

Fingerspelling

When a signer does not know the sign for a word or if there is no sign for the word, such as a name, the signer will often spell out the word letter by letter. This is called fingerspelling.

To begin fingerspelling, you must first learn the handshapes of the manual alphabet.

- Right-handed signers fingerspell with the right hand. Left-handed signers fingerspell with the left hand.
- Fast fingerspelling does not mean that person is a better fingerspeller
- The hand is raised in a comfortable position by bending the elbow.
- The palm is facing at a 45-degree angle across the body.
- The arm does not move when fingerspelling. Each handshape is clearly formed.
- Pause slightly between words
- In words containing double letters, the hand is moved slightly to the outside for repeated letter or the fingers will tap the letter twice
- Mouth forms the whole word phonetically as you spell the word. Do not say individual letters as the word is fingerspelled.
- Demonstrate the letters: discourage students from “doing the alphabet”- do words. (handout)
 - Practice three letter words. (handout)
 - say the word slowly (phonetically) as you spell it

For example:

and, ask, act, art, age

bat, bid, beg, bop, bun

cat, can, car, cap, cod

dad, dig, don, dep, dud

elf, eat, ear, end, ego

far, fun, fat, fit, fop

gas, gun, gut, git, god

him, her, how, hap, hug

ink, imp, ice, its, ion

jam, jut, jog, jar, jip

key, kit, keg, kob, kal

lab, let, lot, lux, lit

etc.

- Words with double letters
 - Either move hand slightly to the outside or bounce hand slightly for second letter
- For example:**
all, add, app, baa, coo, dee, egg, ebb, eel, fee, goo, ill, moo, etc.

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