

Location of Signs

Where a sign is made, with examples for each place

Why location matters

Location is one of the parameters that make up a sign, alongside handshape, palm orientation, movement, and non-manual markers. Where your hands are is not decoration — it is part of the word.

Two signs can share the same handshape and the same movement and still mean different things, because they are made in different places on the body. Learning signs by location is one of the fastest ways to keep them straight.

Head and face

Head

HAT

CAP

LETTUCE

Forehead

FATHER

GRANDFATHER

BOY

Nose

NOSE

BORING

EAGLE

Side of face

AUNT

COUSIN

UNCLE

COUSIN is made here for male or female.

Cheek

EXPERIENCE

PEACH

EVERYDAY

Chin

SOON

FINLAND

TRASH

Lips

LIPS

LIPSTICK

SURE

TRULY

Ears

EARS

EARRINGS

RADIO

Try it as a warm-up

Call out a location and have students produce a sign made there before you show them one. It forces them to search their vocabulary by place rather than by English word, which is how the signs are actually stored.

Location of Signs

Where a sign is made, with examples for each place

Neck and body

Neck

THIRSTY

NECK

THROAT

Shoulders

COACH

BOSS

SPANISH

Chest

MY

MINE

CONGRESS

CLEVELAND

Torso

DEPRESSED

BODY

KING

QUEEN

Stomach

DISGUSTING

NAUSEA

STOMACH

Waist

BRAG

SKIRT

BELT

BRAG is also glossed BOAST.

Front of body

ABLE

BOOK

RUN

COURT

Neutral space in front of you, not touching the body.

Arms and hands

Arm and forearm

CRACKER

BAG

EPISCOPAL

Elbow

TEMPTATION

CHEAT

POOR

Palm of hand

COOKIE

CAN

CAKE

BUTTER

Back of hand

CHURCH

CHOCOLATE

ISLAND

INTEREST