

How Classifiers Work

American Sign Language

The three parts

WHAT

PART 1

Handshape

The handshape represents the object, or the whole category of objects, that you are talking about.

EXAMPLE **CL:3** represents a vehicle — a car, a truck, or a bus.

HOW

PART 2

Movement

The movement shows the action — what the object is doing, and how it is doing it.

EXAMPLE **CL:3** moving forward shows a car driving down the road.

WHERE

PART 3

Location (space)

Where you place the classifier in your signing space shows where the object sits, and how objects relate to each other.

EXAMPLE One **CL:3** set beside another shows a car parked next to a car.

All three at once

A classifier is never doing just one of these jobs. Every time you sign one, you are answering all three questions in the same moment.

HANDSHAPE

=

the object

MOVEMENT

=

the action

LOCATION

=

the space