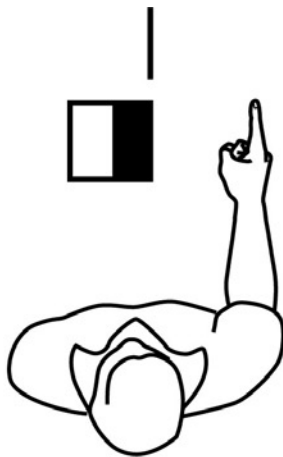
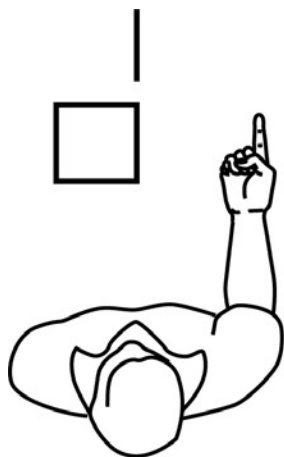
**one half**



**Deaf**



**where**



**happen**

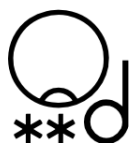
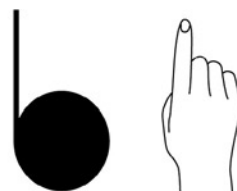
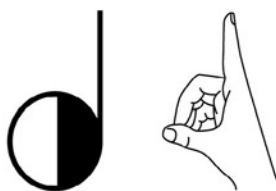


**you**



**also**

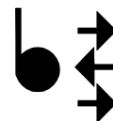
# Writing Signs



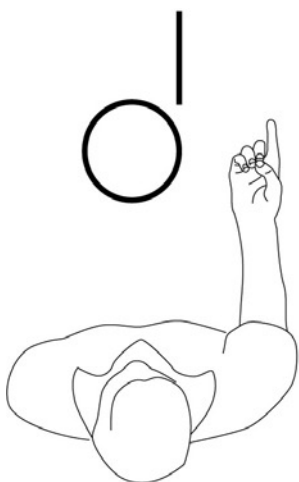
dinner



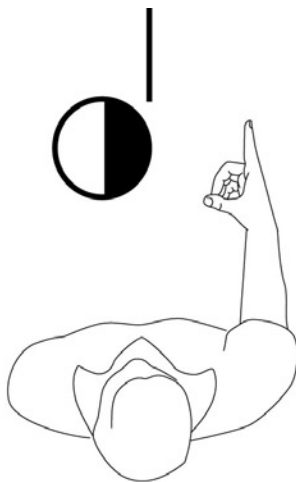
dating



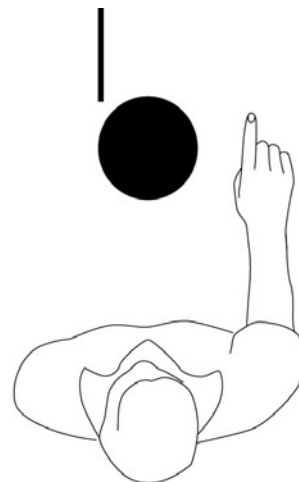
democracy



do-do?

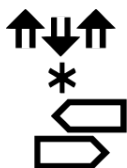
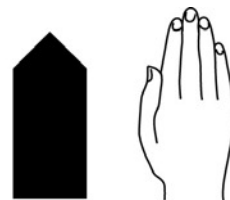
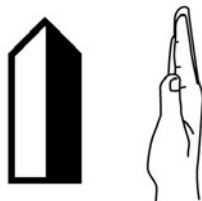
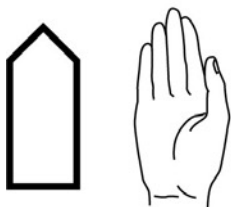


dessert



doctor

## Writing Signs



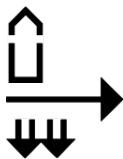
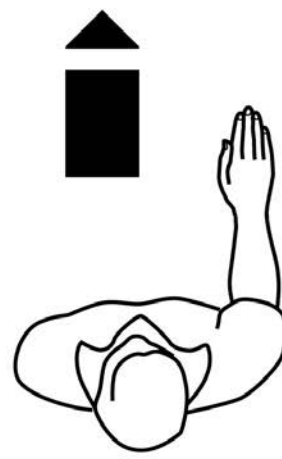
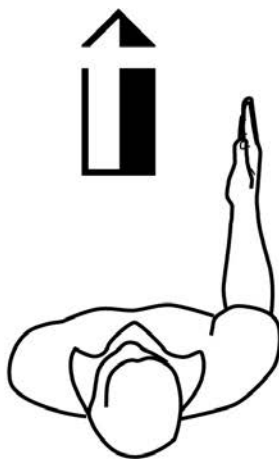
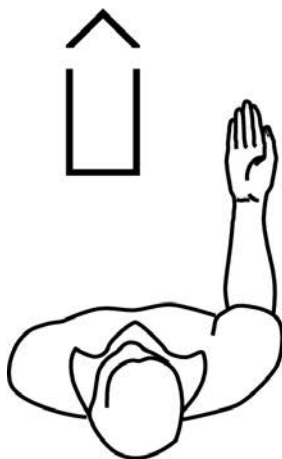
**window**



**house**



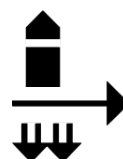
**his, hers**



**things**



**way, street**



**children**



## Spelling Rules

# Spelling Rules

SignWriting defines formal spelling rules for writing signs. These rules ensure that all signs are written in a compact and consistent form.

The spelling rules are part of a **three-step procedure** for writing a sign:

1. Write the sign's **position of contact** (if any)
2. Identify the **center of the sign**
3. Write the sign's **movement symbols** (if any)

---

## Position of Contact

Many signs are based on **contact**, either between two hands, or between a hand and the face or body.

When writing the position of contact, place the two contacting symbols as **close** to each other as possible, just as they appear in the real sign. There should be little or no space between the two contacting symbols.



If contact can be shown this way, by the close placement of symbols, then the contact symbol **Touch** is **not used** to show contact in this case.







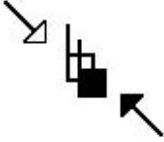
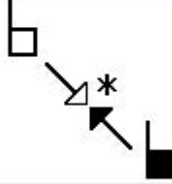
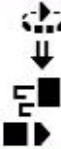

However, to write double-touch contact between symbols, the **Touch** symbol **must be used** twice to show the double touch.



## Position of Contact

Some written signs consist only of contact between two symbols. In this case the other spelling rules are not needed, and the written sign is complete.

Other signs do not have any contact between symbols. In this case the other spelling rules are needed to complete the written sign.

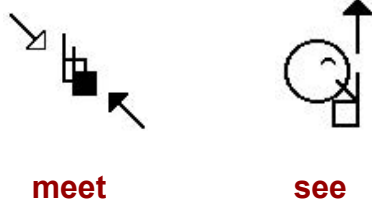
Write This	Not This
	
	
	
	
	

## Position of Contact

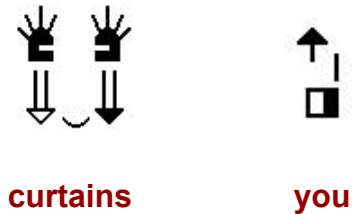
## Center of the Sign

Every written sign has a visual **center**. It is where the reader focuses while reading the sign. It also holds the meaning of the sign.

When a sign has a **position of contact**, it is the center of the sign.



But when a sign has no position of contact, then the sign's **beginning hand position** is the center of the sign.



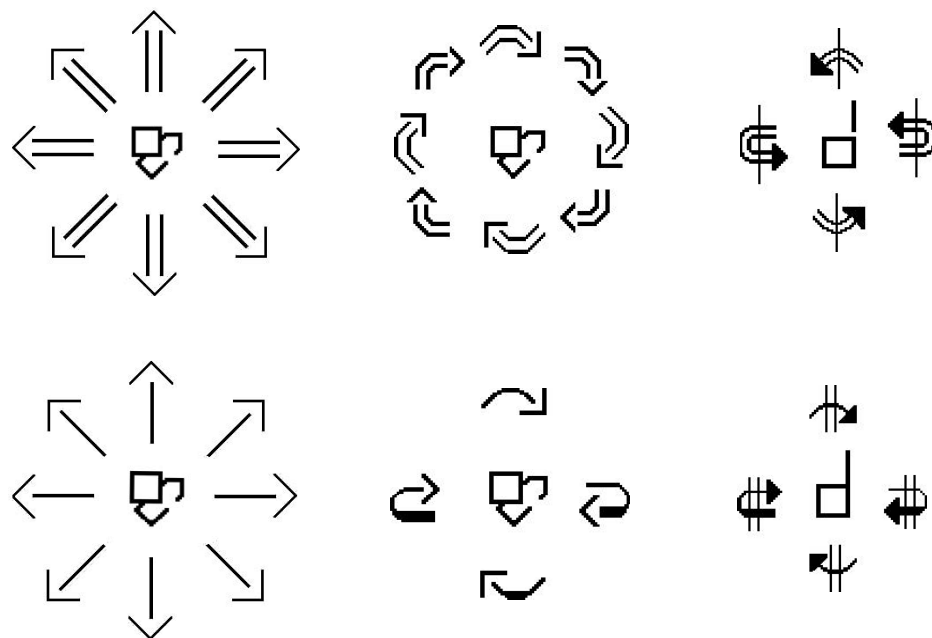
If a sign has movement symbols, they are placed to relate to the center of the sign. They either point directly **towards** the center of the sign, or **away** from it. This is the next spelling rule.

## Writing Movement

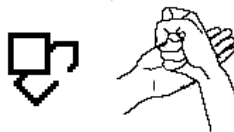
If a sign has movement symbols, they are placed to relate to the center of the sign. They either point **towards** the center of the sign, or **away** from it.

The **diagrams** below show how to place movement symbols in a sign. They are called **movement wheels**, and serve two purposes:

- For each type of movement symbol (straight, curved, rotation), they show all its possible symbol positions.
- For each symbol position, they show **where** that symbol should be written next to the center of a sign.



example  
center of a sign



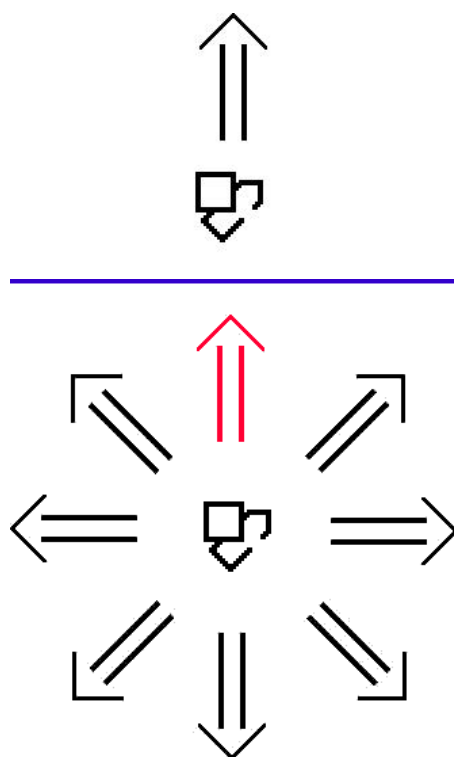
# Writing Movement

## Straight Movement

When writing straight movement, if the movement is **upward** in the signing space, then choose the movement symbol which shows movement straight up.

Find this symbol on the **movement wheel** for straight movement parallel to the **wall plane**. The symbol appears at the top of the wheel, directly above the center of the wheel.

As shown by the movement wheel, place the movement symbol **directly above** the center of the sign, pointing straight up.



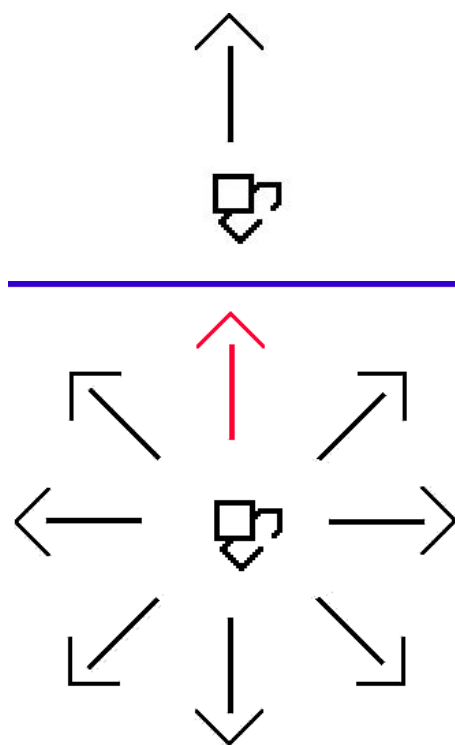
# Writing Movement

## Straight Movement

When writing straight movement, if the movement is **forward** in the signing space, then choose the movement symbol which shows movement forward.

Find this symbol on the **movement wheel** for straight movement parallel to the **floor plane**. The symbol appears at the top of the wheel, directly above the center of the wheel.

As shown by the movement wheel, place the movement symbol **directly above** the center of the sign, pointing straight up.



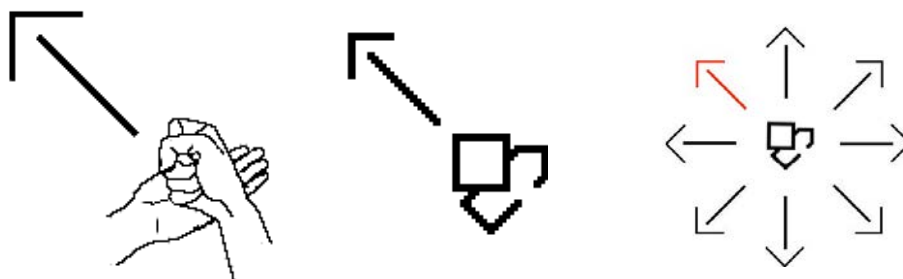
# Writing Movement

## Straight Movement

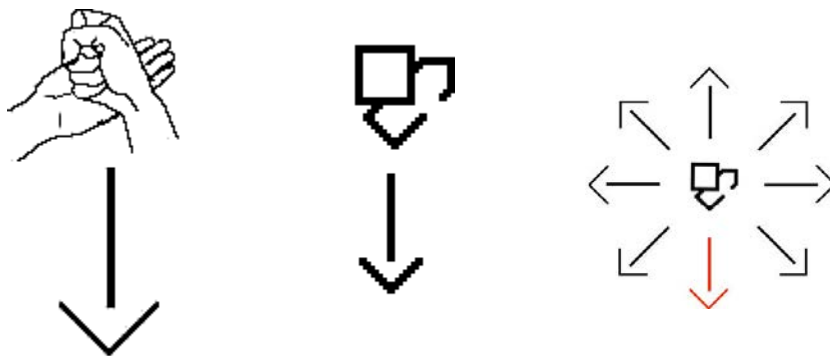
When writing straight movement, if the movement is **angled forward** in the signing space, then choose the movement symbol which shows movement angled forward.

Find this symbol on the **movement wheel** for straight movement parallel to the floor plane. The symbol appears in the upper left part of the wheel, angled above the center of the wheel.

As shown by the movement wheel, place the movement symbol at **an angle** from the center of the sign, pointing away from the center.



If a straight movement points **back** in the signing space, then as shown by the movement wheel, place the movement symbol directly **below** the center of the sign, pointing straight down.



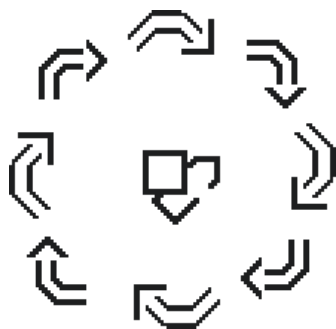
# Writing Movement

## Curved Movement

When writing curved movement, choose the proper **movement symbol** and symbol position for that movement.

Find the symbol in the **movement wheel** for that symbol.

Place the curved movement symbol next to the center of the sign, as shown by the movement wheel.



**bowl**



**help all of you**

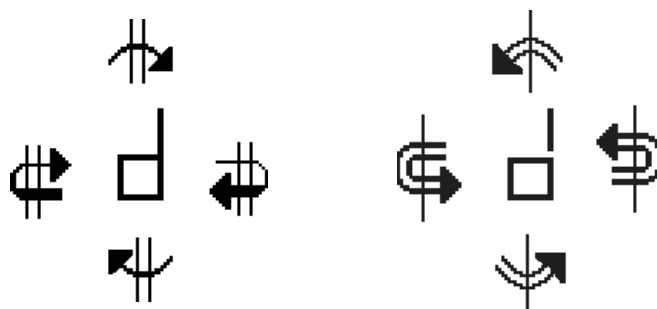
# Writing Movement

## Rotation Movement

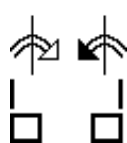
When writing rotation movement, choose the proper **movement symbol** and symbol position for that movement.

Find the symbol in the **movement wheel** for that symbol.

Place the rotation movement symbol next to the center of the sign, as shown by the movement wheel.



If an rotation movement symbol curves **downward**, then it is usually placed under the center of the sign. If the movement symbol curves **upward**, it is usually placed above the center of the sign.



**happen**



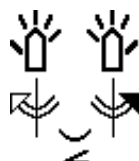
**yeah!**



**so-so**



**open**



**finish**



**welcome**



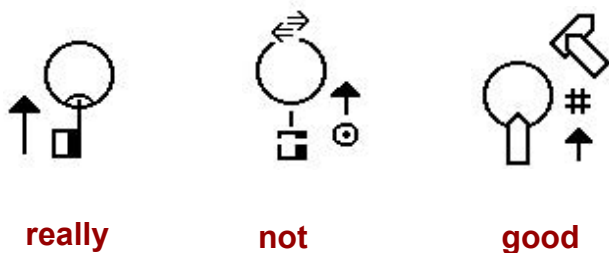
# Writing Movement

## Exceptions

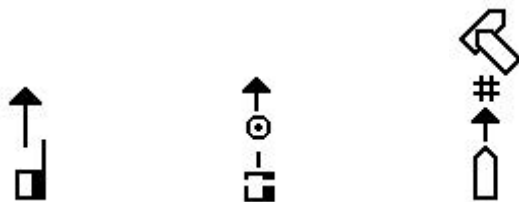
In some cases, the SignWriting spelling rules **do not work** when writing a sign.

For instance, sometimes a movement symbol cannot be placed according to its movement wheel. This happens because the placed symbol would **collide** with another symbol in the sign (typically, a face or shoulder symbol).

In this case, it is necessary to place the movement symbol to the **side** of the center of a sign.



If a face symbol was not part of these signs, their movement symbols would have been placed according to the **movement wheel**.





## Writing Sentences

# Punctuation Symbols

**Punctuation symbols** are used to **write sentences** in sign texts.



Pause



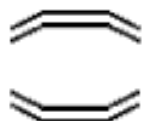
End of Sentence



Pause Before End of Phrase



Pause Before List of Items

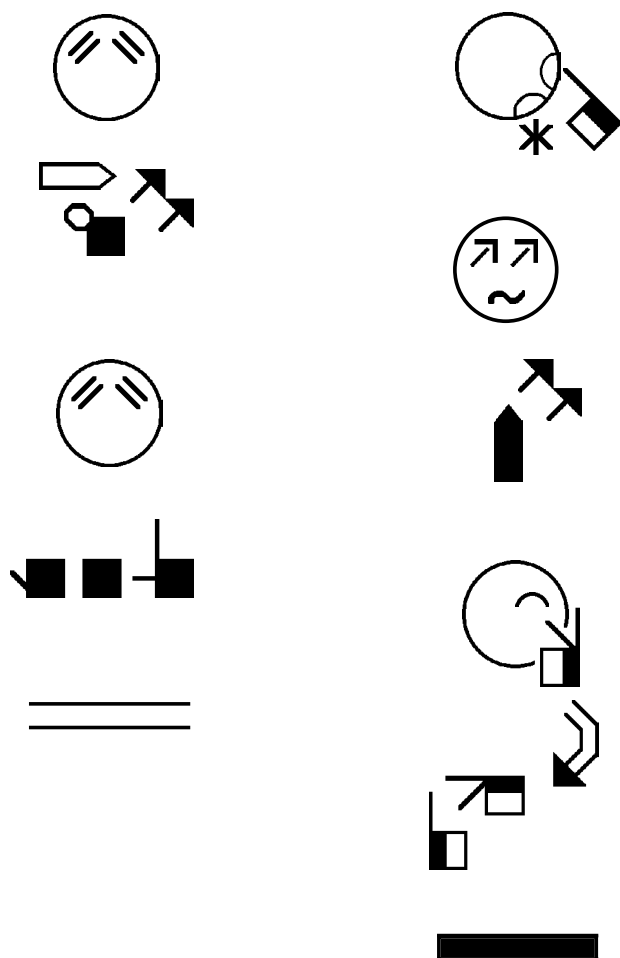


Pause Before and After Parenthetical Phrase

## Writing Sentences

Sentences in SignWriting are written **down the page**, from top to bottom.

Successive lines of writing are written from left to right, across the page.

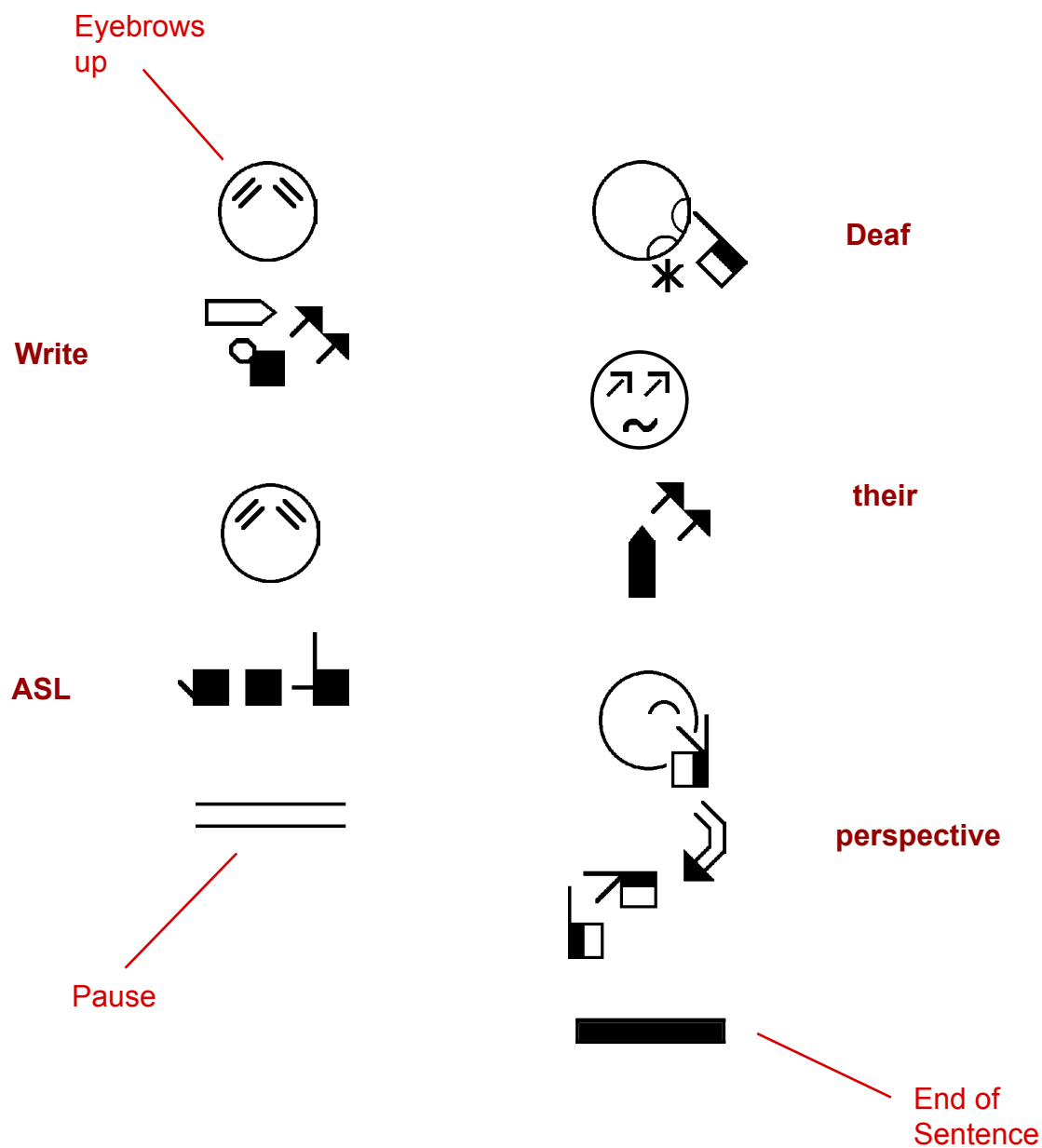


**Writing ASL from the Deaf perspective.**

# Writing Sentences

Sentences in SignWriting are written **down the page**, from top to bottom.

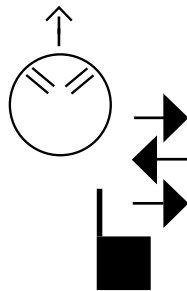
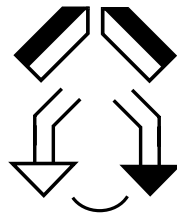
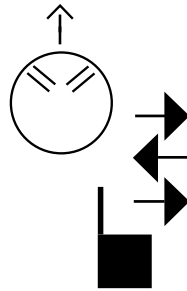
Successive lines of writing are written from left to right, across the page.



**Writing ASL from the Deaf perspective.**

# Writing Sentences

Questions in SignWriting are marked by the sign language grammar and a special **punctuation symbol**.

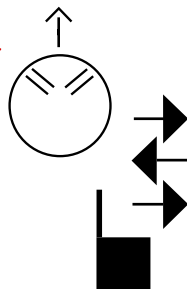


Where is the house?

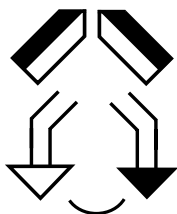
# Writing Sentences

Questions in SignWriting are marked by the sign language grammar and a special **punctuation symbol**.

Eyebrows  
down

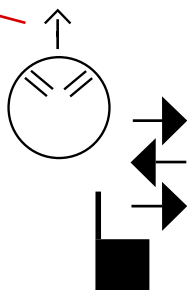


Where



house

Head  
forward



where



?

Question  
Pause

Where is the house?

# Punctuation

Punctuation symbols are used to **punctuate** sentences in sign texts.



## **Pause**

Similar to a comma in English.



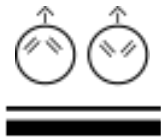
## **End of Sentence**

Similar to a period in English.



## **Pause Before End of Phrase**

Similar to a semicolon in English.



## **Question Pause Before End of Phrase**

Similar to a question mark in English.

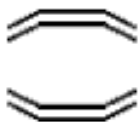
When a sentence or phrase ends in a question, there is a slight pause at the end. The **Pause** symbol is used to write that pause. But to work as a question pause, this symbol must be preceded by signs that include the head movements and facial expressions for grammatically marking questions. These include **Head Forward** and **Eyebrows Up** or **Down**.



## **Pause Before List of Items**

Similar to a colon in English.

This is used in the middle of a sentence, marking a new phrase that lists items 1, 2, 3, and so on.



## **Pause Before and After Parenthetical Phrase**

Similar to parentheses in English.

Marks an added thought in a sentence, starting with the curved-up symbol and ending in the curved-down symbol.



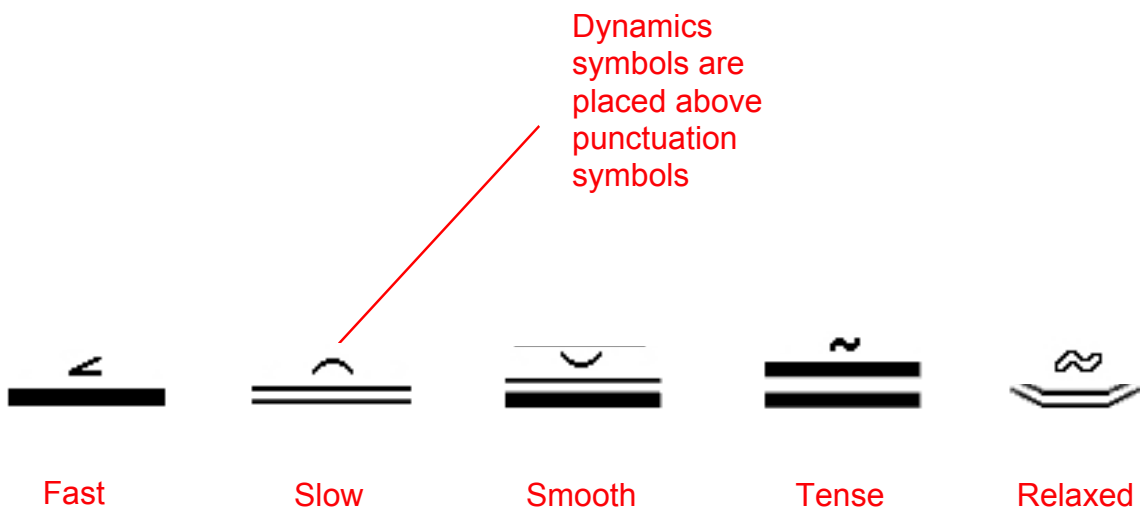
# Punctuation Dynamics

SignWriting includes **dynamics symbols** which can be placed next to punctuation symbols to show the speed, timing, and quality of entire phrases and sentences.

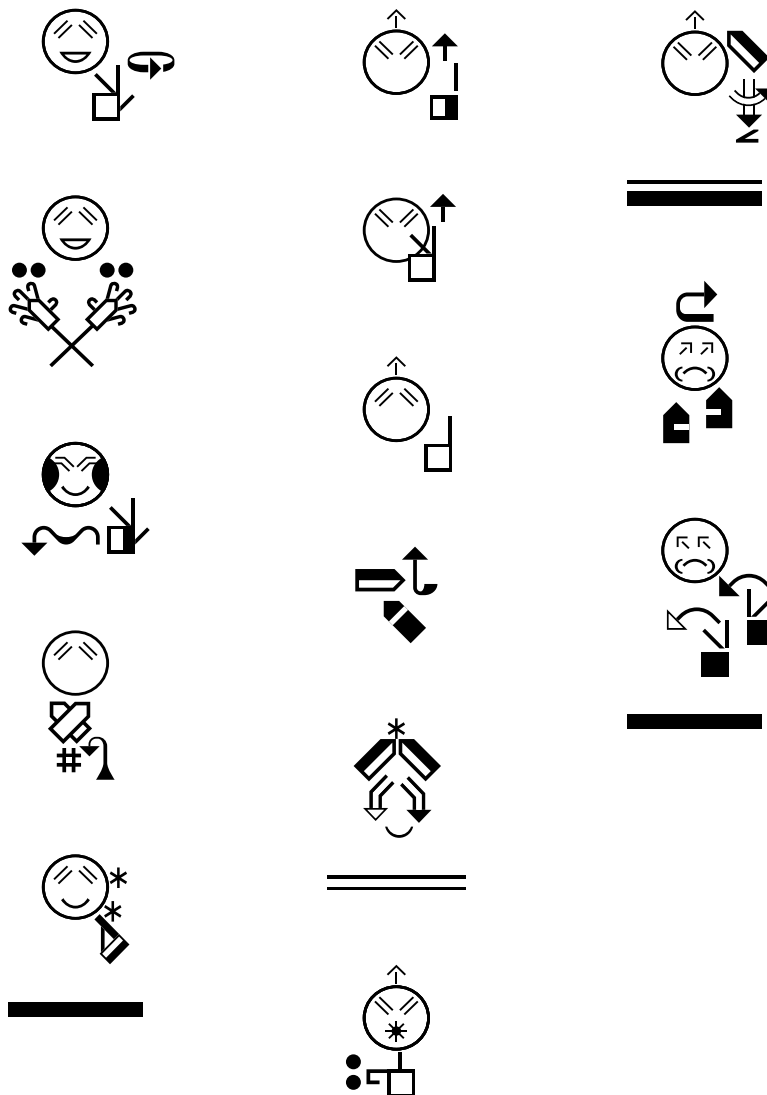
The dynamics symbol **Fast** indicates that the **preceding** phrase or sentence is signed quickly. This is similar to an exclamation point in English.

The dynamics symbols **Slow**, **Smooth**, **Tense**, and **Relaxed** can also be placed next to punctuation symbols, to give the feeling of slow, smooth, tense, or relaxed sentences.

For more information on dynamics symbols, see the **Dynamics** chapter.

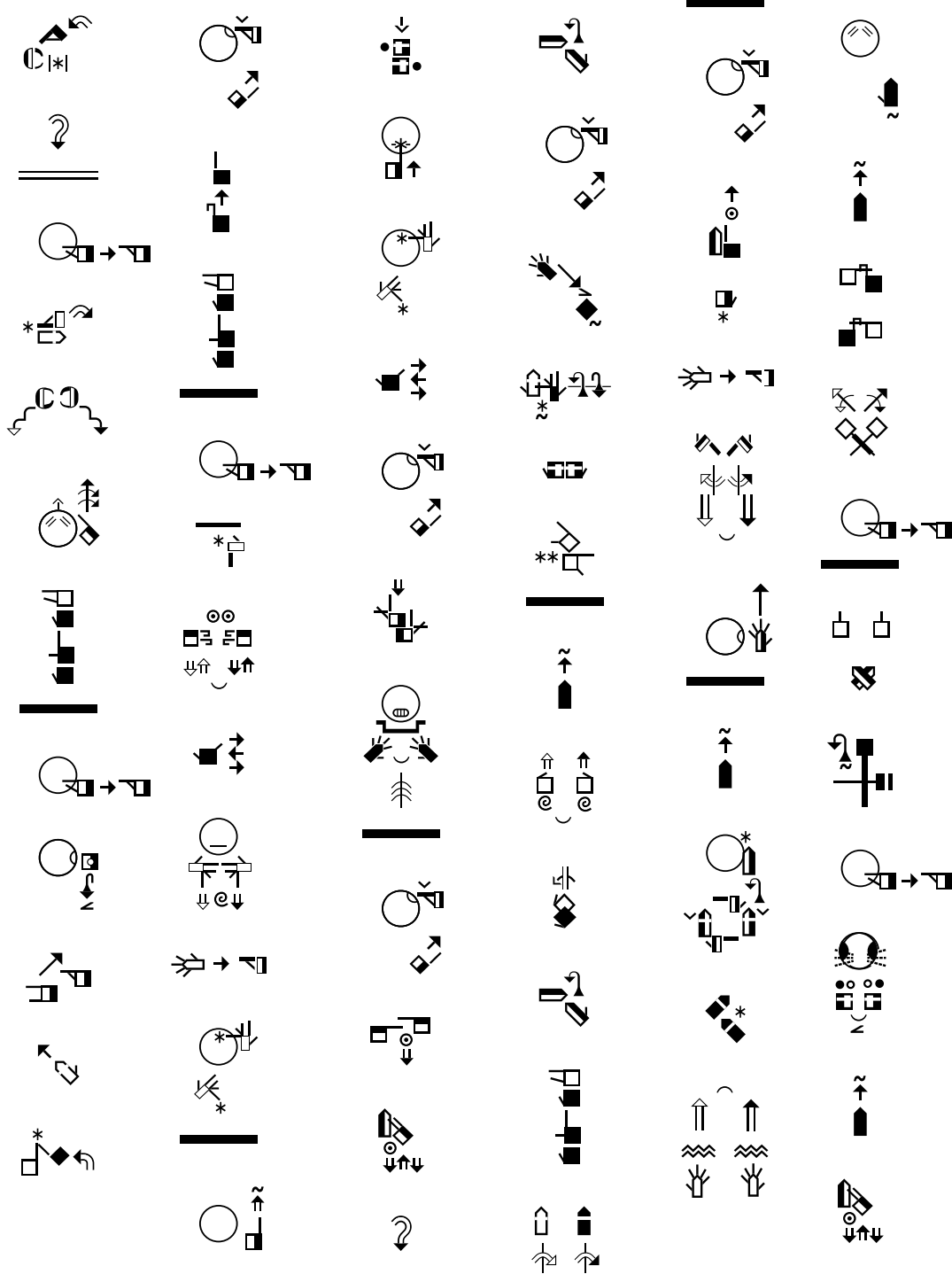


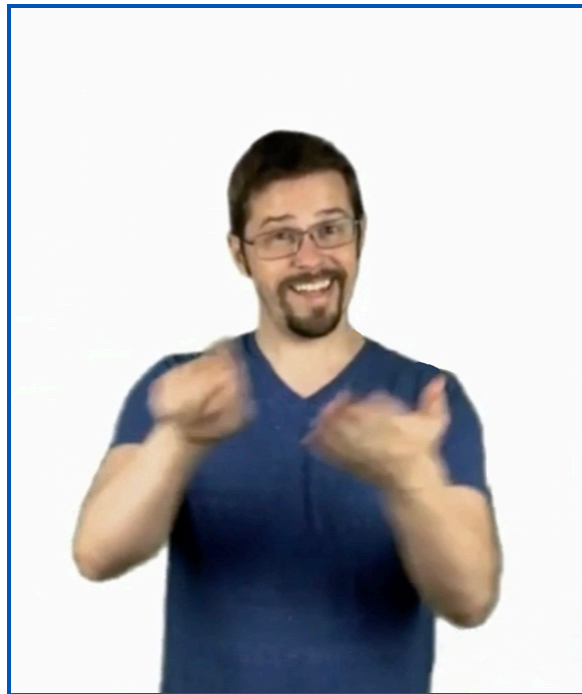
## Writing Sentences



The three bears arrive home. They see someone has entered the house. Who? They don't know. The door is already open a crack. They push the door open and look around.

# Writing Sentences





## Dynamics

# Dynamics Symbols

**Dynamics symbols** show properties of positions, movements, facial expressions, and signing.



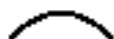
**Simultaneous**



**Alternating**



**Uneven Alternating**



**Slow**



**Smooth**



**Fast**



**Fast with Emphasis**



**Tense**



**Tense with Emphasis**



**Relaxed**



**Relaxed with Emphasis**

# Dynamics

SignWriting includes five types of **dynamics symbols**.

**Movement Dynamics** are placed next to movement symbols. They indicate movement that is fast, slow, smooth, tense, relaxed, simultaneous, or alternating.



**Hand Dynamics** are used to mark classifiers. Classifiers are hands that remain in the same position for an extended period of time.



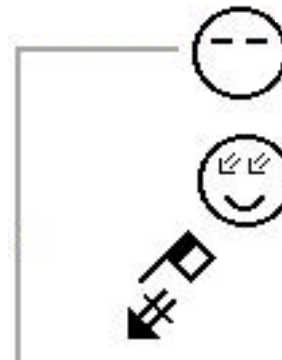
**Face Dynamics** show tense or relaxed facial expressions. The Tense symbol is used to show squeezed eyes, raised cheeks, and lips that press together.



**Punctuation Dynamics** show the speed, timing, and quality of entire phrases and sentences.



**Unit Dynamics** mark the influence of one symbol on a group of signs. The Unit-Connecting Line is used to show one facial expression influencing several signs.



# Movement Dynamics

**Movement Dynamics** show different kinds of movement. They are used by placing dynamics symbols next to **movement symbols**.

The symbol names below are **aliases** for the basic dynamics symbols.



## Simultaneous Movement

Both hands move at the same time.



## Alternating Movement

Both hands move at the same time, but perform the same alternating movement in opposite directions.



## Uneven Alternating Movement

Both hands move, but **not** at the same time. Movement alternates between the hands – when one hand stops, the other starts.



## Slow Movement



## Smooth Movement



## Fast Movement



## Fast Movement with Emphasis



## Tense Movement



## Tense Movement with Emphasis



## Relaxed Movement



## Relaxed Movement with Emphasis

# Hand Dynamics

**Hand Dynamics** are used to mark classifiers. Classifiers are hands that remain in the same position for an extended period of time.

**Classifiers** are written as hand symbols with an associated classifier marker. The marker is the dynamics symbol **Tense**. It is always placed under the hand symbol.

In the text to the right, Goldilocks sees a bowl of porridge. The bowl is established in space by a feeling of tension, like placing something on a table. This anchors the image of a bowl in space. The **Tense** symbol marks that feeling.

After the classifier is created, one hand continues to mark the classifier (while remaining in the same position), while the other hand signs other signs. The **Tense** symbol remains under the hand that marks the classifier.

In the text, Goldilocks says that she sees the bowl, and then eats the porridge from it. But the porridge is too hot.





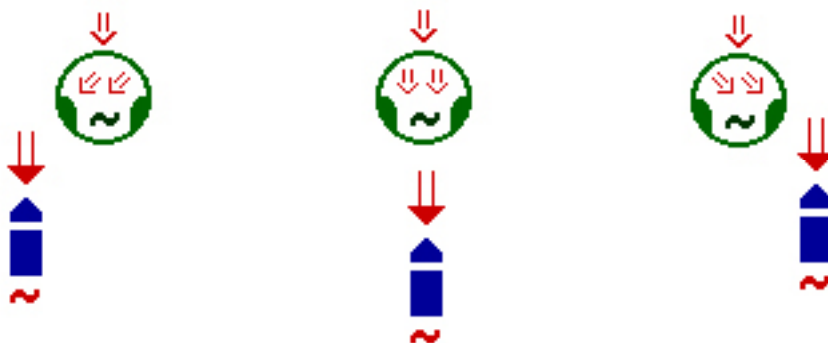
# Face Dynamics

**Face Dynamics** show tense or relaxed **facial expressions**.

Facial expressions are essential to writing sign language stories and literature. They mark grammar and emphasis. The face symbol **Tense Lips** shows the dynamics of the lips tensing as a hand is established in space as a classifier. Tension on the lips and near the hands is often written together.

In the example below, the sign for "bed" is written with the dynamics symbol **Tense** under the hand symbol, to mark the sign as a classifier. At the same time, the lips are tensed to create the classifier in space.

Three options are shown below for creating the classifier in different parts of the signing space.



The bed is placed to the left side. It is established in the **left space**, to the left of the facial expression.

The lips **tense** as the classifier is placed in space.

The bed is placed in the center. It is established in the **center space**, directly under the facial expression.

The lips **tense** as the classifier is placed in space.

The bed is placed to the right side. It is established in the **right space**, to the right of the facial expression.

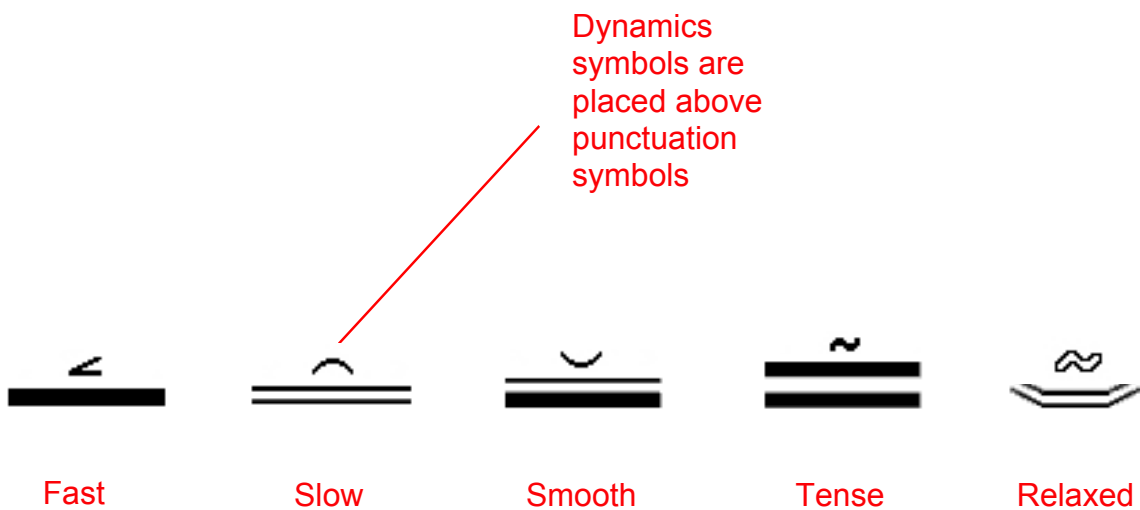
The lips **tense** as the classifier is placed in space.

# Punctuation Dynamics

**Punctuation Dynamics** show the speed, timing, and quality of entire phrases and sentences. They are used by placing dynamics symbols next to **punctuation symbols**.

The dynamics symbol **Fast** indicates that the **preceding** phrase or sentence is signed quickly. This is similar to an exclamation point in English.

The dynamics symbols **Slow**, **Smooth**, **Tense**, and **Relaxed** can also be placed next to punctuation symbols, to give the feeling of slow, smooth, tense, or relaxed sentences.



# Unit Dynamics

## Unit-Connecting Line

✓ This first face occurs in all the signs below it, that are inside the grey bracket.

**Unit Dynamics** show the influence of a facial expression on a series of signs.

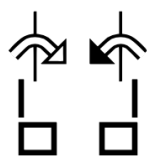
A single facial expression can **influence** several signs. This is shown with the **Unit-Connecting Line** symbol, which groups together a face symbol with the signs it influences.

The face symbol is written before the signs it influences. The unit-connecting line is written like a **bracket**, grouping together the face symbol with the signs it influences.

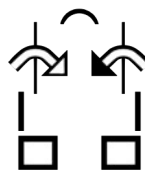


## Writing Dynamics

The dynamics symbol **Simultaneous** is optional. If a sign contains no dynamics symbols, its hand movements are assumed to be simultaneous.

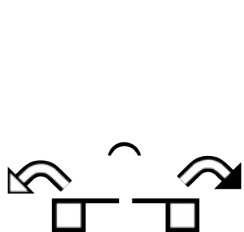


happen

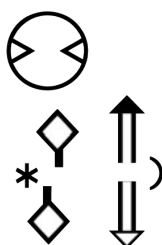


happen

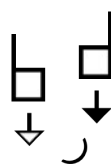
The dynamics symbols **Simultaneous**, **Alternating**, and **Uneven Alternating** are placed so they visually link the two movement symbols.



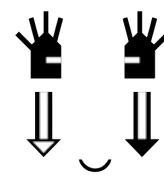
oppose



thin

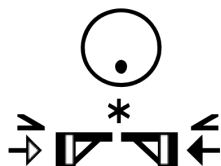


come

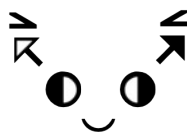


curtain

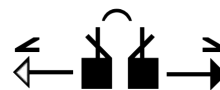
When used in pairs, the dynamics symbols **Fast** and **Fast with Emphasis** are usually (but not always) placed so they point to the center of the body.



kiss

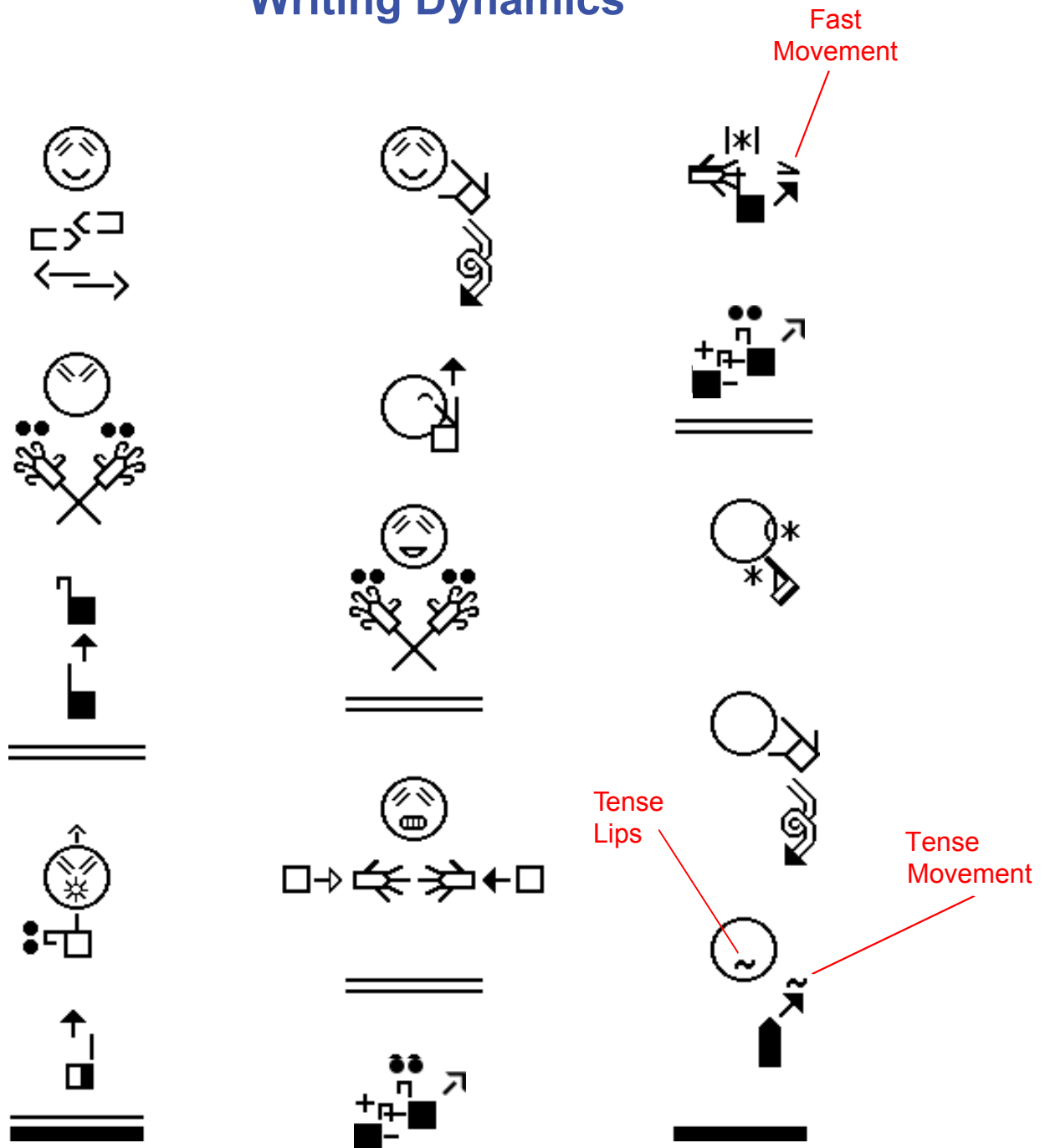


none

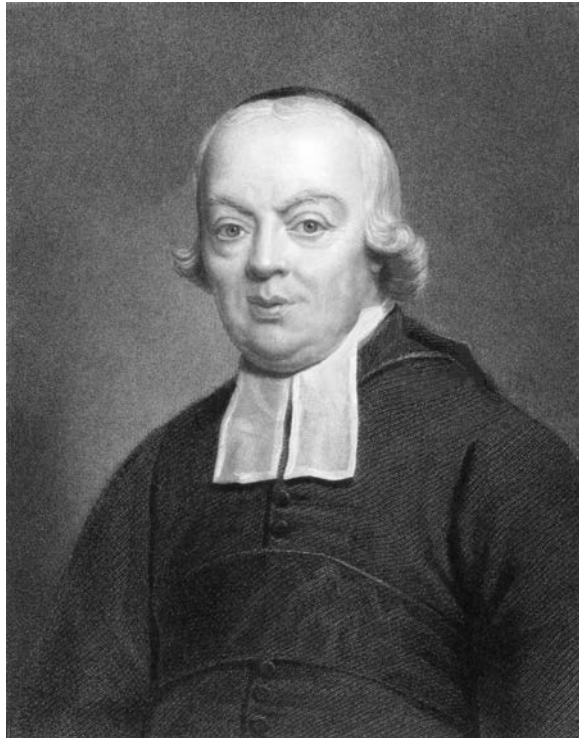


ready

# Writing Dynamics



Baby Bear asks "Who are you?" Goldilocks saw the bears, became frightened, shot out of the house, and ran all the way home.



**Sign Text**

# Sign Text

The following text is a biography of **Charles-Michel de l'Épée**.

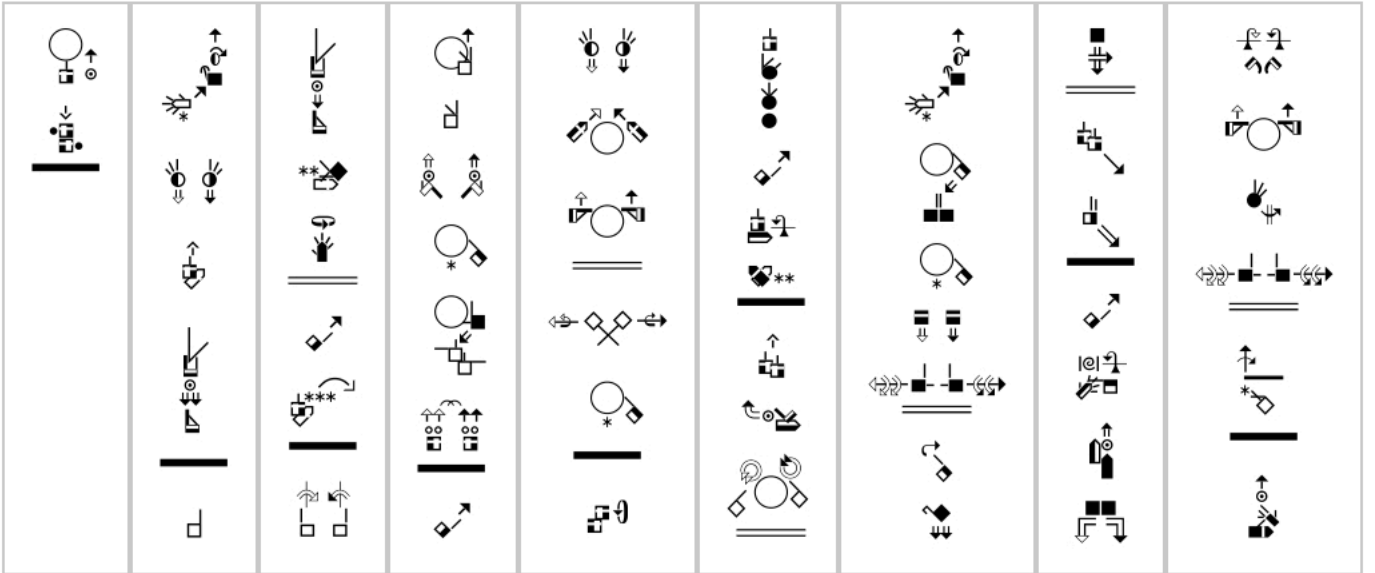
## 1

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

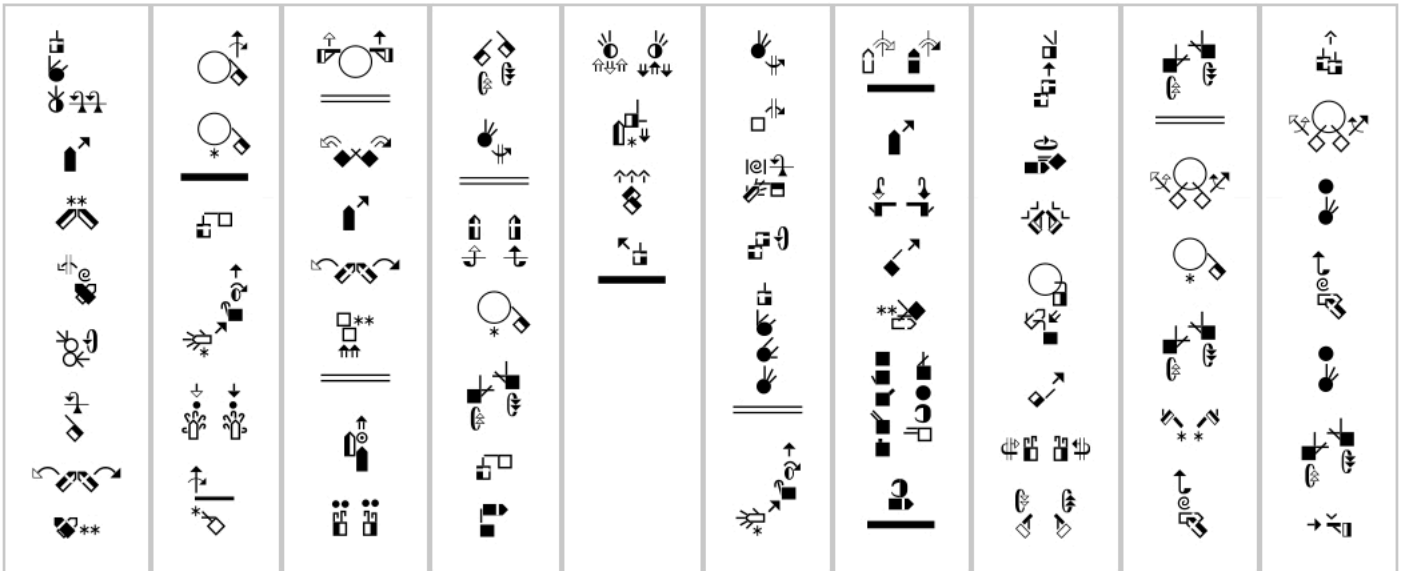
## 2

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

### 3

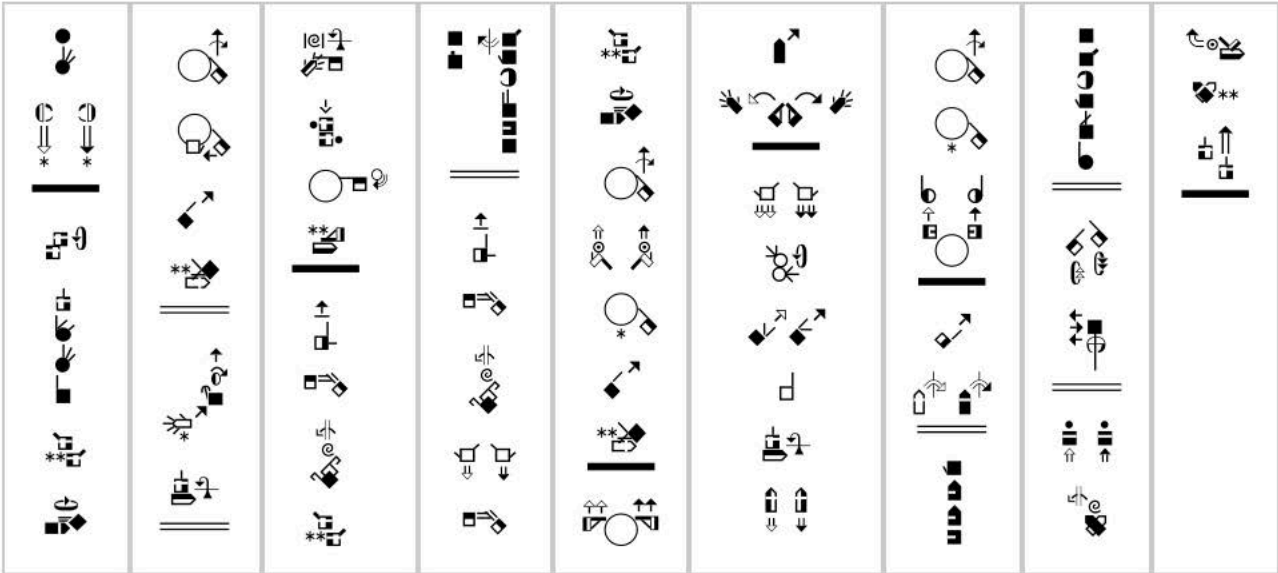


### 4

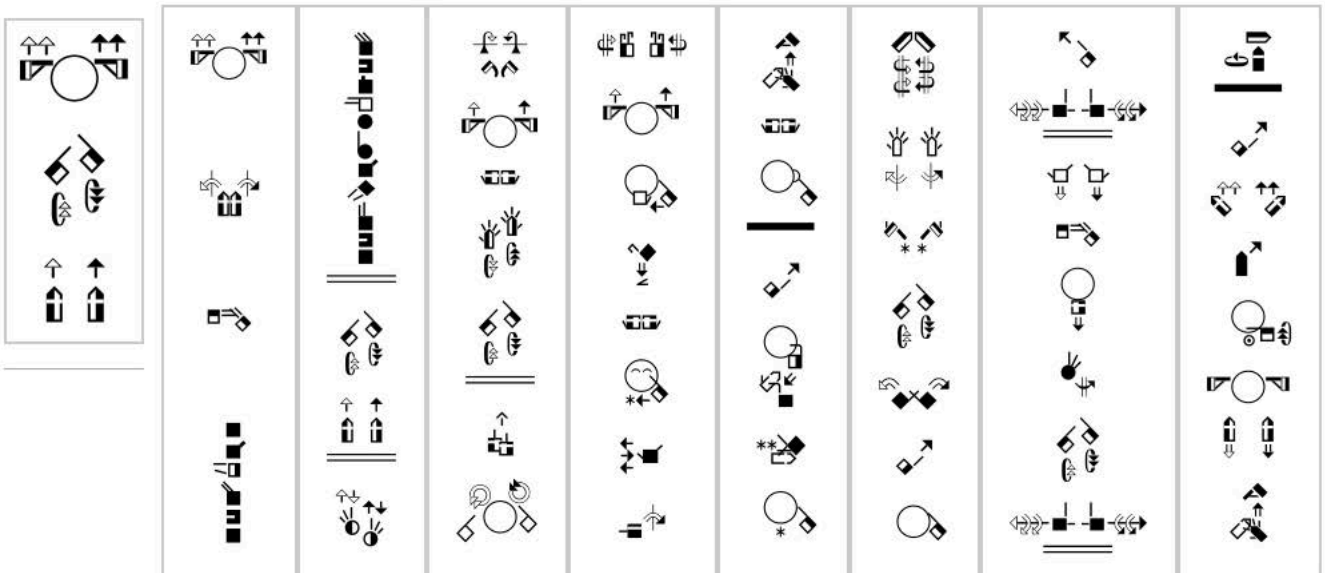




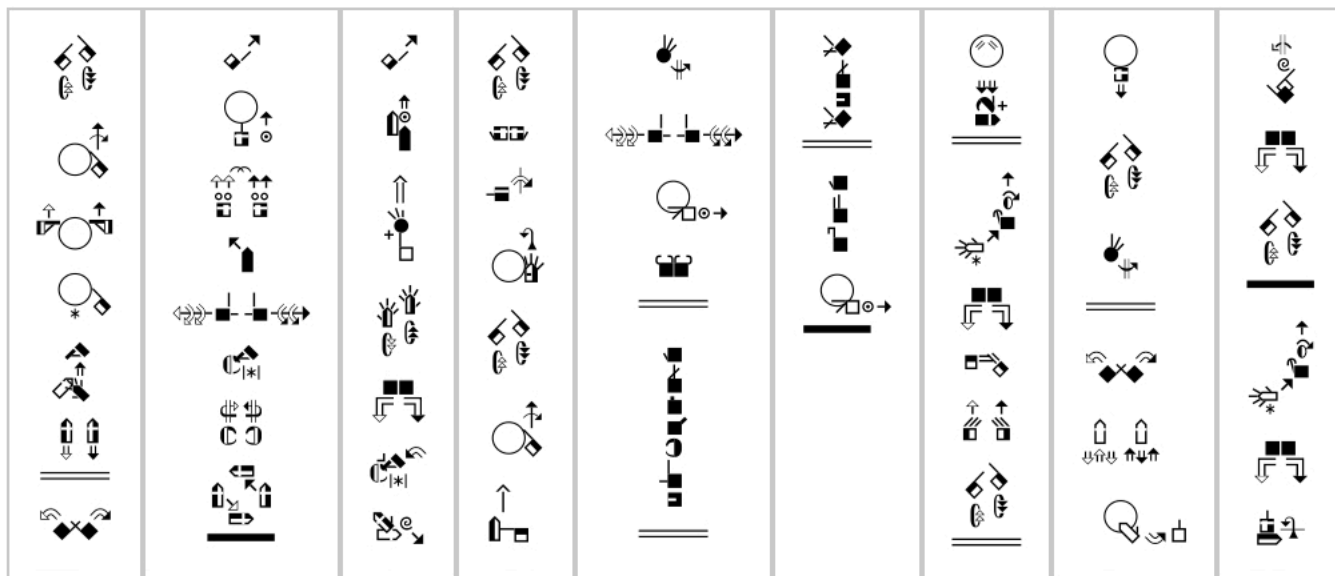
# 5



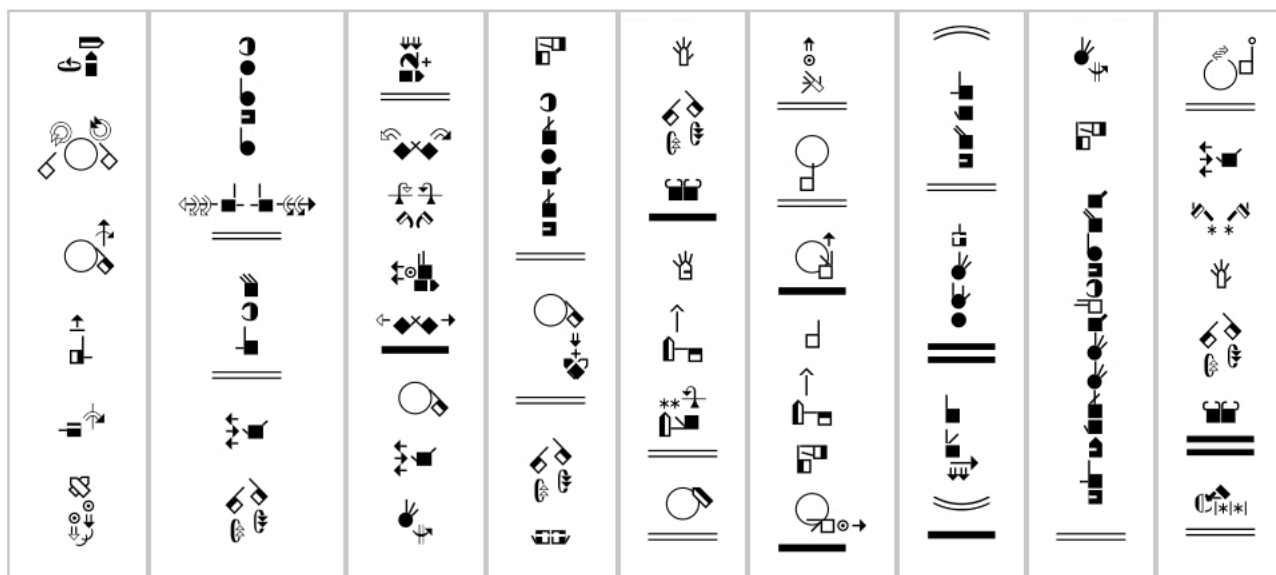
# 6



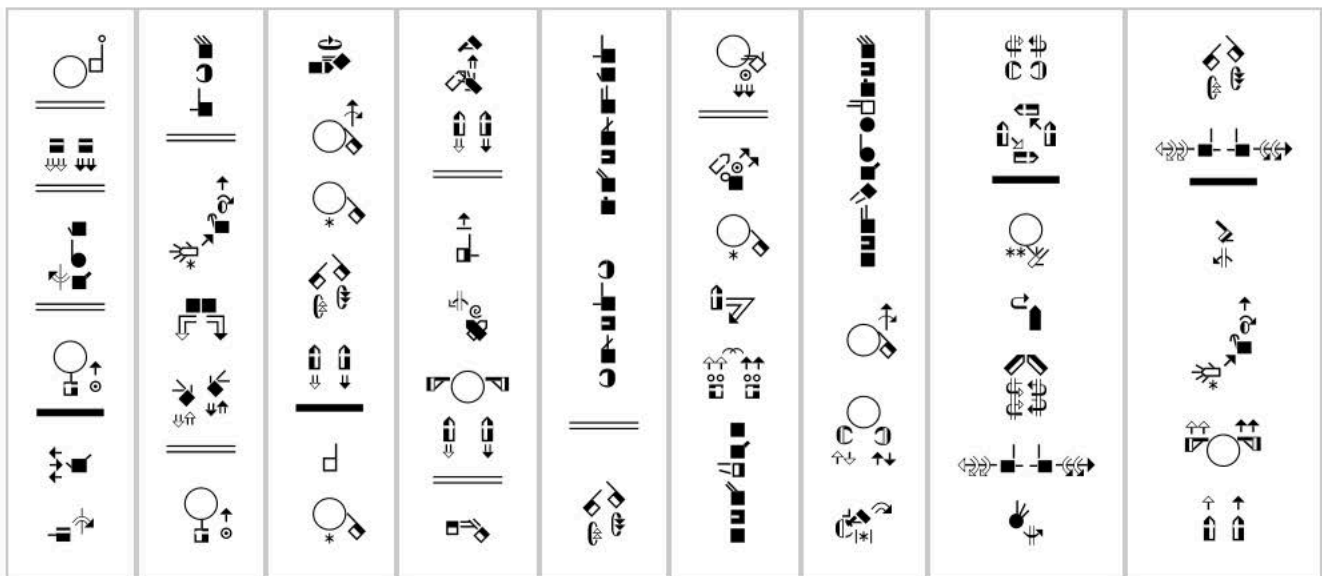
# 7



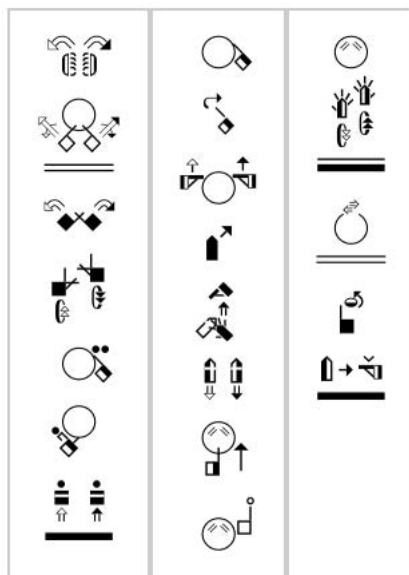
# 8



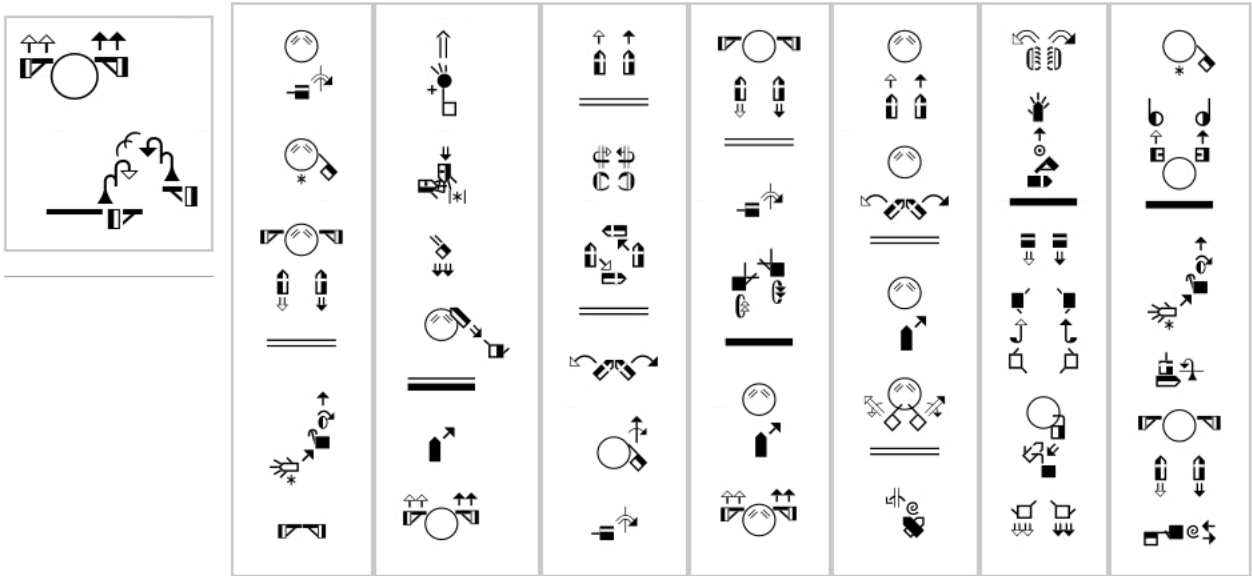
# 9



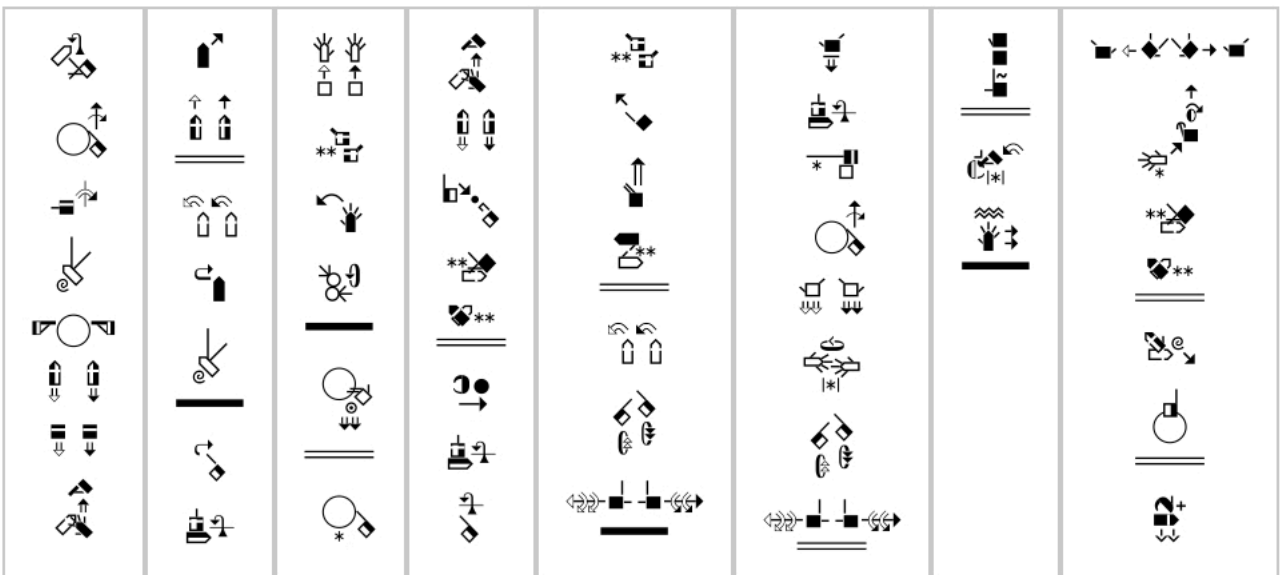
# 10



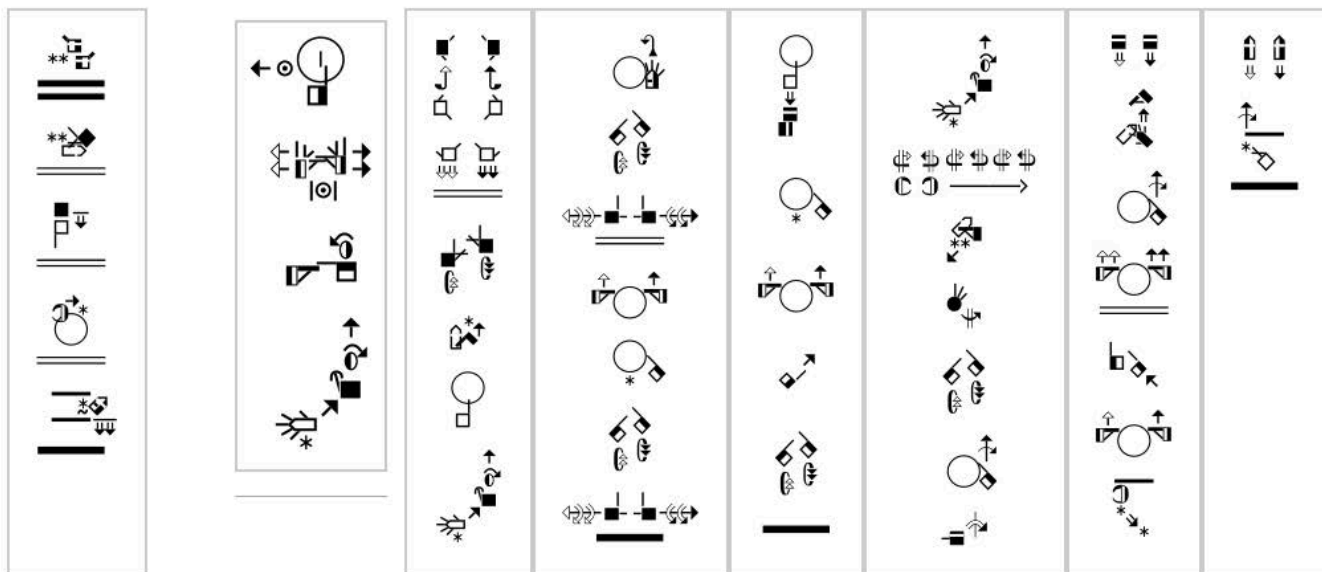
# 11



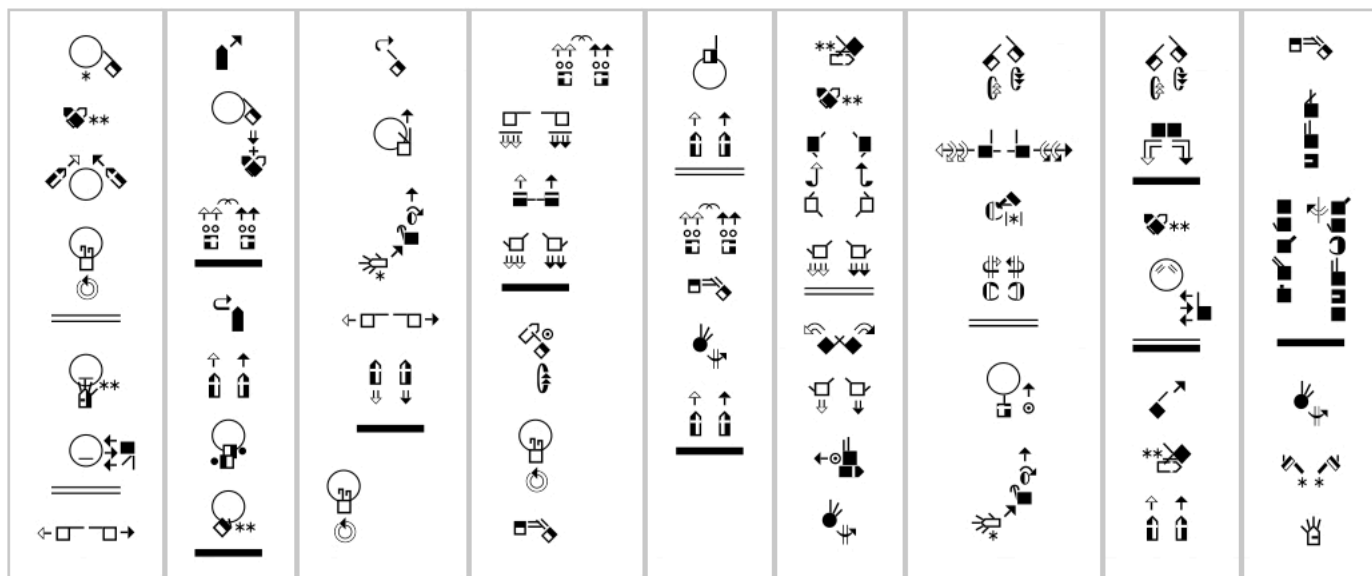
# 12



























































# 13













































# 14



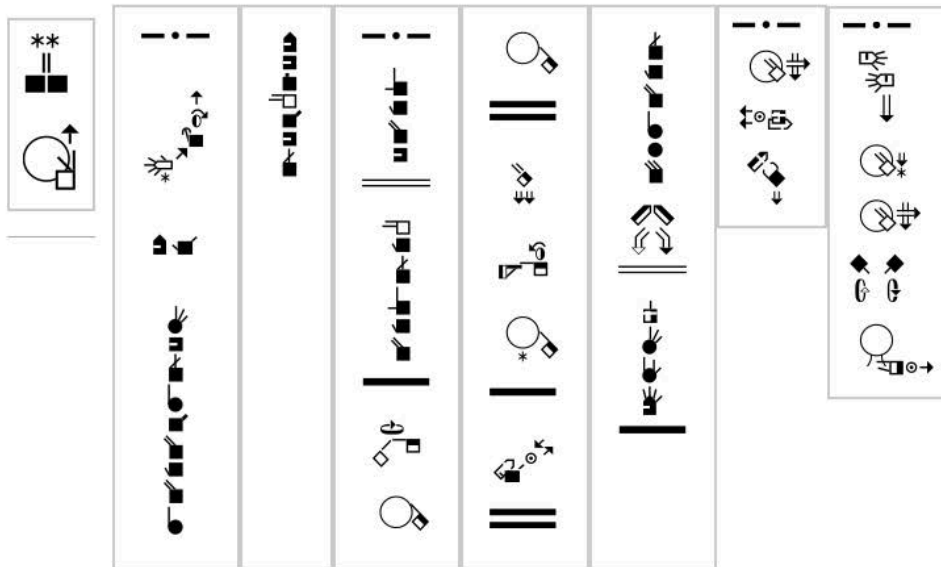
# 15

# 16

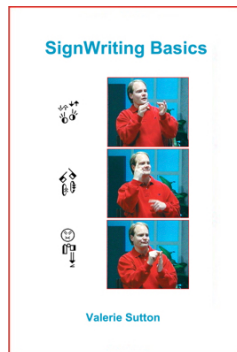
					
					
					
					
					
					
					

# 17



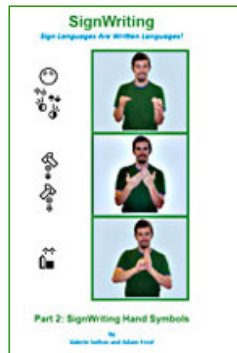
This text was written in ASL by Adam Frost. It is based on an earlier text which was signed in ASL by Lucinda O'Grady Farnady, recorded on video, and transcribed by Charles Butler Neto.

# SignWriting Books



## **SignWriting Basics** by Valerie Sutton

Provides an introduction to the basic concepts of SignWriting. All examples are in American Sign Language (ASL).



## **SignWriting Hand Symbols** by Valerie Sutton and Adam Frost

Provides a detailed description of the hand symbols in the international SignWriting alphabet.



## **American Sign Language Hand Symbols** by Adam Frost and Valerie Sutton

Provides a detailed description of the hand symbols used in American Sign Language.





The SignWriting Press  
[www.signwriting.org](http://www.signwriting.org)