



Celebrating Inclusive Arts

Singing & Signing
Guidance Notes

www.aamedia.org.uk



Accessible Arts & Media Singing and Signing Guidance Notes

1) Key to Singing and Signing levels

This is the key that you will find used in the learning guide that accompanies each signed song

1.1 Signing

- **Level 1:** a few signs, lots of repetition and a definite entry level for signing
- **Level 2:** a greater range of signs, not too difficult to sign and at a reasonable speed of signing
- **Level 3:** a wider range of signs, can contain more difficult signs and faster speed of signing.

1.2 Singing

- **Level 1:** melody falls within a limited range, lies easily in the voice and mostly step-wise movement of pitches.
- **Level 2:** melody over a wider range, with more leaps of intervals, but still reasonably comfortable to sing.
- **Level 3:** more challenging intervals and pitching, some chromaticism, faster words and pitch changes.

2) The Accessible Arts & Media approach to teaching Songs and Signs

2.1 Warm ups

We have always considered warm ups a crucial part of the singing work at Accessible Arts & Media, and it is our experience that a good warm up generally leads to much better singing later on in the rehearsal or performance.

We always warm up 3 areas - our:

- 1 **Bodies** - a loosened and stretched body helps promote more effective and resonant singing and better flexibility.
- 2 **Voices** – also needs to be loosened up. One of most useful things to do to warm up the voice is to 'slide' around gently, from lower to higher pitches and vice versa.
- 3 **Hands** – in preparation for **signing** as it is such an important part of our work and we therefore feel that it is important to do a variety of different signing preparations at the beginning of sessions. At Accessible Arts & Media we have also written specific songs with a range of words that have signs using only one hand shape (e.g. signs with a flat hand, with a fist, etc)

It is important to do different types of warm ups so that participants don't become too used to doing the same thing each time (although groups do have their favourites!) and so that everybody is ready to get the best out of every session.

Themed Warm Ups

One of the types of warm ups we do a lot is a 'themed' warm up. As a group we take an idea or setting, such as 'the seaside', or 'getting up in the morning', and create a series of body movements and stretches, and voice preparations based on that theme.

We usually have a session leader and a participant up at the front to lead the warm ups. Sometimes, members of the group have written their own warm up, which they lead. We keep the warm up notes in our rehearsal folder, with signs, photos and words to prompt as needed.

2.2 Teaching Songs and Signs

Over the 20 years-experience we have had of running singing and signing projects, AAM has developed our own method of teaching singing and signing. This has been based on what we have learned throughout this time and what has worked best with the wide range of needs and abilities across our many projects.

Step 1) Signs

AAM leaders learn the signs initially away from the group before going over the signs individually, one at a time, with the group. Then we combine the signs phrase by phrase, building up slowly until we can go through a verse, a chorus, etc. We take time to get the hand shapes right, especially on more tricky, complicated signs. Our support workers, carers and the members themselves support each other to practice getting the signs right before learning the melody.

Step 2) Melody

Next, we teach the melody to a song in a similar way to the signs, starting with each phrase, then combining two phrases, etc, until we can sing a whole verse or chorus. We teach by call and echo, with the leader singing a phrase and the group singing it back. Again, we take time over this, and a phrase might need several repeats until people become familiar with it.

Step 3) Put the Signs and the Melody Together

When we are ready, we put the signs and the melody together, practicing slowly, phrase by phrase at first, until we feel that the group is ready to sing the section of the song we have learned to the backing track. When we are doing a song that has a fast backing track we use **Speedshifter** - a really useful online tool from ABRSM (the music examining board) that will allow you to slow the track down without changing the pitch while you are learning it. Speedshifter will also allow you to raise or lower the track by 1 ½ semi tones without affecting the speed, which can be a useful tool in rehearsals too. (See section 6 for a link to the ABRSM website where you can download Speedshifter).

Involving participant as leaders

As with warm ups, we consider it a very important aspect of our work to have members of the group up at the front helping to teach the signs and songs. This is an excellent way to build confidence and leadership skills in our members as well as promoting an extremely positive model of disability. Co-leaders work alongside the conductor/ leader to teach a particular song and they work with the same song each week, so that they become familiar with it as they teach. They will also co-lead the song in performances and outreach workshops. With careful planning and consideration we find ways to ensure that each participant has their time to shine within a project, which can be anything from leading a full song or warm up to doing a small solo, based on individual ability and experience.

Accessible Arts & Media has devised one of the first **Apprentice Workshop Leader Training Programmes** in the UK for adults with learning difficulties and disabilities, where the inclusive model mentioned above is further developed into a structured training programme. For more information go to the 'What We Do' tab on our website and click on the Apprentice Workshop Leader Programme.

3) Sign Supported Communication

At Accessible Arts & Media we place equal weighting on both the signing and singing. However, we recognise that some leaders using this resource

Accessible Arts & Media Singing & Signing Guidance Notes.

Diagrams, text and descriptions used with permission of The Signalong Group.

www.aamedia.org.uk

will be new to signing and we have therefore included the following information to help you.

Sign Supported Communication, as the name suggests, uses signs to enable those who experience difficulties expressing themselves verbally to communicate more easily. It follows the principals of Sign Supported English, takes its signs from British Sign Language (BSL) and uses the structure and grammar of the English spoken language. BSL, or any other national sign language, is a language in its own right; it has different structural and grammatical rules and users do not always speak and sign at the same time. Unlike BSL, Sign Supported English users always speak **and** sign

We use Sign Supported English (SSE), rather than BSL, because SSE is designed for the needs of children and adults with verbal communication difficulties. There are many different Sign Supported English sign providers. **Signalong** is our Signing Partner, who have kindly given their permission for us to use their sign drawings within these resources. For further copyright details go to section 6 below.

Just as spoken English has many different dialects; signs can also vary between sign providers and between regions in the country. Makaton is a very popular sign provider used by many schools. However, whilst many of the signs in SSE are the same, there are some variations. Whenever teaching signs to a group who use Sign Supported English, it is important to teach the signs that they already know, so changing a sign to suit the group is best practice. This might mean using signs from BSL or Makaton, for example if those are known by your group. At Accessible Arts & Media we always adapt our signs to suit the group we are working with and not the other way round.

4) Principles of Signing

- **Use the hand that is most comfortable to you when signing. This is also referred to as your 'working' hand;** if you are naturally right handed, your working hand will be your right hand and your left hand will be your 'supporting' hand. If the sign uses 2 hands, your working hand will be the 'moving' hand.
- **Always speak and sign.** Speak as you would normally, don't use exaggerated lip patterns as this distorts the lip movements, which will then make it harder for people who "read" your lips. The sign and the relevant spoken word should be placed at the same time.
- **Only sign the key words** in the sentence and speak and sign in the spoken English word order. Communicate at the appropriate level for the group

Accessible Arts & Media Singing & Signing Guidance Notes.

Diagrams, text and descriptions used with permission of The Signalong Group.

www.aamedia.org.uk

you're working with - appropriate language should be used to ensure the message is understood.

- **Some signs are directional** because more information can be given in a single sign about the context of that word. E.g. 'help' could mean, help me (the sign moves towards yourself); help you – (sign moves towards the person being offered the help); and it could also be circular, for 'help us'. The sign for help should move towards the person/s requiring the help.
- **The signs are used to help convey the meaning** of what is being communicated and it is important that the signs are formed correctly and clearly.
- **There are 4 aspects to producing a correct sign:**
 - 1 **Hand shape** - how the hands are formed, e.g. when your hand is flat with all of your fingers spread out, this is known as an 'open hand', or if create a fist and then extend your index finger, this is known as an 'index hand' shape.
 - 2 **Orientation**- How the hands are placed i.e. which direction/ position the palms face and hands point.
 - 3 **Placement** - where the hands are placed, i.e. where in the signing window should your hands be
 - 4 **Movement** - this is a change in any of the above- this could be the formation circling, or moving in a specific direction, or the hand shape changing from one shape to another.

Please refer to Section 7 for further details on 'producing a correct sign'.

- **Total Communication should be used whenever communicating.** It involves using all means of communication. For example, speech, signing, body language, facial expression, tone of voice, objects of reference and touch e.g. hand over hand.
- **Show the sign in a meaningful way**, e.g. use the correct body language and facial expression for the sign and word. When you communicate, always think from the point of view of the receiver. For example, if you are making the sign for 'happy', make sure you have a smile on your face!
- **Signing and total communication should be used across the whole session** to help improve access for a wide range of ability levels.

5) Further Information

Here are some websites where you will find more information on signing and singing, and some other web-based resources that you might find useful:

The Signalong Group - <http://www.signalong.org.uk/>

British Sign Language - <http://www.britishsignlanguage.com/>

Accessible Arts & Media Singing & Signing Guidance Notes.

Diagrams, text and descriptions used with permission of The Signalong Group.

www.aamedia.org.uk

Makaton - <http://www.makaton.org/>

Sing Up Song Bank - <http://www.singup.org/songbank>

Music and the Deaf - <http://matd.org.uk/signed-song/>

Drake Music - <http://www.drakemusic.org/dm-education/resources-courses/accessible-singing-resources-drake-music-sing>

Singing for the brain (an Alzheimer's Society project) - http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=760

Teaching Music - <http://www.teachingmusic.org.uk/home>

Sing and Sign (helping babies to communicate before speech) - <http://www.singandsign.com/>

Signing Hands - <http://www.singinghands.co.uk/>

Speedshifter - <http://gb.abrsm.org/en/exam-support/practice-tools-and-applications/speedshifter/>

6) Copyright Information

Accessible Arts & Media Singing and Signing Resources

These resources have been created to be used by people as easily as possible within a range of settings, and with the minimum of restrictions; however there is some copyright information that you need to be made aware of.

6.1 Music

Many of the songs have been written or devised by one of AAM's singing and signing groups ([Hands & Voices](#), [IMPs York and IMPs East Riding](#)) working alongside one of our Singing and Signing Leaders, including: **Chris Bartram, Mollie Taylor, Kath Fathers, Sam Dunkley and Kate Pearson**, who have also created the backing track to accompany their individual songs. Each track is used with their permission.

The vocal recordings have been sung by the following AAM staff or Music Leaders: **Chris Bartram, Rose Kent, Kath Fathers, Sam Dunkley and Mollie Taylor**. Most have been recorded by Aled Jones, AAM Sound Engineer at our base at Burton Stone Community Centre. Others have been recorded by Lee Hutchinson at AAM's former recording studio, Studio Cube, and by Sam Dunkley and Kate Pearson in their home studios.

The copyright in the contents of this resource bank is owned by AAM or its licensors. The text and images contained in this website belong to the AAM

and are protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights. You can print or download any part of these text and images for personal use only and any copies must retain the copyright or other intellectual property notices contained in the original material. Any other use could lead to action or breach of copyright. No part of this resource bank may be reproduced by any process, broadcast or re-sold without written permission from AAM.

6.2 Signs

Copyright for the signs is held by our signing partner, The Signalong Group. AAM has been granted permission to incorporate the lines drawings within each sign sheet through the licence we hold with Signalong. No copying or scanning is permitted without the express permission of The Signalong Group and wider circulation is by prior express permission. For more information contact Signalong:

<http://www.signalong.org.uk/contact/index.htm>

If you have any questions, require any additional training or support or you would like us to run a singing and signing taster workshop with your group to get you started contact:

info@aamedia.org.uk

01904 626965

 [facebook.com/aamedia.org.uk](https://www.facebook.com/aamedia.org.uk)

 @aamedia_org_uk

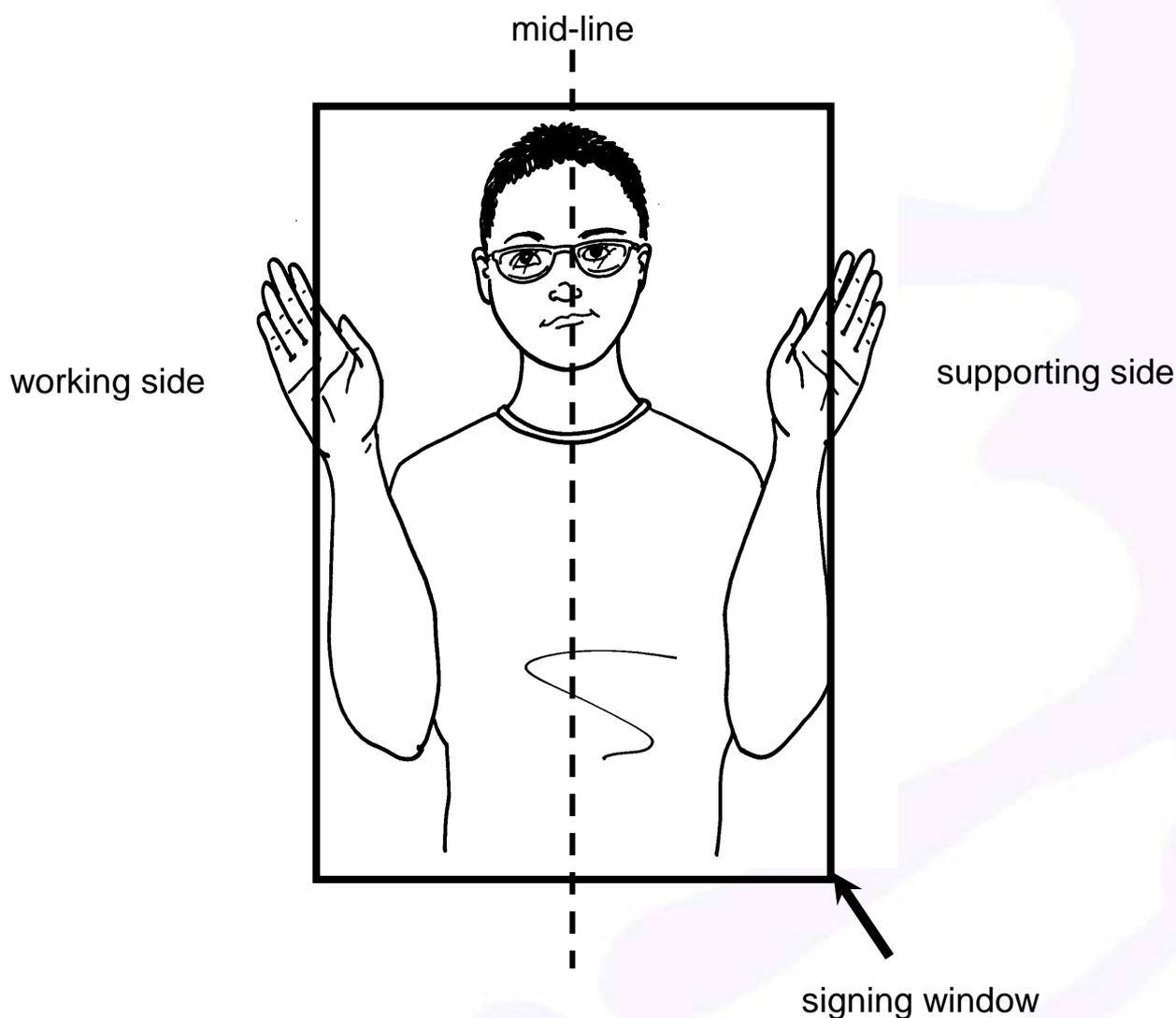
**Accessible Arts & Media, Burton Stone Community Centre
Evelyn Crescent, York, YO30 6DR**

7) More Information on Producing A Correct Sign

7.1 Placement

All signs start within in 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 (eg "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 head height or at the top of the signing window.

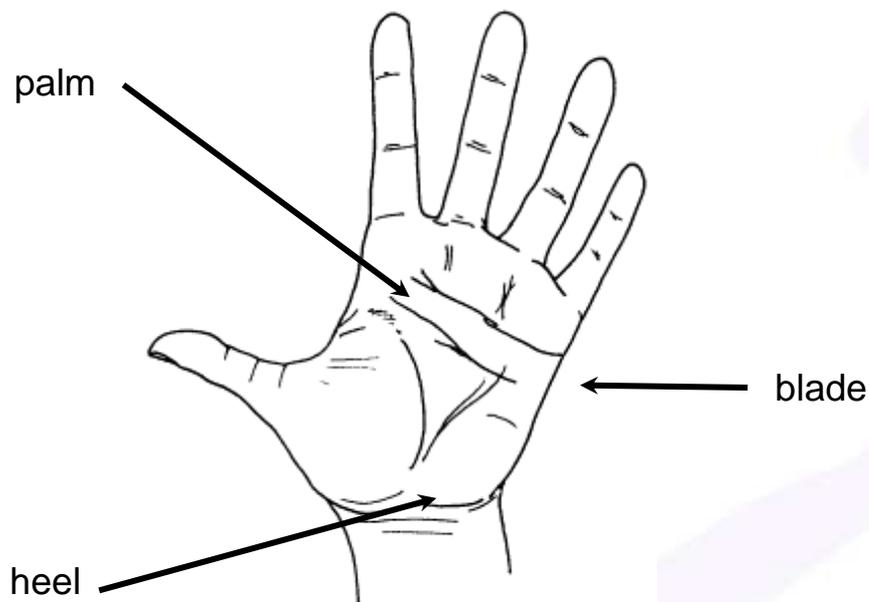
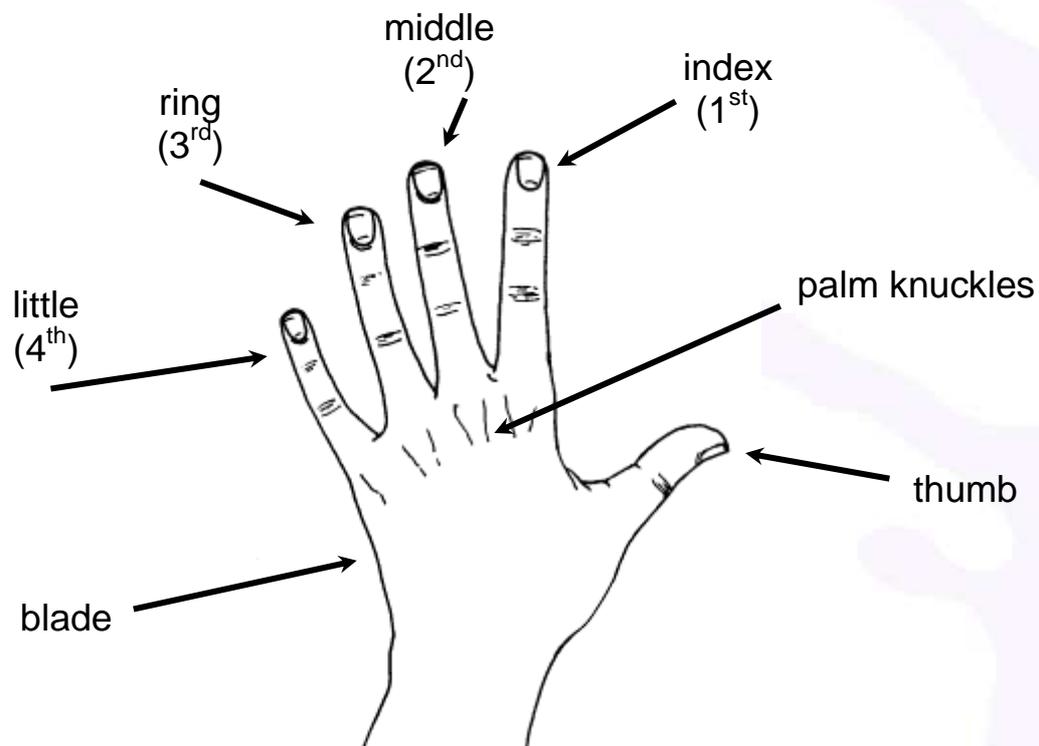
All of the illustrations in all of the SIGNALONG manuals are performed by a right-handed signer. Because we know that there are left and right-handed signers we refer to the "working hand" and "supporting hand" – **REMEMBER YOU NEED TO BE CONSISTENT**, this avoids confusion and gives a point of focus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



Accessible Arts & Media Singing & Signing Guidance Notes.
Diagrams, text and descriptions used with permission of The Signalong Group.

www.aamedia.org.uk

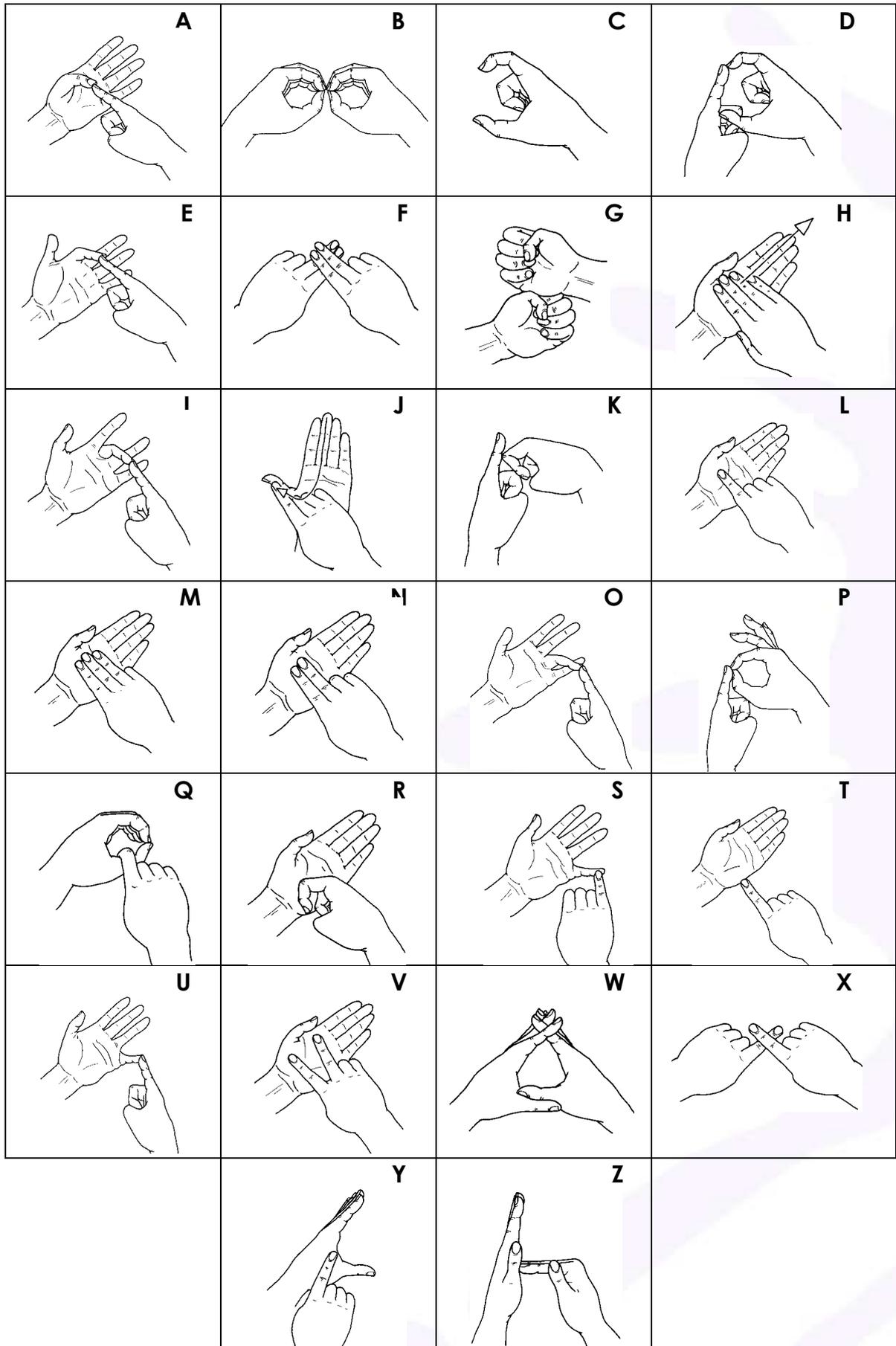
7.2 Parts of the Hand



Accessible Arts & Media Singing & Signing Guidance Notes.
Diagrams, text and descriptions used with permission of The Signalong Group.

www.aamedia.org.uk

7.3 Signalong Letter Shapes – based on BSL



Accessible Arts & Media Singing & Signing Guidance Notes.
Diagrams, text and descriptions used with permission of The Signalong Group.

www.aamedia.org.uk

7.4 Basic Hand Shapes



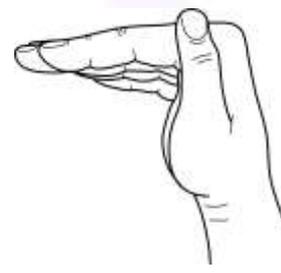
FLAT HAND



OPEN HAND



CLAWED HAND



BENT HAND



CUPPED HAND



BUNCHED HAND



CLOSED HAND



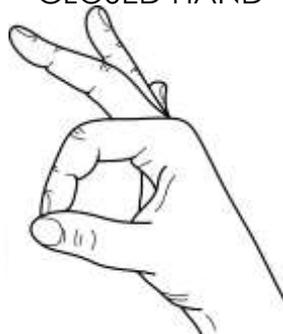
FIST HAND



"C" HAND



FULL "C" HAND



"O" HAND



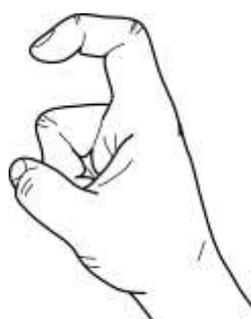
FULL "O" HAND



"M" HAND



"N" HAND



"R" HAND



"V" HAND

The last six shapes are based on the RIGHT hand shape of British two handed finger spelling, 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.

7.5 Additional Hand Shapes



"Y" HAND



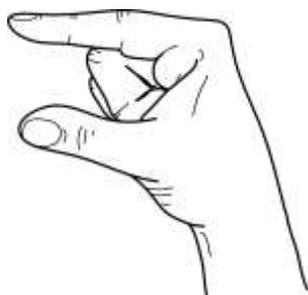
INDEX HAND



THUMB HAND



LITTLE FINGER



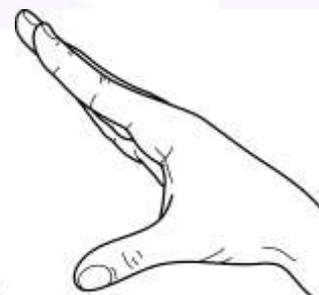
OPEN PINCHED



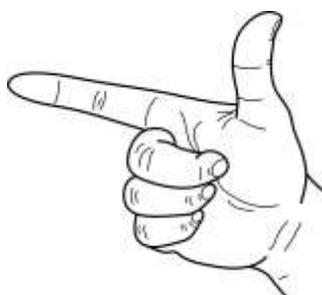
CLOSED PINCHED



PARALLEL BENT



PARALLEL FLAT



"L" HAND



TUCKED HAND

7.6 Orientation

Orientation is a combination of PALMS FACING and HANDS POINTING.

7.6.1 Palms Facing

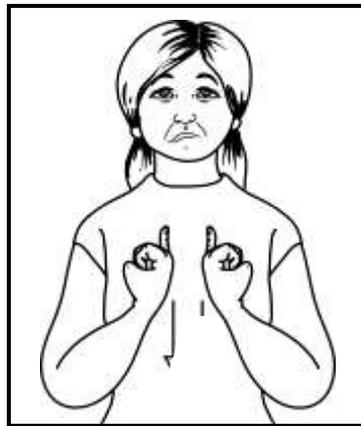
There are SIX directions that the palms can face, these are palms facing:

- 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 or ceiling
- DOWN - face the bottom of the signing window or floor
- FORWARD - face ahead of the signer
- BACK - face towards behind the signer

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



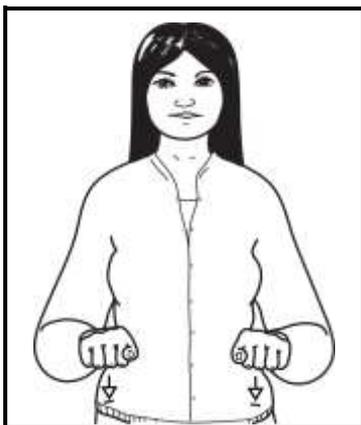
PALMS IN



PALMS OUT



PALMS UP



PALMS DOWN



PALM FORWARD



PALMS BACK

7.6.2 Hands Pointing

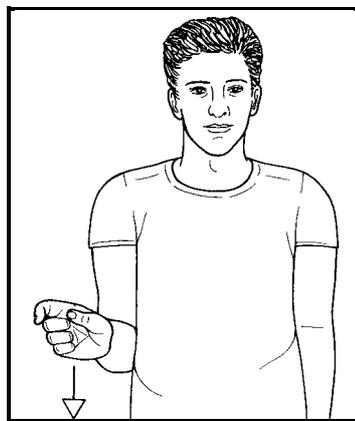
There are SIX directions that the hands can point, these are hands pointing:

- 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 hand shape, if in doubt check using a flat hand before forming the hand shape for the sign.



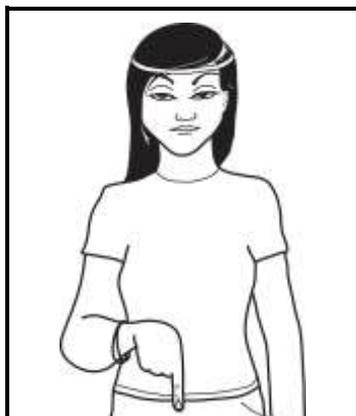
POINTING IN



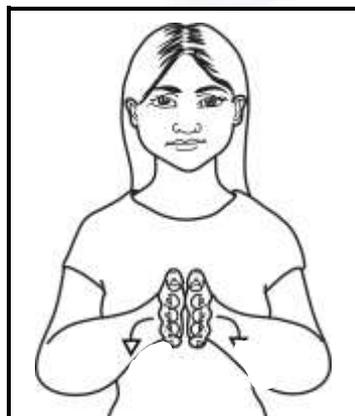
POINTING OUT



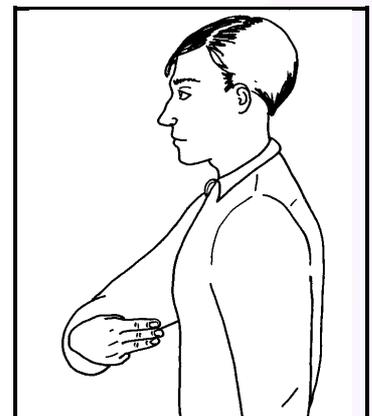
POINTING UP



POINTING DOWN



POINTING FORWARD



POINTING BACK

7.6.3 Diagonals

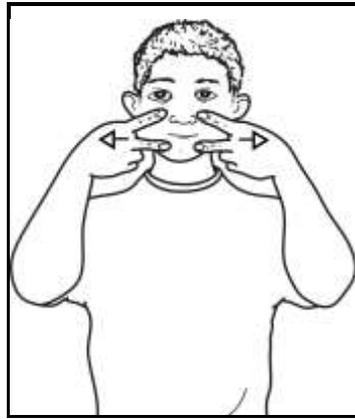
Sometimes an orientation falls between two planes and is described as a diagonal, with a "/" denoting the planes it lies between.

7.1 Movement

Once the hand shape and orientation has been described, the sign can sometimes move. Movement can take place in the same six directions as the palms face and hands point.



MOVEMENT IN



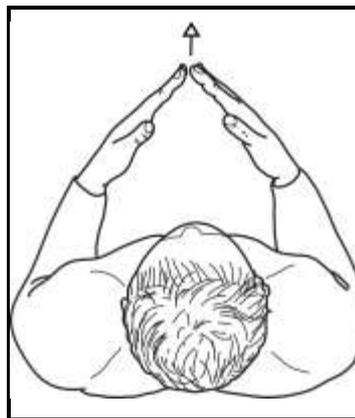
MOVEMENT OUT



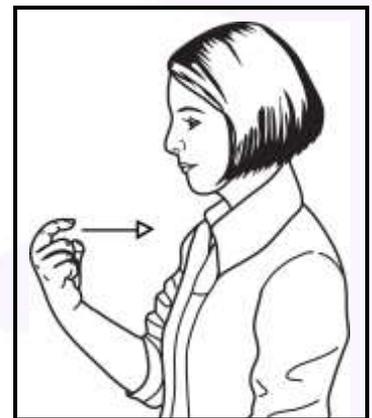
MOVEMENT UP



MOVEMENT DOWN

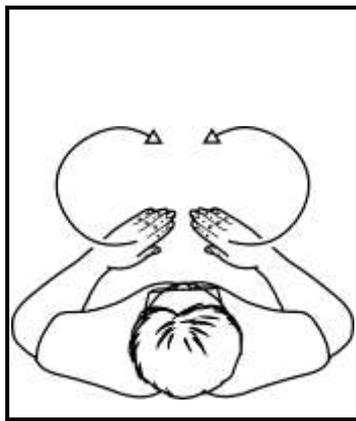


MOVEMENT FORWARD

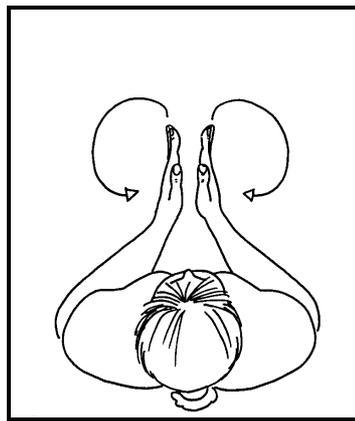


MOVEMENT BACK

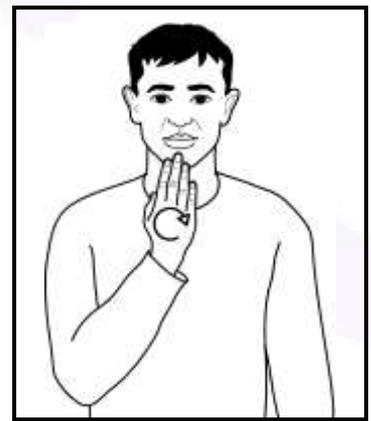
7.7.1 Circling



CIRCLING IN
(HORIZONTAL)



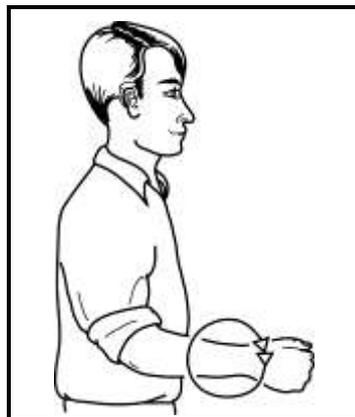
CIRCLING OUT
(HORIZONTAL)



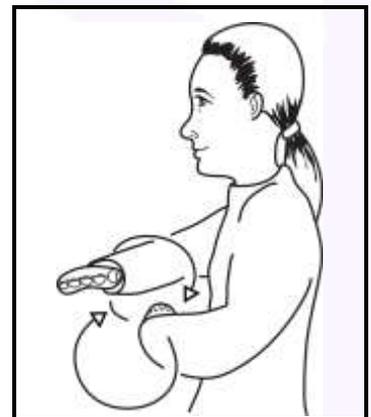
CIRCLING IN
(VERTICAL)



CIRCLING OUT
(VERTICAL)



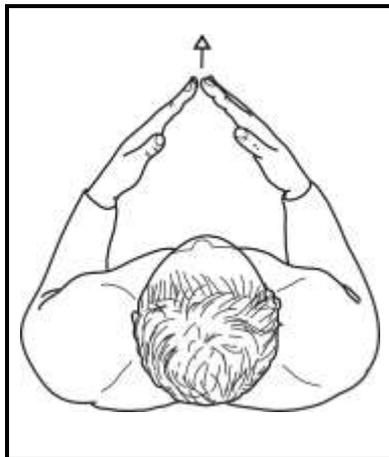
CIRCLING FORWARD



CIRCLING BACK

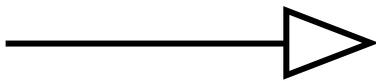
7.7.2 Formation

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



8) Guide to Movement Symbols

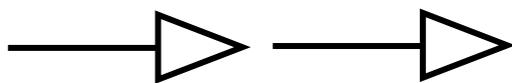
basic arrow to show direction of movement



hand moves backwards and forwards



broken movement



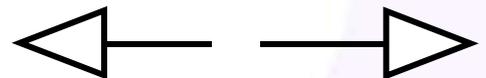
movement in one direction then the other



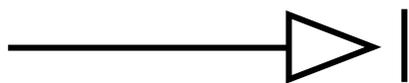
repeated movement



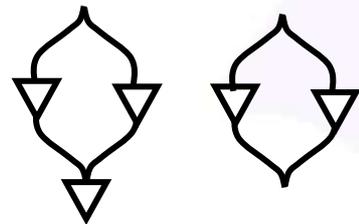
hands move apart



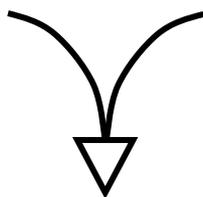
hands or fingers open and then close



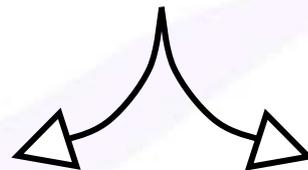
Sign ends with stress



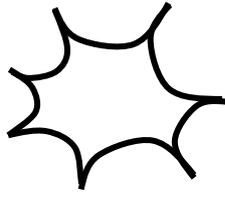
open shape closes



open shape opens



contact on point drawn



small repeated movements

