



Mission

SIGNALONG is committed to empowering children and adults with impaired communication to understand and express their needs, choices and desires by providing vocabulary for life and learning.



Introducing Communication

What do we mean by “communication”? At what level do we need to define it?

Communication is basically two processes:-

- 1) The passing of information from one person to another and
- 2) The reaction to information received in order to promote an interaction.

There are several ways in which the first process can take place:-

- hand gestures
- facial expressions
- body gestures and poses
- cries
- vocalisations
- language - the most complex form



Acquiring Pre - Language Skills

A very obvious point which is easy to overlook is that language cannot develop in a vacuum. In order for language to be acquired, the notion of communication must be there and it cannot develop without:-

- an interest in other people - the desire to communicate
- familiarity with the idea of one thing (a sound, word or sign) representing something else (an object or idea)
- the ability to listen as well as hear
- the ability to use or manipulate the voice

Language impaired children may experience difficulties because these skills have not been acquired. It is important, therefore, that pre-language skills should be taught and encouraged in all language impaired children regardless of age.

According to Ann Locke, “Living Language”, there are four major areas which need to be developed before language can be acquired:

- social-emotional development
- play skills
- listening skills
- expressive skills

Bibliography Locke, Ann: “Living Language”



Why Signalong?

The points of similarity between Signalong and other sign-supported communication systems are that they are key-word systems which use mainly BSL signs, and are intended for use with people who have language and communication difficulties mainly arising from learning disabilities. Because of the BSL root, signs for words which occur in both lexicons are usually the same, but there are some differences.

In other systems Core Vocabulary they use the same (or virtually the same) signs for concepts such as doll/baby, cup/drink, bed/sleep and look/see. It is possible that this arose because in the beginning they were advised by members of the Royal Association for the Deaf, and BSL users frequently use the same signs for these concepts, relying on context to aid understanding. Because Signalong was originally introduced to assist with language development programmes, we use one sign per concept, one concept per sign.

There are some significant differences in presentation and accessibility. Signalong analyses signs for their handshape, orientation, placement and movement, supported by clear line drawings. This means that when they understand the methodology, practitioners can accurately reproduce signs from the manuals without having to attend additional classes or reference to a trainer. Others do not have this methodology, sometimes using stick figure illustrations with occasional text explanations which lack the precision of Signalong. Signalong has published over 8,000 signs since 1992 and offers

a much wider vocabulary, enabling a wider range of opportunities for users.

With the exception of symbols for sexual awareness, Signalong has not published its own symbols, preferring to work with Widgit Software on the development of their Rebus symbol system (now Symbols for Literacy). As early as 1995 our organisations collaborated to ensure that there was a Rebus symbol match for the Signalong Basic Vocabulary, and in March 2008 Signalong and Widgit signed an agreement on mutual co-operation in resource development, with the aim that there should be sign and symbol matches for all resources published by the 2 organisations. An additional advantage of working with Widgit is that they are UK agents for the PCS symbols system, which is less abstract than others.

In the case of students with ASD, practitioners need to have a great deal of adaptability and access to a wide range of communication methods and vocabulary. The Signalong methodology enables practitioners and parents to use the Signalong Text-a-Sign Service whereby signs can be accurately acquired in writing.



How We Do It

Signalong is based on British Sign Language, using unaltered BSL signs wherever possible. The difference between Signalong manuals and other sources of signs, apart from our much wider range, is the way that they are presented.

When the sign has been selected, a description is worked out. This follows a consistent method, as follows (don't worry, each manual has introductory pages with diagrams):

1. Working and supporting hands are chosen. Some signs only require one hand, and in others one hand takes the lead. Signalong says that it doesn't matter which hand you choose, but you must be consistent. The people who need sign support for their communication may have difficulty in concentrating. If you keep swapping hands they may become confused, and communication breaks down.

2. The handshape will be given. Signalong has identified 26 ways in which a handshape can be described. The British Deaf Association Dictionary has a highly technical way of labelling the handshapes, but we use ordinary terminology (e.g. "flat hand", "bunched hand", "C hand" etc).

3. The orientation of the hand will be given. Signalong users are asked to remember that palms face, and hands point. The instruction will be given in that order. It doesn't matter what the handshape is, if the book says "working closed hand, palm forward, pointing in", it means that the palm is facing away from the body towards the front (even though you can't see the palm) and if the hand were flat the fingers would point across the body, even though the fingers are curled over in the closed handshape.

4. Any movement will be described. This could be a direct movement, a broken movement, a movement which changes direction, or circling. The diagrams which accompany the signs are very useful here - please remember that you should read the instructions and look at the diagram.

5. The placement of the sign will be given. When signing, you should perform nearly all of the signs within an imaginary frame, which extends from the waist to just above the head and across the width of the shoulders. This enables the watcher to concentrate not only on the hands, but also on the other vital clues - facial expression, body language, tone of voice. Some signs may go outside the frame, often for emphasis.

6. Sometimes both hands will be brought together to form a combined shape, called a "formation" in the instructions. These will then move together to perform the sign.

7. Once the description has been formulated, a line drawing will be produced. We use line drawings because they can be produced without clutter, unlike photographs and more elaborate drawings. The artist focuses on the essentials of the sign - including facial expression and body posture where relevant. Our artists depict the signs with a variety of characters showing different ethnic types, ages and genders so nobody need feel left out.

Once you have mastered the descriptions and the drawings, you can then select the signs that you need from whichever manuals they appear in or on the Sign Library.

Please remember that Signalong is a sign-supporting system, which requires you to speak as you sign. Use simplified language, but speak in grammatical language. Signalong is not intended to replace speech. Short sentences are much more easily understood than long and complex ones.

Signalong is a total communication system, in which you give every clue to meaning which is relevant in the situation. While signing, always remember to use body language, facial expression and voice tone to reinforce the message.

Don't forget that you are using Signalong because the person you are communicating with has difficulties. Don't flood them with language, whether in speech or in sign. Give them time to process the thought, and time to respond.

Very few of us are signing experts. Try to produce signs as accurately as you can, but accept whatever efforts are made to communicate with you. Don't demotivate the other person by insisting on a correct performance. In the end, it doesn't matter if the signs aren't perfect - effective communication is what we want.



Name Signing

The Springboard method is used to build a name sign.

A name sign is representing/identifying a concept about that person. There are four ways of creating a name sign. All start with the initial letter shape:

Method 1

Initial letter shape then a sign for the meaning of all or part of a name

e.g. J + Brown = Jimmy or Mr Brown, Jimbo

Method 2

Initial letter shape and something you can see, physical characteristic

e.g. J + earrings = Jane or S + Bracelet = Sia

Method 3

Initial letter shape and something you know about a person. This does not have to be an occupation, it can also be a hobby or just something someone likes to do

e.g. M + Nurse = Mary

Method 4

Combination of letter shapes. Never use more than 3 letter shapes. These can be a combination of initials or the consonant sounds in a name

e.g. S + A + M = Sam or D + B = Debbie

How are name signs selected?

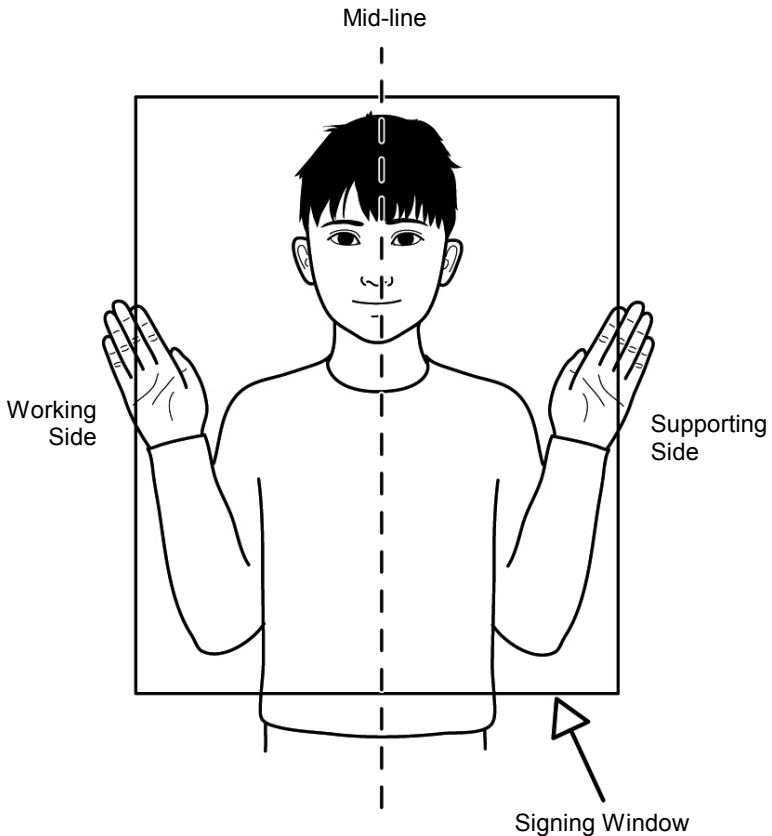
You need to be sensitive when choosing people's name sign if based on physical appearance and appropriateness of name sign choice. Name signs are like a nickname and they identify the individual rather than their name itself.

Service users are very good at choosing name signs for staff and should be supported to select their own name signs.

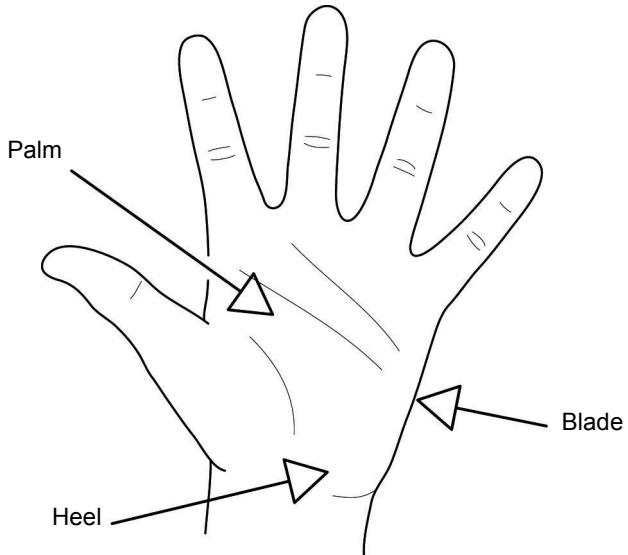
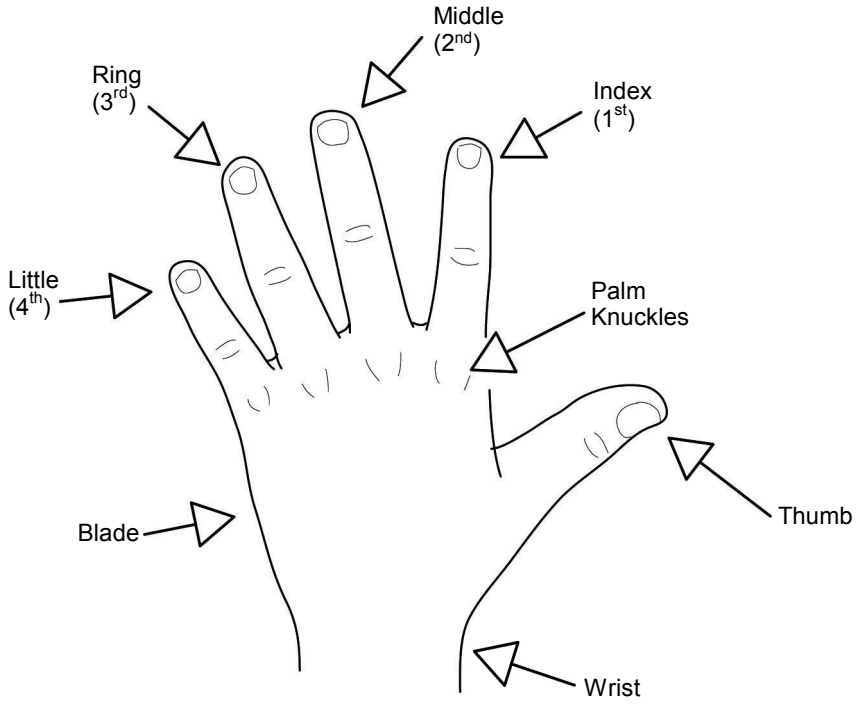
PLACEMENT

All signs start within an area known as the signing window. This extends from the top of the head to the waist and from just beyond each shoulder. The placement of the sign can be used to add meaning, and sometimes moves outside the window. For example, signs relating to the ground or floor or low down on a person (e.g. "socks") would be signed at waist level or at the bottom of the signing window. Signs relating to the sky or ceiling would be signed at the height or at the top of the signing window.

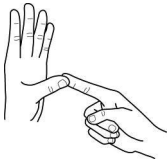
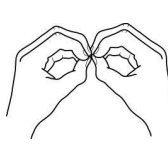
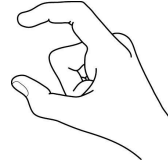
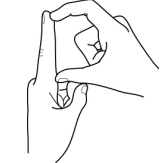
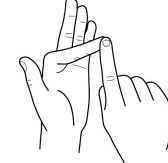
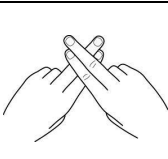
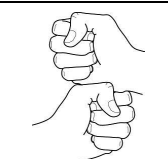

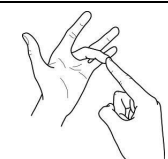
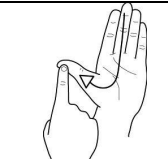
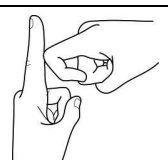
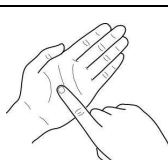
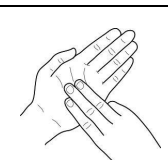
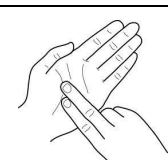
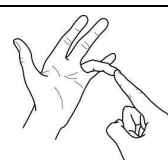
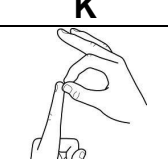
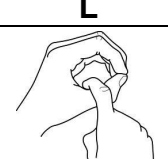
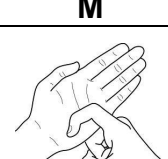
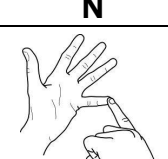
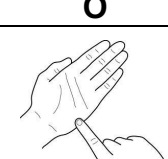
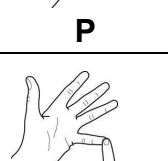
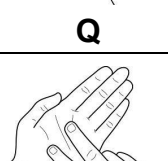
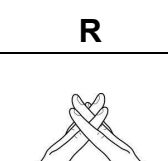
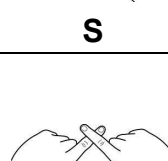
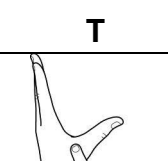
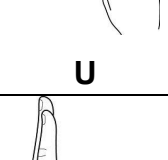
All of the illustrations in all of the SIGNALONG manuals are performed by a right-handed signer. Because we know that there are left and right-handed signers we refer to the "working hand" and "supporting hand" – REMEMBER YOU NEED TO BE CONSISTENT, this avoids confusion and gives a point of focus to the person you are signing to.



PARTS OF THE HAND



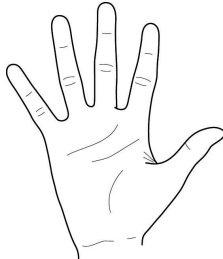
SIGNALONG LETTER SHAPES – based on BSL

 <p>A</p>	 <p>B</p>	 <p>C</p>	 <p>D</p>	 <p>E</p>
 <p>F</p>	 <p>G</p>	 <p>H</p>	 <p>I</p>	 <p>J</p>
 <p>K</p>	 <p>L</p>	 <p>M</p>	 <p>N</p>	 <p>O</p>
 <p>P</p>	 <p>Q</p>	 <p>R</p>	 <p>S</p>	 <p>T</p>
 <p>U</p>	 <p>V</p>	 <p>W</p>	 <p>X</p>	 <p>Y</p>
 <p>Z</p>				

BASIC HANDSHAPES



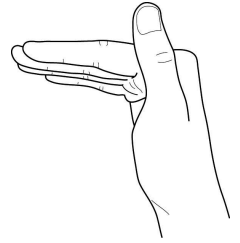
FLAT HAND



OPEN HAND



CLAWED HAND



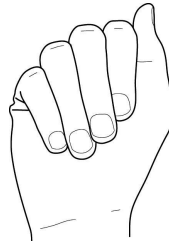
BENT HAND



CUPPED HAND



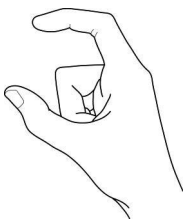
BUNCHED HAND



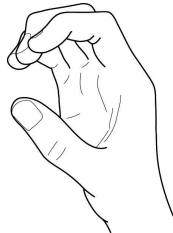
CLOSED HAND



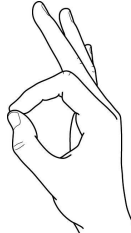
FIST HAND



"C" HAND



FULL "C" HAND



"O" HAND



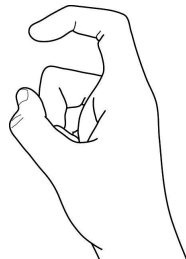
FULL "O" HAND



"M" HAND



"N" HAND



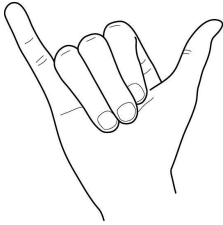
"R" HAND



"V" HAND

The last six shapes are based on the RIGHT handshape of British two-handed fingerspelling, but could also apply to the left hand. All shapes can be further clarified, eg: working hand slightly bent, or loosely cupped etc. If a finger is described as extended it is generally understood that the rest of the hand is closed.

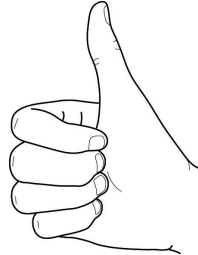
ADDITIONAL HANDSHAPES



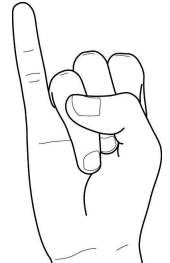
"Y" HAND



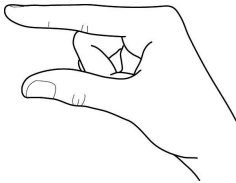
INDEX HAND



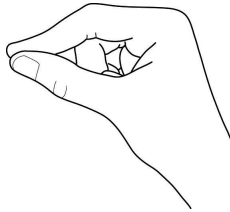
THUMB HAND



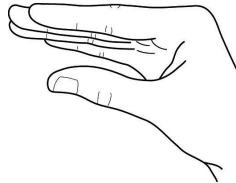
LITTLE FINGER
HAND



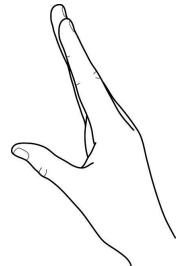
OPEN PINCHED
HAND



CLOSED PINCHED
HAND



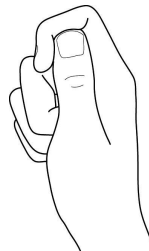
PARALLEL BENT
HAND



PARALLEL FLAT
HAND



"L" HAND



TUCKED HAND

ORIENTATION

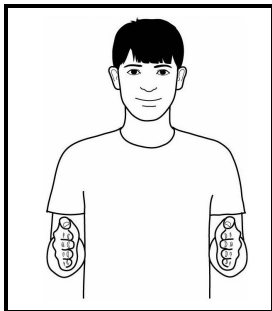
Orientation is a combination of PALMS FACING and HANDS POINTING.

PALMS FACING

There are SIX directions that the palms can face, these are palms facing:

- IN - face the opposite side of the signing window
- OUT - face their own side of the signing window
- UP - face the top of the signing window
- DOWN - face the bottom of the signing window
- FORWARD - face ahead of signer
- BACK - face towards behind the signer

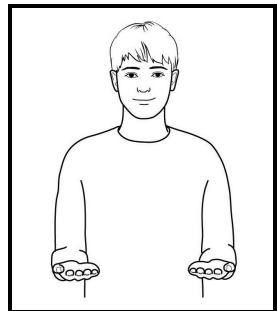
Remember, this is where PALM is facing, and is irrespective of the handshape, if in doubt check using a flat hand before forming the hand shape for the sign.



PALMS IN



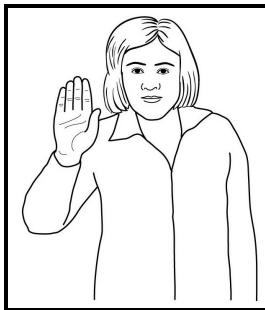
PALMS OUT



PALMS UP



PALMS DOWN



PALM FORWARD



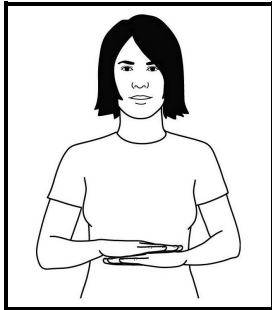
PALMS BACK

HANDS POINTING

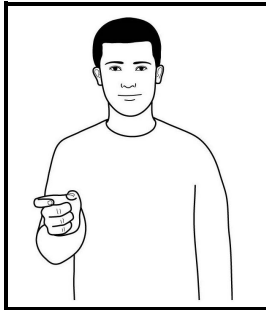
There are SIX directions that the hands can point, these are hands pointing:

- IN - points to the opposite side of the signing window
- OUT - points to their own side of the signing window
- UP - points to the top of the signing window or ceiling
- DOWN - points to the bottom of the signing window or floor
- FORWARD - points to ahead of the signer
- BACK - points to towards behind the signer

Remember, this is where the **HAND** is pointing (from the wrist or heel of the hand to the palm knuckles), **NOT THE FINGERS**, and is irrespective of the handshape, if in doubt check using a flat hand before forming the handshape for the sign.



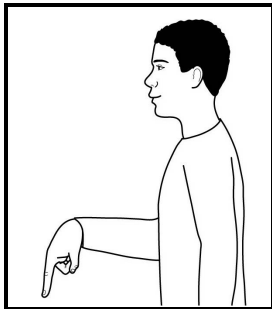
POINTING IN



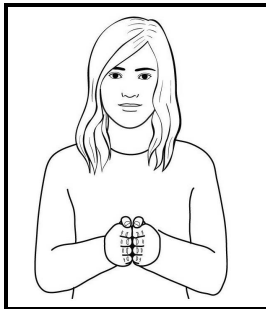
POINTING OUT



POINTING UP



POINTING DOWN



POINTING FORWARD



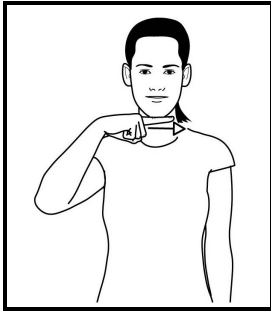
POINTING BACK

Diagonals

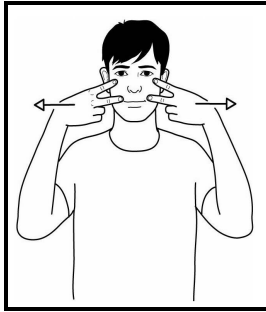
Sometimes an orientation falls between two planes and is described as a diagonal, with a "/" denoting the planes it lies between.

MOVEMENT

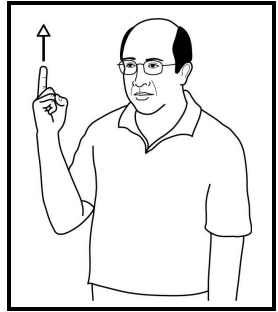
Once the handshape and orientation have been described, the sign can sometimes move. Movement can take place in the same six directions that the palms face and the hands point.



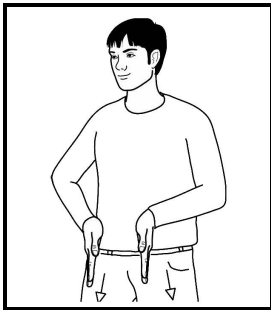
MOVEMENT IN



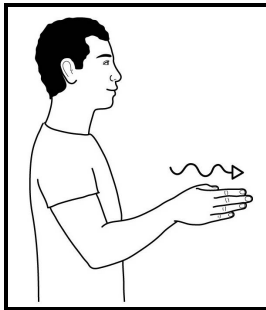
MOVEMENT OUT



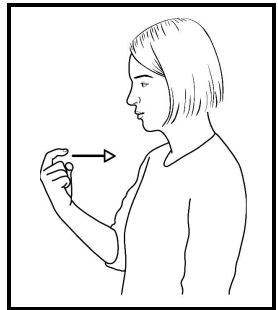
MOVEMENT UP



MOVEMENT DOWN

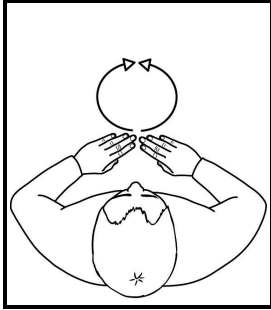


**MOVEMENT
FORWARD**

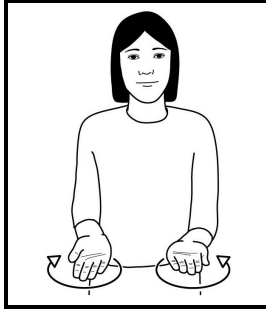


MOVEMENT BACK

CIRCLING



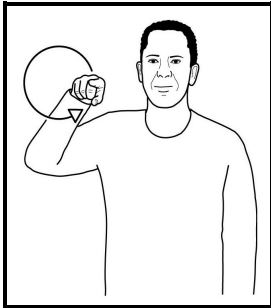
**CIRCLING IN
(HORIZONTAL)**



**CIRCLING OUT
(HORIZONTAL)**



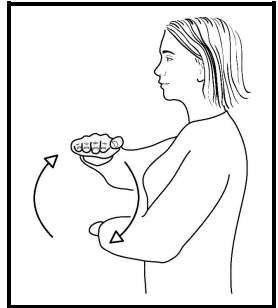
**CIRCLING IN
(VERTICAL)**



**CIRCLING OUT
(VERTICAL)**



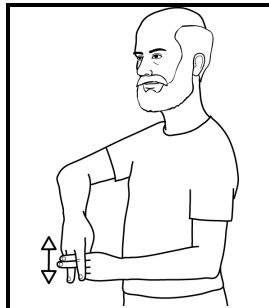
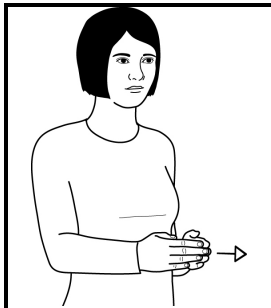
CIRCLING FORWARD



CIRCLING BACK

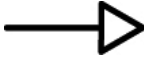
FORMATION

A formation is when two hands, not necessarily in the same shape or orientation, move as though fixed together.



GUIDE TO MOVEMENT SYMBOLS

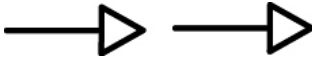
basic arrow to show direction of movement



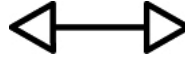
hand moves backwards and forwards



broken movement



movement in one direction and then the other



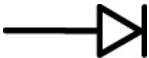
repeated movement



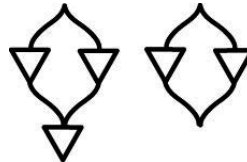
hands move apart



sign ends with stress



hands or fingers open and then close



open shape closes



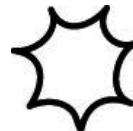
small repeated movements



closed shape opens



contact on point drawn





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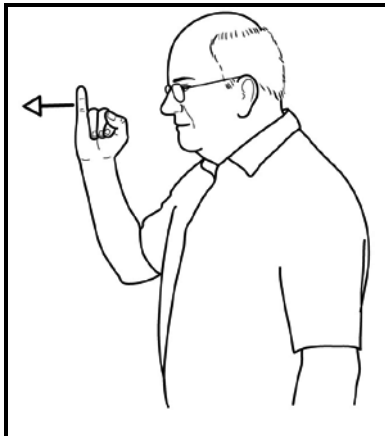
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AGAIN



Working "V" hand (palm in, pointing forward) drops down from wrist.

BAD / NAUGHTY



Working little finger hand (palm in, pointing up) held up, moves forwards slightly.

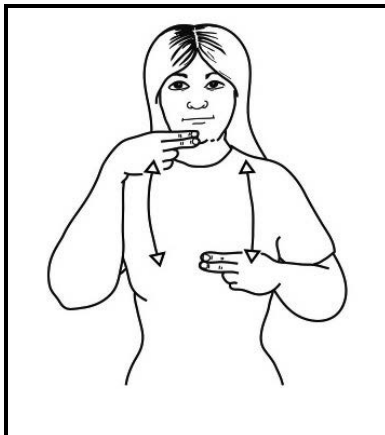
Directional sign.

BREAK, TO



Fists together (palms down, pointing forward) twist sharply to palms in.

DINNER



"N" hands (palms back, pointing in) move alternately to mouth.

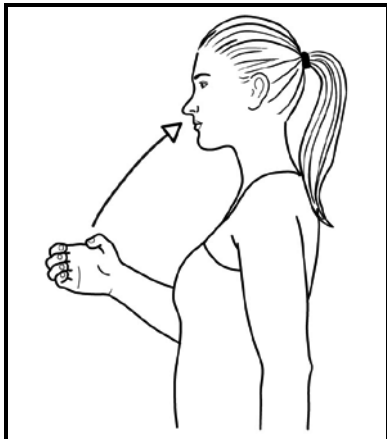
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DRINK



Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

Working full "C" hand (palm in, pointing forward) moves up to mouth turning to point up.

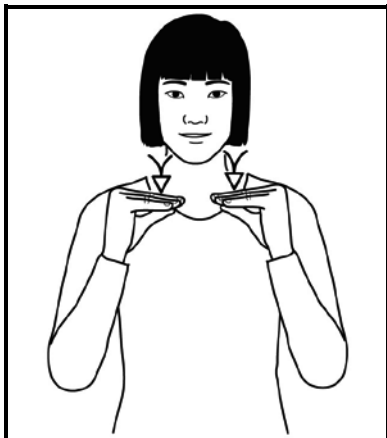
EAT



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Working bunched hand (palm back, pointing up) taps twice at working side of mouth.

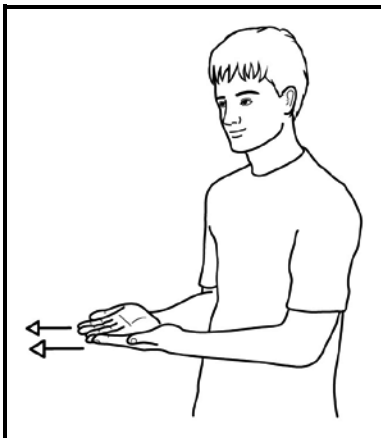
FINISHED



Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

Open hands (palms in, pointing up) fingers move sharply down on to thumbs.

GIVE



Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

Flat hands (palms up, pointing forward) move towards receiver. "Give me": hands move back to signer, fingertips turn to body (palms up, pointing back).

Directional sign.

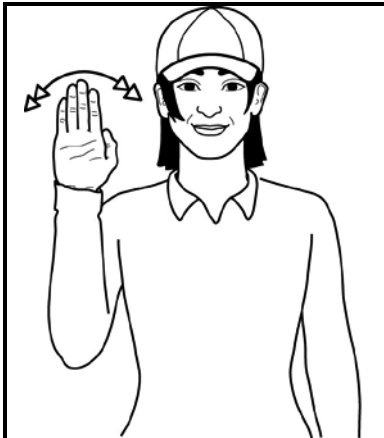
GOOD



Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

Working thumb hand (palm back, pointing in) held up in front of body.
Directional sign.

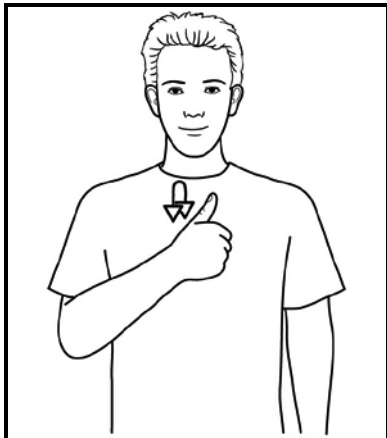
GOODBYE



Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

Working flat hand (palm forward, pointing up) waves twice.

HELLO



Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

Working thumb hand (palm back, pointing in) held up in front of body, twists backwards and forwards at wrist.
Directional sign.

I / ME



Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

Working index hand points back to chest.

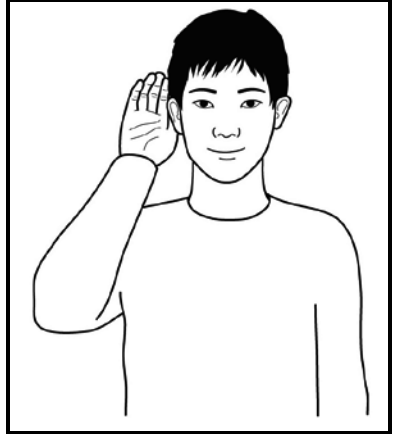
LIKE, TO



Working flat hand (palm back, pointing in/up) taps supporting side of upper chest twice.

Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

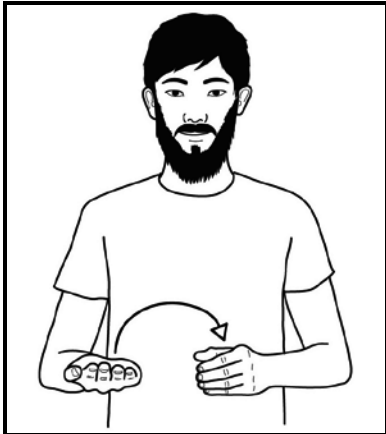
LISTEN, TO



Working cupped hand (palm forward, pointing up) behind ear.

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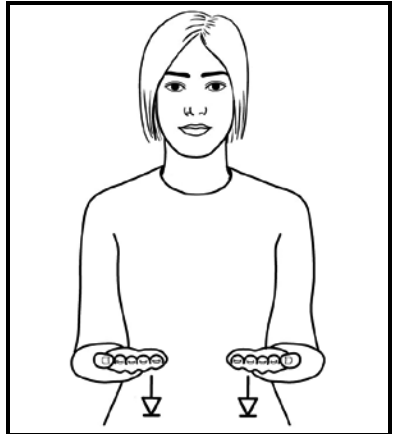
MORE



Working flat hand (palm up, pointing forward) moves and turns over onto supporting full "C" hand (palm in, pointing forward).

Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

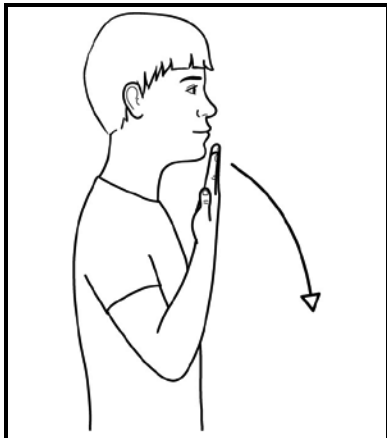
NOW



Flat hands (palms up, pointing forward) move down sharply.

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PLEASE



Working flat hand (palm back, pointing up) fingers in front of bottom lip, drops forward and down (palm up, pointing forward).

Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

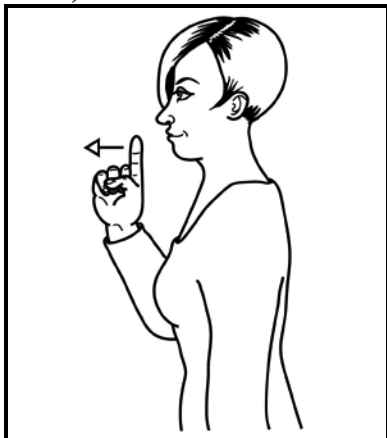
QUICK



Working extended index (palm down, pointing forward/in) strikes supporting index (palm down, pointing forward/in) and moves up sharply.

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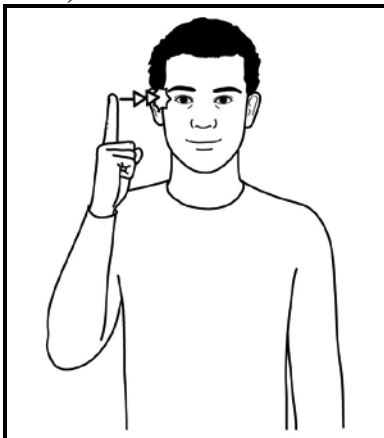
SAY, TO



Working index hand (palm in, pointing up) moves forwards from lips.

Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

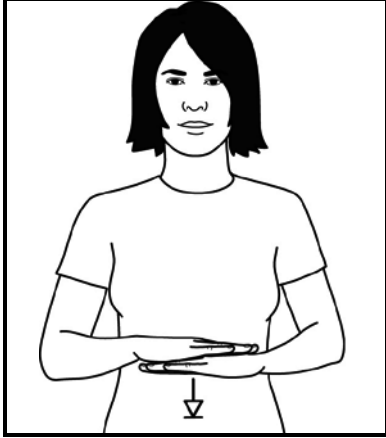
SEE, TO



Working index (palm in, pointing up) taps at side of eye twice.

Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

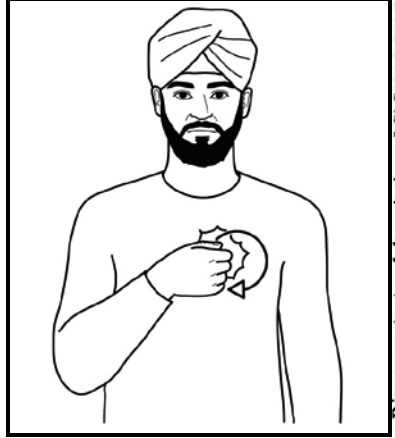
SIT, TO



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Flat hands (palms down, pointing in) working hand on top, make short sharp downward movement.

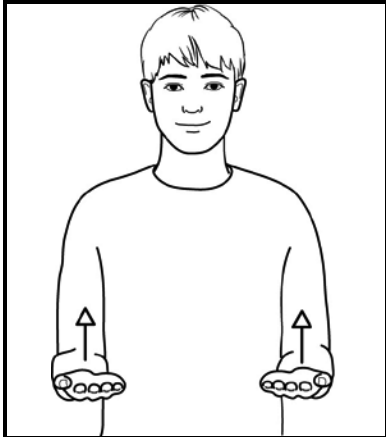
SORRY



Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

Working closed hand (palm back, pointing in) moves in small inward circle against chest. Use appropriate facial expression.

STAND, TO



Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

Flat hands (palms up, pointing forward) make small movement upwards.

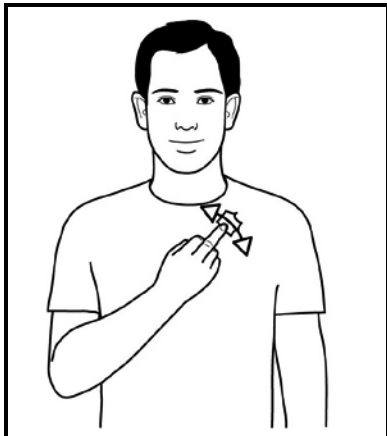
THANK YOU



Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

Working flat hand (palm back, pointing up) fingers in front of bottom lip, makes a short forward movement.

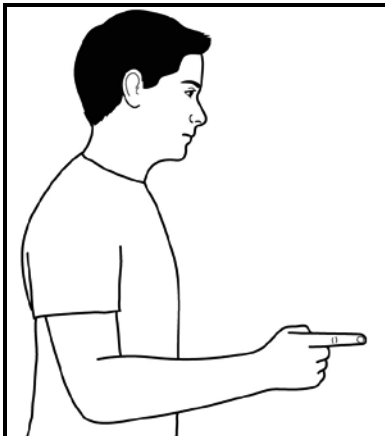
TOILET



Extended middle finger of working hand (palm back, pointing in/up) brushes up and down against supporting side of upper chest.

Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

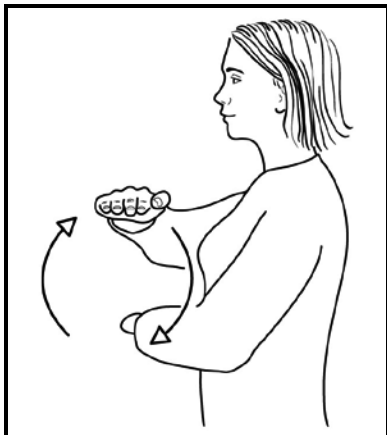
YOU



Working index hand (palm in, pointing forward) indicates person.
Directional sign.

Diagrams, text and descriptions ©SIGNALONG

WAIT



Flat hands (palms down, pointing in) working hand above, make alternate slow backward circles.

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