

Handshapes

Every handshape, and signs that use it

Learning by handshape

Handshape is one of the parameters that build a sign, along with location, palm orientation, movement, and non-manual markers. Grouping signs by the shape your hand makes is a fast way to add vocabulary — once the shape is comfortable, every sign on that line comes easier.

Signs are written here in gloss form, in capitals, with hyphens joining multi-word signs.

Letter handshapes

HANDSHAPE	SIGNS THAT USE IT
A	WITH · AUNT
Open A	GIRL · NOT · WHICH · REMEMBER · TOMORROW · YESTERDAY · PRACTICE
B	DAUGHTER · SON · BLUE · BROWN · DOOR
Open B	PLEASE · PAPER · NICE · SCHOOL · THANK-YOU · GOOD
Bent B	KNOW · HOW · HAVE · EXCUSE-ME
C	COUSIN · CLASS · WIFE · CHOCOLATE · HUSBAND
D	DORM · DIVORCE · DATE · DEPARTMENT
E	ELEVATOR · ELEMENTARY · EMERGENCY
F	FRANCE · CAT · FAMILY · TEA
Open F	MEAT · SHIRT · VOLUNTEER · EARRING
G	PEABRAIN / MORON · GREEN
U / H	UNCLE · CUTE · FUN · CHAIR · SIT · NAME
I	IF · SUPPOSE · ART · DRAW · SPAGHETTI

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Letter handshapes, continued

HANDSHAPE	SIGNS THAT USE IT
K	PEOPLE · KIND · TWO-OF-US
L	LATER · LIBRARY · SISTER · BROTHER
Bent L	MOON · RUN · CAMERA · BIG
M	DOCTOR · MATH · MIAMI
N	NURSE · NIECE · NEPHEW
O	SUNRISE · NONE · OFFICE
Baby O / Closed X	EXACT · WRITE · CELEBRATE
Flat O	TEACH · NONE · HOME · MORE
R	RULES · RETIRE · READY
S	YES · MOTORCYCLE · BIKE · COFFEE · ADOPT
T	TOILET · TEAM · BATHROOM · TUTOR
V	STUCK · SEE · STAND · EITHER
Bent V	STAIRS · SQUIRREL · JUMP
W	WATER · WINE
X	TEASE · HEARING-AID · APPLE · FRIEND · KEY
Y	SILLY · YELLOW · JACKET · NEW-YORK

Handshapes

Number handshapes, combinations, and a note on changing shapes

Number handshapes

HANDSHAPE	SIGNS THAT USE IT
1	WHERE · BLACK · DEAF · CANDY · BORING
3	LOUSY · AWKWARD · CAR
Bent 3	BUG · HEAR · DEVILISH · LOUSY
4	TALK · PEOPLE-IN-LINE · RAINBOW
5	MOM · DAD · FINE · GRANDMOTHER · GRANDPA
Bent 5 / Claw 5	MACHINE · WANT · MAD
8	HATE · LIGHT · MELON
Open 8	WHAT'S-UP · FEEL · SICK · TENDENCY

Combination handshapes

HANDSHAPE	SIGNS THAT USE IT
L - I	I-LOVE-YOU · FLY · WHY · CALIFORNIA
1 - L	TENT · SARCASTIC · KIDS

Watch for signs that change shape

Some signs use more than one handshape, and some begin with one shape and end with another. Pay attention to what your hand is actually doing the next time you sign.