

Classifiers in ASL

Seventeen handshapes and what each one shows

What are classifiers?

Classifiers are designated handshapes, and rule-grounded body pantomime, used to represent nouns and verbs.

Their purpose is to add information about those nouns and verbs:

Location

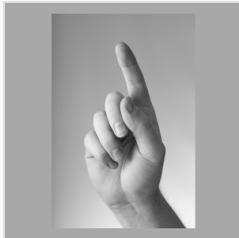
Kind of action

Size

Shape

Manner

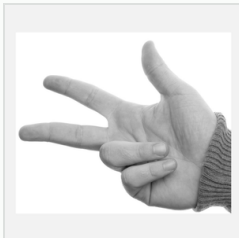
The handshapes



CL:1 The 1 handshape

Used for a person, or for a long thin object. It can also explain width — how skinny something is.

EXAMPLE A person walking. A knife, a pencil, or a stick.



CL:3 The 3 handshape

Extremely common, and typically used for vehicles. If you sign CAR, you can add CL:3 to show how the vehicle moves.

EXAMPLE Cars, trucks, and motorcycles.



CL:4 The 4 handshape

Expands on the amount of something in formation, or describes a characteristic of an object. Two CL:4 hands can show many people standing in a line: the dominant hand moves forward in front of the passive hand, which continues in the opposite direction. CL:4 also describes the shape or pattern of objects.

EXAMPLE Curtains — start in front of the body, then move both hands downward.

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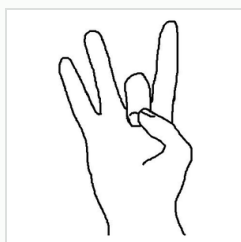
The handshapes, continued



CL:5 The 5 handshape

Represents a large amount of people or things. Both hands in CL:5 can show a crowd of many people.

EXAMPLE Depending on the direction of the movement: traffic, or an audience at a theater.



CL:8 The 8 handshape

Typically used for showing the action of kicking. It can also expand into the concept of showing an explosion.

EXAMPLE Kicking a soccer ball.



CL:A The A handshape

Represents object placement. It can stand for a building or a house.

EXAMPLE Sign HOUSE, then use CL:A to set up visually where the house is located.



CL:B The B handshape

Used in a flat way, so it describes things that are typically flat. It can also show something flat moving forward, or expand on the dimensions of a wall.

EXAMPLE Tables, shelves, and paper.

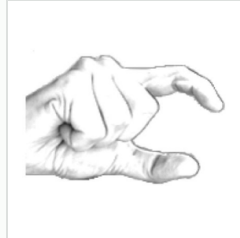
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The handshapes, continued



CL:C



C modified

CL:C The C handshape

Describes the round shape of an object, or the thickness of an object. C modified is a similar shape, used to indicate how round, flat, or thick something is.

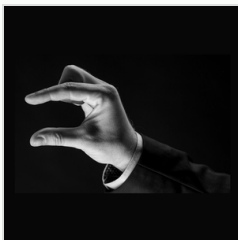
EXAMPLE A thick stack of paper.



CL:F The F handshape

Shows objects that are small and round in size. It also shows specific eye movements.

EXAMPLE Coins, buttons, and eye rolling.



CL:G The G handshape

Shows how thin something is, or describes small objects.

EXAMPLE How thin a book is, or a picture frame design that is thin.



CL:I The I handshape

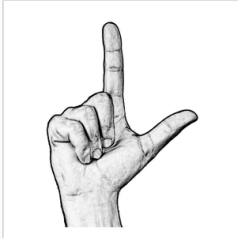
Describes objects that are thin and long. It can also describe outlines and borders.

EXAMPLE The use of small, intricate paint brushes.

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The handshapes, continued



CL:L The L handshape

Describes flat objects, and can be used to show square-shaped objects.

EXAMPLE An envelope or a letter.



CL:V The V handshape

Typically used to represent legs. CL:V can show movement, as in walking, or being in a standing position.

EXAMPLE A person walking, or standing in place.



CL:R The R handshape

Represents things that are twisted or rope-like.

EXAMPLE Hair braids and ropes.

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The handshapes, continued



CL:S The S handshape

Can represent round objects, or the act of pulling something.

EXAMPLE A person's head. An individual pulling on a rope, or opening drawers.



CL:X



X closed

CL:X The X handshape

Shows objects that are curved or bent. The modified version is a closed X, typically used to show an individual holding onto small objects.

EXAMPLE Showing the biopsy process. Writing with a pencil, or flossing.



CL:Y The Y handshape

Represents things that are commonly wide, as well as things that can be poured.

EXAMPLE Syrup being poured, or a person of wide build walking.

Remember

Whichever handshape you choose, it is only one third of the job. The handshape is the object, the movement is the action, and where you place it in your signing space is the location.

A handshape held still in the wrong part of your space says something different from the same handshape placed correctly. Set the scene first, then let it move.