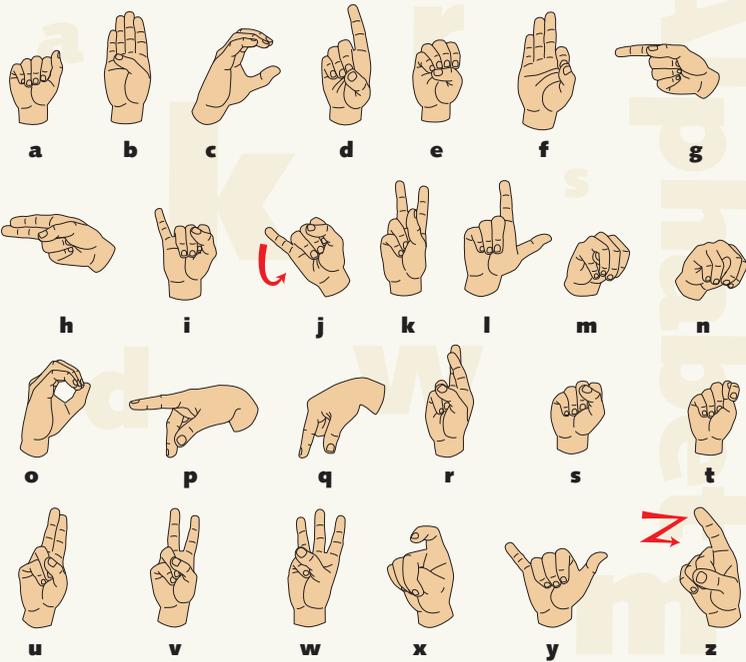




## ALPHABET



## THE CONDITION

- Hand one writes with is the dominant hand
- Other hand is passive
- **Dominance Condition:** Passive hand in unmarked shape when signing
- **Symmetry Condition:** Both hands in same shape moving alternately or in the same direction



Unmarked Handshapes

## NAME SIGNS

- Date back to 19th century
- Used for identification
- **Arbitrary Name Signs (ANS)**
  - Uses manual alphabet (can be two letters - must be signed with double motion)
  - Sign located on body or in front of signer
  - Short/double letter names may not have name signs
- **Descriptive Name Signs (DNS)**
  - Depict information about personality/physical characteristics
  - Signed with double movement
  - Proper names need to be introduced before a name sign is used

## LEARNING ASL

### GENERAL RULES

- **Verbs** have a single motion
- Verbs are not mouthed; mouth movement is used to express adjectives and adverbs
- **Nouns** have a double motion
- **Adjectives** can be incorporated into the noun
- When a noun acts as an adjective, the word order does not change; for example: grass skirt, health chart, fruit juice
- **Adverbs** can be incorporated into the verb
- The adverb will always answer the question of how the verb was performed
- ASL is high contextual; the person doing the action needs to be identified--an explanation of how the subject and circumstances come together before the action (verb) occurs
- English is low contextual - a prior knowledge of the subject is not necessary; therefore, English can be spoken in a passive tense while ASL is in an active tense
- Nouns are signed with a **double motion** (tapped twice); verbs are signed with a **single - motion**; nouns are usually "mouthed" or pronounced; verbs are not. Some examples:



Chair



Sit

### AGENTS

- To personify a sign, add an **agent** after the sign
- Personification is done by sliding the heel of the hands down the side of the body from chest to waist
- Also known as a marker



Preach + Agent = preacher



Drive + Agent = Driver



Plane



Fly



Store



Sell



Agent



Teach + Agent = Teacher



Fly + Agent = Pilot

### VERBS

- In ASL, verbs take on different functions
- For example, with multidirectional verbs, the sign is made toward the direction of the referent:



We were defeated



We defeated them

### LOCATIVE VERBS

The action is signed on the location of the referent



Hurt left arm



Standing on surface

# LEARNING ASL CONT.

## RECIPROCAL VERBS

The signer uses both hands in the same hand shape; one hand represents the signer while the other hand represents the addressee



Look at each other



Exchange info

## NEGATION AND AFFIRMATION

- When the sign "not" is put at the end of a sentence, negation is added
- Sometimes the head shaking "no" also will be signed with "not"
- Affirmation is usually done with the signer making a statement then signing "will" at the end of the sentence
- The head nodding slightly backward and forward with the eyebrows raised are also appropriate nonmanual markers
- One can also sign "true" at the end of the sentence while using such non-manual markers as a head nod with tight lips (to emphasize a statement)



Not



True



Will

## SENTENCE STRUCTURE

There are several sentence structure types in ASL. Here are a few:

- Topic Comment**  
ASL is structured by the order in which an event occurred; the topic is mentioned first, the subject of the event, then a comment about the topic/subject
- Yes/No Question**  
Simple yes/no questions do not require ASL word order; however, if the yes/no question requires explanation before a yes/no response, ASL word order and sequence of events is needed
- The appropriate physical information is head tilted forward, shoulders raised, and eyebrows up; the eyes will naturally open more than usual
- Questions Seeking Information**  
Questions which ask who, what, when, where, why and how are asked at the beginning and end of the sentence
- There will usually be a "hold" (pause) after the question at the end of the sentence--this is done for emphasis
- The head is tilted to the side, eyebrows down and close together

- If the signer is asking a rhetorical question, the head will be tilted to the side or forward, eyebrows up
- Sometimes it takes a more fluent signer to understand that the question is rhetorical

### Time Indicator Sentences

- These sentences start with time verbs
- If time is not signed at the beginning of the sentence, it should be placed as close to the subject as possible (in ASL the subject will be at the beginning of the sentence)
- Some **time adverbs** are: now, soon, tomorrow, next year, last summer and recently
- The time indicator will allow the addressee to understand if the sentence is past, present, or future

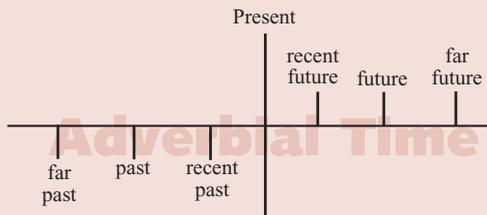
### Conditional Sentences

- Like the topic/comment, conditional sentences are stated in two parts
- Conditional sentences must have the condition first
- The comment will always be about the referent in the condition (the first part)
- Generally, conditional sentences are futuristic
- When signing the condition, eyebrows are raised; they will be lowered (with comment about the condition)

### Simple Sentence Structure

- This short sentence can use any word order
- A simple sentence will have a subject (referent) and verb (action concerning the referent)

### Adverbial Time Indicators



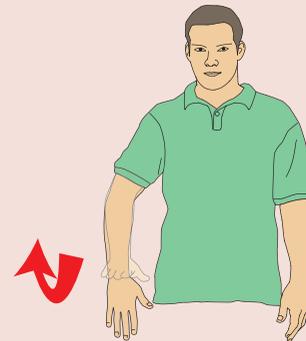
- In ASL, adverbial time indicators are placed at the beginning of the sentence, or as close to the subject as possible
- In English, adverbs are placed in any part of the sentence
- In ASL, time indicators qualify (measure) time expected or time expired
- Signs behind the body refer to the past
- Signs directly in front of the body refer to the present, today or now
- Signs extended in front of the signer refer to the future; like the signs which are extended behind the body for the past, the extension of the arm determines the degree of how far past or how far into the future
- Facial expression will assist the time indicator
- Finish/Not Yet**  
"Finish" allows the addressee to understand the information is past tense
  - It is also signed when joking, meaning "enough already"
  - It is also signed in admonishment, meaning "stop it"
  - Context and facial expression will determine the signer's intention
  - "Finish" can be placed at the beginning or end of a sentence



Finish

- "Not yet" refers to action that has not taken place
  - The intended action is signed, then "not yet" is stated
  - It is placed at the end of the sentence

- It is signed with the head slightly shaking "no" and the mouth is usually opened



Not yet

### Temporal Aspect

- Found in the predicate of a sentence, as verbs come after the noun in ASL
- Tells how the action is performed
- Also explains how the action is signed in reference to time



Look at- over time



Look at- regularity



Look at- long time



Look at- repeatedly

### Indexing

- Pronouns in ASL can be signed by pointing to a referent; this is also called indexing
- Indexing can be done with the finger, a head nod, or eye gazing (visual indexing)

### Possessive Pronouns

- Singular
  - To express possessive pronouns, an open hand toward the referent will indicate *his, hers*
  - A hand on one's chest will indicate *mine*
- Plural possessive is shown with the open hand toward one referent; the hand makes a sweeping motion inclusive of all referents



Indexing



Singular



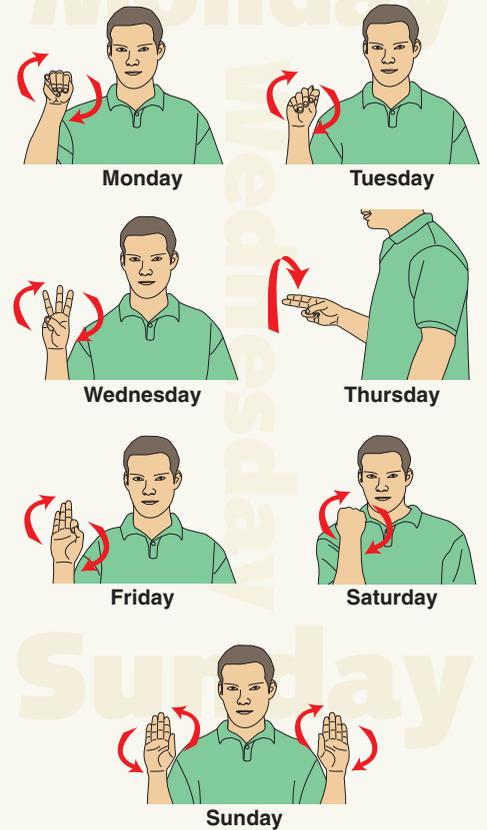
Plural

- ♦ As in English, a pronoun in ASL requires a noun to be stated before a pronoun can be used
- **Loan Signs**
  - ♦ All languages "borrow" from each other; loan signs are words borrowed from English
  - ♦ In ASL, they are usually two letters: the first and last
    - There is usually a distinct hand movement for words that are borrowed and have more than two letters
    - For example, "early" is signed in a circular motion; "style" is signed in an up/down motion
- **Classifiers**
  - ♦ Express and represent descriptive qualities of nouns (referents); their shapes, sizes, degree of color, actions, locations in space and whether they are singular or plural content
  - ♦ There are certain signs that are used to establish a classifier's discourse
  - ♦ Before using a classifier, a subject noun must be identified; like pronouns need a referent
  - ♦ Classifiers are signed with the passive hand; the action the classifier encounters with the verb is signed with the dominant hand
  - ♦ If the classifier is singular and describing the shape or size, the referent will be in close proximity
  - ♦ Plural classifiers require both hands
  - ♦ To show random order, alternating movement of the hands is necessary
  - ♦ To show an orderly arrangement, the passive hand is stationary while the dominant hand provides the movement and pluralization by moving in a linear fashion

- Moving outward from the passive hand (in the same hand shape), the dominant hand indicates rows of the referent
- After the referents have been established, the signer can continue the discourse
- **Non-Manual Markers**
  - ♦ Facial grammar, body language, and eye contact contribute to well over 50% of sign language expressed by a fluent signer
  - ♦ Fluent signers also tend to look at the facial, throat and shoulder areas when watching other signers because much information can be expressed through these body parts
  - ♦ Facial expression covers many components in a message
    - It will indicate how an action is performed, how fast or slow it was performed, and if it was performed conscientiously or carelessly
    - It can indicate the degree in size, shape and color
  - ♦ Adverbs and adjectives can be expressed through facial expression
  - ♦ Eye contact has importance of its own; eye shifting, eye indexing, eyes wide open, eye gazing, eye squinting, or breaking eye contact all work together with body language and head movement to set up referents of people and objects in a spatial location
  - ♦ Body language is equally important; tilting the head, raising the shoulders, and body shifting are all indications of change in a sentence or who is being talked about

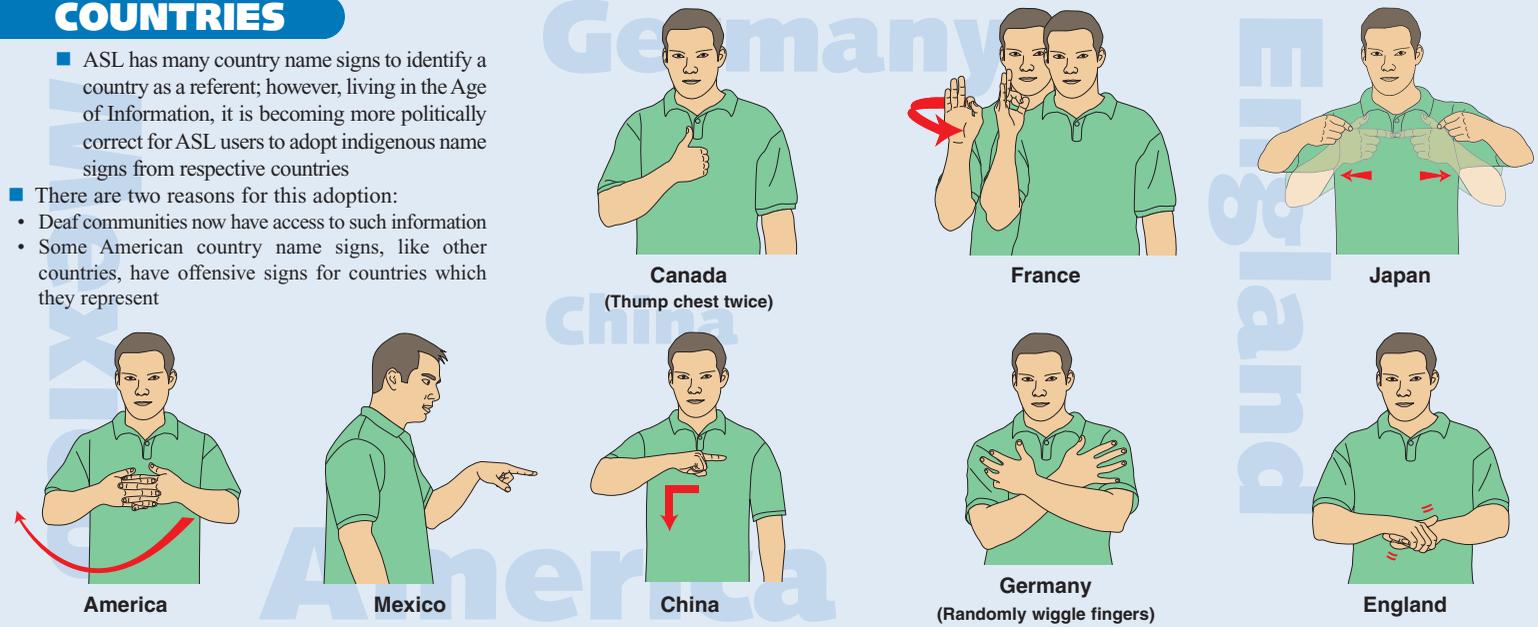
**WEEKDAYS**

■ Days of the Week- Act as time indicators and should be placed at the beginning of the sentence



**COUNTRIES**

- ASL has many country name signs to identify a country as a referent; however, living in the Age of Information, it is becoming more politically correct for ASL users to adopt indigenous name signs from respective countries
- There are two reasons for this adoption:
  - Deaf communities now have access to such information
  - Some American country name signs, like other countries, have offensive signs for countries which they represent



**COLORS**

- The depth of color can be incorporated into the noun by facial expression
  - Color will come after the referent it is describing



**COLORS**



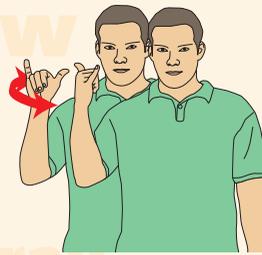
Pink



Purple



Gray



Yellow



Brown



Gold

**NUMBERS AND SPORTS**

**NUMBERS 1 - 20**

- In the numerical system, one through five are signed with the palm facing the signer
- Six through ten are signed with the palm facing the addressee
- Eleven through fifteen are signed with the palm facing the signer
- Sixteen through nineteen are signed: ten, six; ten, seven; ten, eight; ten, nine
- Twenty is signed with the index finger and the thumb tapping two times



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



13



14



15



16



17



18



19



20

**SPORTS SIGNS**

Sports signs are iconic (they look like what they represent); however, they can be used in the subject



Football



Wrestling



Baseball



Tennis



Golf



Boxing



Basketball



Cycling



Bowling



Swimming

**CREDITS**

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**NOTE TO STUDENTS**

This **QuickStudy** guide is an outline of the major topics taught in American Sign Language courses. Keep it handy as a quick reference source in the classroom, while doing homework, and as a memory refresher when reviewing prior to exams. Due to its condensed format, use it as an ASL guide, but not as a replacement for assigned class work.

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