1 SIGN PHONOLGY

Phonology is sign patterns
Sign patterns are made with: handshape, placement, movement, direction, orientation and non-manual features (nmf)

CONTENTS

Handshapes 2
Placement 4
Movement 7
Direction 10
Orientation 12
Non Manual Features 13
**Handshapes for People and Objects**

Handshape indicates who or what is the topic of conversation. Certain Handshapes that represent people, parts of the body and objects are known as CLASSIFIERS AND PROFORMS.

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERSON, BOSS</td>
<td>Index finger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FACE-TO-FACE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIM, HER, IT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEOPLE, DRESS</td>
<td>Full hand digits apart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISLIKE, FREE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEGS, VIDEO, AGAIN</td>
<td>Index and middle fingers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(fingers downwards)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EYES, GLASSES</td>
<td>Index and middle finger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOTH</td>
<td>slightly apart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VEHICLE, FISH, MIRROR</td>
<td>Flat hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIKE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELEPHONE</td>
<td>Thumb and little finger up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AEROPLANE, KETTLE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOBILE, OURS, MINE</td>
<td>Fist shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHURCH, COLD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small round objects</td>
<td>‘O’ with thumb and index finger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. NEEDLE, BUTTON, COIN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUP, CRISPS, MATCH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAKE, BUILDING, PLACE, ROCK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLOUDY</td>
<td>Claw shape</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are 3 types of classifiers:

**Entity** – the whole (entire) hand
Used to represent flat objects, e.g. VEHICLE, TABLE, BOOK, SHEET-OF-PAPER

**Handling** – shape used to pick up or handle something
e.g. used for OPEN-JAR, carrying a thick book
PEN, NEEDLE, PICK-UP-CUP

**Tracing** – trace the shape of an object e.g. one finger
PICTURE, ROOM; two fingers CORRIDOR, RIVER

References
London pages 46 - 48

**Placement**
The important area for signing is the space on and in front of the body, from just below the waist to just above the head and from just outside the left side of the head shoulder and arm to the right head, shoulder and arm. Placement must be used for pointing, eye gaze and body shift.

**POINTING AND REFERENTS**
Handshapes are used to refer to people, animals and objects as pronouns are used in English. Pointing is used quite frequently to show where a person has been placed

![Diagram of sign language gestures for LADY, WALK, and FALL-OVER.](image)

A Lady was walking along and suddenly fell over

![Diagram of sign language gestures for GIRL, RICH, and LONDON.](image)

That girl is rich.

![Diagram of sign language gestures for PEOPLE, LIVE, and HOW-MANY.](image)

How many people live in London?

Reference
EYE GAZE

1. Look upwards for God/heaven, sun, rainbow; down to floor, ground

2. Locate people/things in space for he/she, you, ball in air

3. Indicate role shift for looking at conversational partner or character

4. Turntake, look at conversational partner or a group member for feedback

5. Look to the side to indicate past, looking ahead or down to indicate the present, looking up for the future

ROLE SHIFT
(Head and body movement)

The signer acts as the adult and the baby (2 role shifts)

The Baby

The signer shows the characters in the picture by moving head and body of the lady, cat and dog in the picture (3 role shifts).

The Cat and Dog

Signer becomes cat; bends as lady feeding cat; cat eats from bowl.

Signer becomes dog looks at food

Picture the baby,  Picture this by Karen Denis and Jim Hay. Picture cat and dog from CACDP.
**Movement**

Information is given in the speed of movement: **aspect** shows the timing of events; **manner** the intensity and how things are done.

**ASPECT**

Aspect is the timing of events (tenses in English).

Something happening for a long time; repeat the sign:

- LOOK-FOR-A-LONG-TIME
- WAIT-FOR-A-LONG-TIME

Separate signs show aspect:

- OFTEN
- ALWAYS
- FREQUENTLY
- NORMALLY

- BEEN
- EAT…
  - I have eaten
- WORK
  - I have finished work

Repetition fast or slow e.g. REMIND/BE- REMINDED:

- REMIND- YOU
- REMIND-YOU-AGAIN
- REMIND-ME
- REMIND-ME-AGAIN
Pace of sign, fast or slow holding sign e.g. LOOK, LOOK-HARD

Sign made smoothly and interrupted with fast sign e.g. THINK

Sign can change and increase in speed e.g. SWIM, FAST, FASTER

Signs used to show completion e.g. BEEN EAT WORK FINISHED

References

MANNER
In BSL how things are done is known as MANNER. Intensity and degree is shown in manner. For example: how cheerfully, miserably, humorously, confidently or secretly. Variation of speed of movement is used.

Examples of manner are:

LIKE
LIKE (point)
I like him/her/it

THINK
THINK-HARD

CYCLE
CYCLE-FAST

RESEARCH
RESEARCH-FOR-AGES

LOOK-FOR-A-LONG-TIME
WAIT-FOR-A-LONG-TIME

GOOD (nod yes)
BORING (nod no)
BUSY (puff cheeks)

Reference
Cambridge University Press chapter 7 pp 124 – 125
The direction in which a sign moves carries meaning: in time and verbs. There are timelines that symbolise past, present and future; there are verbs that show how and where actions take place.

**TIME LINES**

**Time Line A:** Backwards over shoulder for past or front of hand forward for past. Frontwards for future

- **LONG-TIME-AGO**
- **RECENTLY**
- **FUTURE**

**Time Line B:** Along the arm

- **LAST-WEEK**
- **NEXT-WEEK**
- **LONG-TIME**

**Time Line C:** In front of the body

- **CONTINUE**
- **NOW**
- **FOREVER**

**Time Line D:**

- **GROW-UP**
AGREEMENT/DIRECTIONAL VERBS

HELP-ME

HELP-YOU

LOOK-AT-ME

LOOK-AT-YOU

RAINBOW LOOK-UP

DOG LOOK-DOWN

PAY-ME

PAY-YOU

TELL-ME

TELL- Them
Orientation
This relates to the direction of the palm and fingertips, whether the palm is up, down, facing left or right. Orientation carries information.

For example:

TOMORROW  YESTERDAY  MINE  HIS/HERS

ME  YOU  LOOK-AT-YOU  LOOK-AT-ME

LIBRARY  WHERE?  FLOOR  TURN-LEFT

Reference
Non-Manual Features

Manual means using hands. Non Manual Features (NMF) means using face and body. Appropriate facial expression must accompany signs to make them meaningful. When answering with ‘yes’ or ‘no’, the nod or shake of head includes a matching smile or screwed nose.

When asking questions, use the appropriate facial expression, usually with eyebrows furrowed when the answer is not known and eyebrows raised if the answer us expected such as asking a child, ‘where’s mummy’ when mother is in the room.

Facial expressions show the mood or attitude of the signer

MOOD

MOOD shows the attitude of the signer.
Examples of mood are:

You?  I doubt it  Not happy about it  Not pleasant

SURE  NOT SURE  KNOW  DON’T KNOW

Like very much (one hand)  Like very much (two hands)

Don’t like very much

References:
Cambridge University Press chapter 7 pp 125 – 126

Notes on phonology

Phonology means the way a language is produced. **Spoken languages** are produced using speech organs: larynx/voice box, air passes from lungs to vocal cords to mouth where tongue and lips move to make different frequencies of air waves producing vowels and consonants in sound sequence. The vibrating air/sounds are received by the ears passing from outer to middle to inner ear and then to the brain. The sounds are processed in the brain and recognised as speech and language with meaning. **Sign languages** are produced using: hands which can be orientated palms up, down, sideways; body movements; and facial movements to form signs which move simultaneously (not in sequence as sound) in space. The signs are conveyed through light waves, received by the eyes, through the cornea, pupil, lens and iris to the retina which processes light and colour, at the back of the eye. The images which are 3 dimensional pass to the brain, are processed in the brain and recognised as visual patterns with meaning.

These handouts are designed by Sandra Dowe and Linda Squelch and are used by Linda for teaching British Sign Language at level 3 and can be found on the Deaf Support website [www.deafsupport.org.uk](http://www.deafsupport.org.uk) click on ‘resources’

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