

# Honor Requirements

1. Learn the manual alphabet used by the deaf.
2. Have a minimum of three hours of instruction in signing.
3. Send and receive fingerspelling at the rate of five words per minute using a minimum of 25 letters.
4. Learn at least 100 signs.
5. Sign at least two simple songs.
6. Explain the difference between Ameslan and Exact English and demonstrate the use of each.
7. Know the meaning of deafness.
8. Read and give an oral or written report on *Deaf Life Me*.

## References:

*A Basic Course in Manual Communication*, T.J. O'Rourke (National Association of the Deaf)

*Deaf Like Me*, Thomas Spradley (Gallaudet University Bookstore)

*Expressive and Receptive Fingerspelling for Hearing Adults*, LaVera M. Guillory (Gallaudet University Bookstore or T.J Publishers)

*Introduction to American Sign Language*, Harry W. Hoemann (Gallaudet University Bookstore or T.J. Publishers)

*Joy of Signing*, Lottie L. Riekehof (Gallaudet University Bookstore or T.J. Publishers)

*Learning American Sign Language*, Tom Humphries (Gallaudet University Bookstore and National Association of the Deaf)

*"Say That Again, Please!"* Tom Bradford (National Association of the Deaf)

Gallaudet University Bookstore  
800 Florida Avenue, N.E  
Washington, DC 20002  
[gallaudet.edu/bison\\_shop.html](http://gallaudet.edu/bison_shop.html)

National Association of the Deaf  
814 Thayer Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
[nad.org](http://nad.org)

T.J. Publishers  
817 Silver Spring Avenue  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
[tjpublishers.com](http://tjpublishers.com)

# History of Sign Language

The language of signs is ancient. Since earliest recorded history, gestures have been used for communication between groups of different languages and cultures. However, the first attempt to develop formal signs was in the latter part of the 16th century.

Until the 16th century, it was considered futile to attempt to educate the deaf. They were scorned, ridiculed, and ever feared. They were thought to be incapable of reasoning, thinking, or having ideas.

During the 16th century an Italian physician, Girolamo Cardano, felt that hearing words was not needed for understanding ideas, so he developed a code for teaching the deaf. Although his code was never used, his ideas prepared the way for changing the attitude that the deaf are unable to learn.

It was in Spain that the first successful attempts to educating the deaf were made. A Spanish monk, Pedro Ponce de Leon, succeeded in education the deaf children of several noble Spanish families so that they were declared legally qualified to inherit their families' estates. Apparently Ponce de Leon taught these children to read and write, and later to speak.

Still later, Juan Martin Pablo Bonet wrote a book on the education of the deaf. He urged teaching a one-handed manual alphabet as the first step in educating the deaf child. This manual alphabet is essentially the same as is used today.

Public education of the deaf began in France and Germany. It was also in those countries that the methods argument began. In France, Abbe Charles de l'Epee founded the first public school for the deaf. Besides being considered the father of public education for the deaf, he is also considered the father of the language of signs.

Abbe de l'Epee believed the language of signs was the natural language of deaf people and their education should be based on it. But he also recognized that the primitive signs used by the deaf people of that day were not developed enough to be used as an educational tool. So he refined and developed this language of signs into a full language. Our present-day sign language is based on his system.

In Germany, Samuel Heineken originated the German method. That is the oral method of teaching a deaf child through speech and speech reading with sign language forbidden. This started a controversy that continues today. However, recent research projects have proved total communication is the greatest advantage to the deaf.

Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet was a minister. He became the developer of American education of the deaf. He started the first school for the deaf in this country and Gallaudet University, the only liberal arts university for the deaf in the world, was named after him.

Dr. Mason Cogswell who had a deaf daughter, Alice, approached Gallaudet. Dr. Cogswell asked Gallaudet to go to Europe and study the method developed there to teach the deaf. He went to England first to study their methods, planning to combine the best of both methods, oral and manual, but this was not acceptable to the English educators he contacted. They wanted him to use only their methods. About this time, Abbe Sicard arrived in London on the lecture tour with two of his most famous pupils. Gallaudet was so impressed by the demonstrations that he abandoned his negotiations with the English and went to Paris to study with Sicard.

After studying with Sicard for a few months, Gallaudet returned to America, bringing with him Laurent Clerc, who became the first deaf teacher of the deaf in the United States. Gallaudet and Clerc founded the American Asylum for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut, the present American School for the Deaf.

From the beginning, sign language became the national language for the deaf in America. Sign language has been developed and refined until it is now a classical and beautiful—and also picturesque—language the great majority of deaf use to communicate with each other—and with their hearing friends who take the trouble to learn the language of signs.

Sign language is sometimes confusing to a beginner. But it is always interesting, and a student of the language of signs will find it greatly rewarding as he or she progresses to better communication with his or her deaf friends. A student who persists and eventually becomes fluent so that he can help the deaf is helping in the most vital way a hearing person can help the deaf—by becoming an interpreter. Interpreters help the deaf understand what goes on in the sometimes baffling world of the hearing.\*

\*Barbara E. Brasel, *An Introductory Course in Manual Communication*

# Fingerspelling

Fingerspelling is an important part of the communication system of deaf persons. It is using the fingers to form letters instead of using a pen to write on paper. There are 26 hand positions, some of which are exact representations of the printed block letter.

Fingerspelling is used in combination with the language of signs for proper nouns, names, and addresses, and for words that have no sign. Fingerspelling is very important, and it is essential for the beginner to concentrate on developing both expressive and receptive skills in order to become proficient.

Alexander Graham Bell, who appeared before a Royal Commission in 1888 to give evidence on teaching the deaf, said: "For we want that method, whatever it is, that will give us the quickest means of bringing English words to the eyes of the deaf, and I know of no more expeditious means than a manual alphabet."

## **Hand Position**

The palm of the hand should face the audience at a slight angle with the arm being held in a comfortable natural position. Since it is important to see lip movement, the hand should not be held in a position that will block the view of the mouth. Neither should the hand be held so far from the mouth that the lips cannot be read simultaneously with the fingerspelling.

## **Flow and Rhythm**

Each letter should be made clearly, distinctly, and crisply with a slight pause between words. This pause is shown by holding the last letter of a word for a moment before beginning the first letter of the next word. The hands do not drop between words. If there is movement while fingerspelling, it should be a gradual move to the right but there is no need to bounce letters or to push letters forward in an attempt to be clear.

Some letters and combinations of letters are more easily made than others, and there is often a tendency to spell these more rapidly than the more difficult ones, but this is not advisable. It is not necessary to be concerned with speed; with practice, speed will increase. Establishing and maintaining rhythm in fingerspelling is important since this aids readability.

## **Double Letters**

When double letters are formed, the hand is opened slightly before repeating the second letter of the series. Letters such as "c" and "l" are already open and are simply moved from left to right (or to the left if you are left handed) with a very slight bounce. In other words, the repeated letter is not merely moved over to the right, since a clear separation is needed to indicate that the letter is being made twice. The movement for the letter "z" is simply repeated. Try the following words using the principles outlined above:

Aaron	sunny	haggle	fizz
cool	chubby	padded	spellingrolling
better	massivebeet	apple	letter
summersoccer	offer	hurry	dazzle
			swimming

### Capitalized Abbreviations

To distinguish a word from abbreviation, it is necessary to circle the individual letters very slightly when they represent names of places, organizations, etc. Try a few: USA, NAD (National Association of the Deaf), RID (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf).

### Reading Fingerspelling

Fingerspelling should be read in the same way you read the words on this page, in units instead of letter by letter. As you read fingerspelling, first short words and then longer ones, do not allow your partner in conversation to slow down when you do not understand, because this will tend to get you into the habit of reading letters instead of syllables or words. If you do not understand the word being spelled, ask the person with whom you are practicing to repeat at the same rate, even if a great deal of repetition is required. This forces you to read in word units and will increase your comprehension more rapidly.

### Practice Hints

It is suggested that you begin fingerspelling two and three-letter words, gradually increasing the length of words, breaking them down into syllable, until you attain a smooth flow. Speech or lip movement should always accompany fingerspelling and signs as you practice.

It would be well to find a partner with whom to fingerspell; but if this is not possible, try looking into a mirror. You will then see yourself as others do. You will become aware of word-unit formations and you will also be surprised at the errors that will be clearly visible and that can be corrected before bad habits are formed.

The following are examples of one and two-syllable words that will be helpful in developing your skill:

an	rat	pane	get	gold	jam
at	satban	wanedate	jet	hold	Pam
it	can	fate	met	mold	ram
he	Dan	gate	net	sold	Samcot
of	fan	hate	pet	told	dot
so	man	late	setbid	older	got
as	pan	mate	did	bolder	hot
bebat	ran	pate	hid	colder	jot
cat	tanbane	ratedated	lid	folder	lot
fat	cane	hated	ridold	holder	not
hat	dane	fated	bold	solder	
mat	lane	mated	cold	damn	
pat	mane	ratedbet	fold	ham	