

How to Correct Yourself When Signing to a Deaf Person

1. Stay Calm — Mistakes Happen!

Everyone makes mistakes when learning a new language. The Deaf community understands that students are learning, so don't panic or stop signing altogether. Confidence and effort matter more than perfection.

2. Use Simple Self-Correction Signs

- OOPS — A natural, casual sign meaning “my mistake.”
- WRONG — Used when you know you signed something incorrectly.
- SORRY — If your mistake caused confusion or offense.
- AGAIN / REPEAT — To show you want to re-sign the word or sentence.
- Example: YOU LIKE DOGS? (pause, realize mistake) OOPS — YOU LIKE CATS?

3. Repeat the Correct Sign Clearly

After acknowledging the mistake (with OOPS or WRONG), sign the correct version slowly and clearly. This helps both you and the Deaf person confirm understanding.

4. Maintain Eye Contact

When correcting yourself, keep your eyes on the Deaf person. Avoid looking down or breaking eye contact — it shows confidence and respect in ASL communication.

5. Don't Over-Apologize

You don't need to say SORRY every time you mess up. A quick OOPS and correction is usually enough. Over-apologizing can interrupt the natural flow of conversation.

6. Ask for Help if Needed

If you're unsure what went wrong, you can sign: • SIGN WHAT? • HOW SIGN [WORD]? Most Deaf people are happy to show you the correct sign — and appreciate that you care enough to learn it right.

7. Learn and Move On

Don't dwell on mistakes. Instead, use them as learning opportunities. The more you sign, the more natural self-correction will feel.

Example Scenario

Student: (signs) I GO STORE YESTERDAY (uses wrong sign for STORE) Deaf person: [looks puzzled] Student: OOPS — STORE (corrects sign) Deaf person: YES!