Chapter 1: ISWA-2008

7 Symbol Categories

...Category Names & Descriptions...
About Category 1

Handshapes from over 40 Sign Languages are placed in 10 groups based on the numbers 1-10 in American Sign Language. For example, all of the hands that have a single index finger extended, are located under Group 01: Index.

Category 1: Hands
Group 01: Index
Group 02: Index Middle
Group 03: Index Middle Thumb
Group 04: 4 Fingers
Group 05: 5 Fingers
Group 06: Baby Finger
Group 07: Ring Finger
Group 08: Middle Finger
Group 09: Index Thumb
Group 10: Thumb

About Category 2

Contact symbols, small finger movements, straight arrows, curved arrows and circles are placed into 10 groups based on planes: The Front Wall Plane includes movement that is “parallel to the front wall” and the Floor Plane includes movement that is “parallel to the floor”.

Category 2: Movement
Group 11: Contact
Group 12: Finger Movement
Group 13: Straight Wall Plane
Group 14: Straight Diagonal Plane
Group 15: Straight Floor Plane
Group 16: Curves Wall Plane
Group 17: Curves Hit Wall Plane
Group 18: Curves Hit Floor Plane
Group 19: Curves Floor Plane
Group 20: Circles
**Category 3: Faces & Head**

- **Group 21:** Brow, Eyes, Eyegaze
- **Group 22:** Cheeks, Ears, Nose, Breath
- **Group 23:** Mouth, Lips
- **Group 24:** Tongue, Teeth, Chin, Neck
- **Group 25:** Head

**About Category 3**

Starting from the top of the face and moving down, Groups 21-24 include detailed facial expressions and movement of parts of the face and neck. Group 25 includes head movement and views of the head.

**Category 4: Body**

**About Category 4**

Torso movement, shoulders, hips, and the limbs are used in Sign Languages as a part of grammar, especially when describing conversations between people, called Role Shifting, or making spatial comparisons between items on the left and items on the right. The symbols of the body that are in Category 4 are important when writing sign language storytelling and poetry. All sign languages have some signs that point below the hips, or touch the torso, or hunch the shoulders, or touch the arms and wrists.
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Category 5
Dynamics & Timing

About Category 5
Dynamics Symbols are used mostly with Movement Symbols and Punctuation Symbols, to give the “feeling” or “tempo” to movement. They also provide emphasis on a movement or expression, and combined with Punctuation Symbols become the equivalent to Exclamation Points. The Tension Symbol, combined with Contact Symbols, provides the feeling of “pressure”, and combined with facial expressions can place emphasis or added feeling to an expression. Timing symbols are used to show alternating or simultaneous movement.

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Category 6
Punctuation

About Category 6
Punctuation Symbols are used when writing complete sentences or documents in SignWriting. The Punctuation Symbols do not look like the symbols for punctuation in English, but they do have similar meanings. SignWriting punctuation symbols include a period, comma, colon, semicolon, exclamation point and so forth.
About Category 7

The symbols in Category 7 are detailed Location Markers that are not used when writing signs on a daily basis. Location is written and read in SignWriting WITHOUT these symbols.

The symbols in Category 7 are only used in computer software to assist in giving further details for sorting large sign language dictionaries that are sorted by SignWriting symbols. Sometimes signs that are slightly different, may have similar SignSpelling data, and the symbols in Category 7 can help decide which sign should come first and which should come second, in the dictionary.
International SignWriting Alphabet (ISWA)

Category 1: Hands
Group 01: Index
Group 02: Index Middle
Group 03: Index Middle Thumb
Group 04: 4 Fingers
Group 05: 5 Fingers
Group 06: Baby Finger
Group 07: Ring Finger
Group 08: Middle Finger
Group 09: Index Thumb
Group 10: Thumb

Category 2: Movement
Group 11: Contact
Group 12: Finger Movement
Group 13: Straight Wall Plane
Group 14: Straight Diagonal Plane
Group 15: Straight Floor Plane
Group 16: Curves Wall Plane
Group 17: Curves Hit Wall Plane
Group 18: Curves Hit Floor Plane
Group 19: Curves Floor Plane
Group 20: Circles

Category 3: Faces & Head
Group 21: Brow, Eyes, Eyegaze
Group 22: Cheeks Ears Nose Breath
Group 23: Mouth Lips
Group 24: Tongue Teeth Chin Neck
Group 25: Head

Category 4: Body
Group 26: Shoulders Hips Torso
Group 27: Limbs

Category 5: Dynamics
Group 28: Dynamics & Timing

Category 6: Punctuation
Group 29: Punctuation

Category 7: Advanced Sorting
Group 30: Location for Sorting