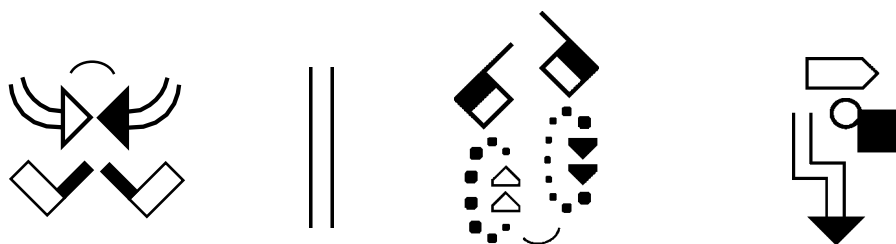


# Lessons in SignWriting®

## Video Series



## 1. Introduction to SignWriting



Published by the DAC  
**The Deaf Action Committee For SignWriting®**

Sponsored by  
**The Center For Sutton Movement Writing, Inc.**  
A non-profit, tax-exempt 501 c 3 educational organization.  
P.O. Box 517 • La Jolla • CA. • 92038-0517 • USA  
858-456-0098 tel • 858-456-0020 fax • DAC@SignWriting.org  
<http://www.SignWriting.org> • <http://www.SignBank.org>

## **Lessons In SignWriting® Video Series**

**ISBN:0-914336-72-X**

Copyright © 1995 Center for Sutton Movement Writing, Inc.

Cover & Title Page Photos: Lucinda O'Grady Batch  
All photos are captured from the video.

Voice-Over & English Script for Kevin Clark  
by Pasch McCombs

All Other Voice-Over & English Scripts  
by Valerie Sutton

Lesson plans, poster diagrams,  
book layout & design  
by Valerie Sutton

Poster diagrams were prepared with the  
SignWriter® Computer Program.

The SignWriter® Computer Program  
was designed and programmed  
by Richard Gleaves.

SignWriting® was first invented  
by Valerie Sutton in 1974.

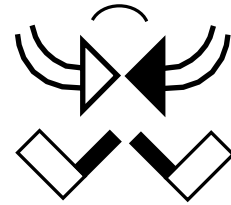
All sign language literature & translations prepared  
by Deaf members of the DAC.

Video Production Facility:  
Lightning Corporation in San Diego, California

On-line Editor:  
Thomas Kihneman.

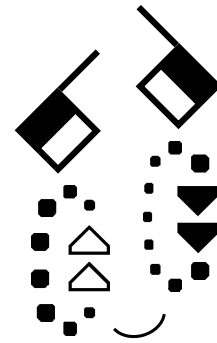
SignWriting® could not continue without support from  
our sponsors, including...Hoag Foundation, Hughes  
Give-Once Clubs, R.C. Baker Foundation, Rockwell  
Donate-Once-Clubs, San Diego Gas & Electric, the  
Seuss Foundation, TRW-Echo, and others.

SignWriter®, SignWriting® & SignSymbolSequence™ are  
trademarks of The Center for Sutton Movement Writing.  
**SignWriting** is a part of Sutton Movement Writing.

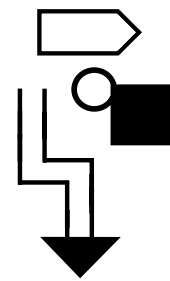


**Introduction**

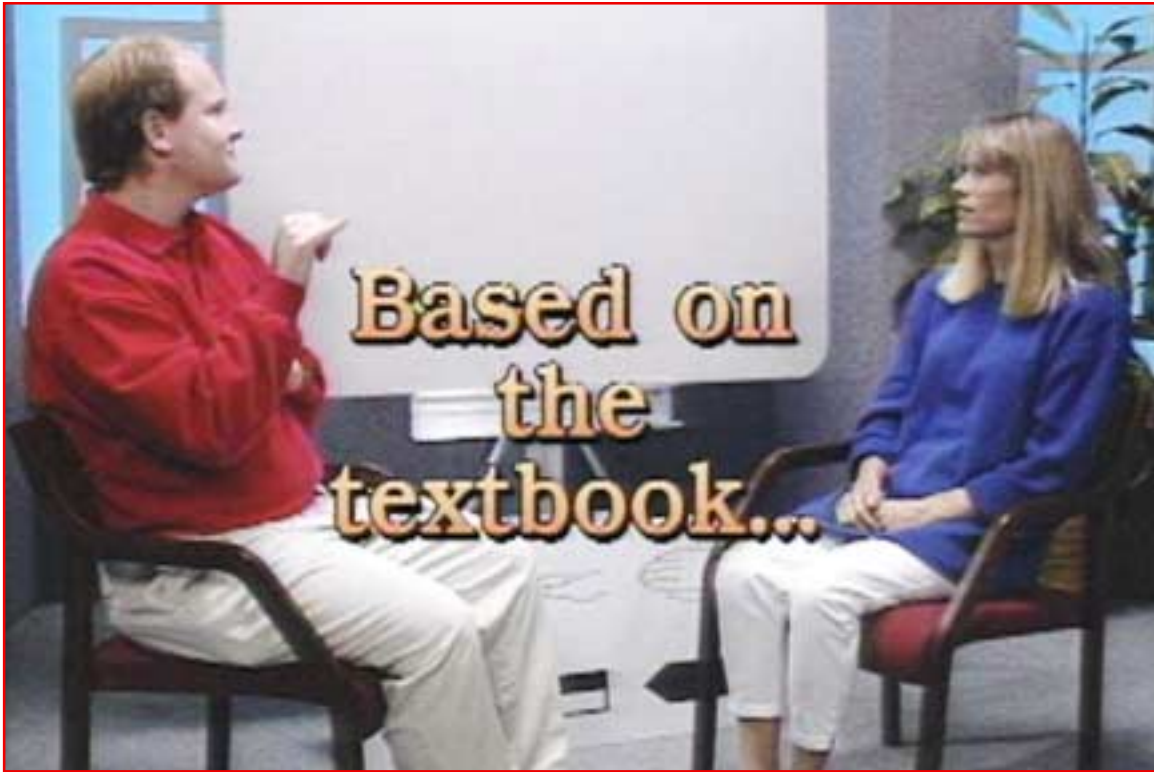
to



**Sign**



**Writing®**





created by...



Valerie Sutton



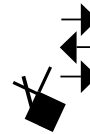
featuring...



Lucinda  
O'Grady Batch




and...



Kevin Clark



 **Cindy**

Hi! My name is Lucinda O'Grady Batch. Welcome to our video series "Lessons In Sign Writing". This first video is called "Introduction to Sign Writing".



 **Kevin**

Hello. My name is Kevin Clark. You know, I have been involved with American Sign Language research for some time now, so I want to learn SignWriting. But I'm curious. What exactly is SignWriting used for?



 **Cindy**

The two of us were born Deaf, from Deaf families. We grew up using American Sign Language, or ASL, our native language. We need a way to preserve our language. SignWriting copies exact movements of signs rather than using English to describe ASL.





**Kevin**

Oh. I see.

I'm curious.

Who uses SignWriting?



**Cindy**

Sign Language researchers, hearing students who need a way to write new signs, Deaf people who want to write ASL poetry, plays, stories, in school education, & also other countries, such as Norway, Denmark, Ireland, & England are starting to write their own signed languages using SignWriting.



**Kevin**

I see. That's good. You know, that makes sense because spoken languages have a way to write their own languages. But we as Deaf people, haven't really had a way to write our signed languages. Now, with this system, it seems possible to do that.





## Cindy

Right. The purpose of this video is to show a few handshapes, movement, contact, and facial expressions, and to show a sign sentence written in ASL. Now I'll teach....you learn.



Let me explain the difference between the Receptive and Expressive points of view. Receptive means watching another person signing. Expressive means seeing signs from your own perspective.

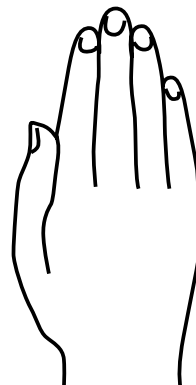
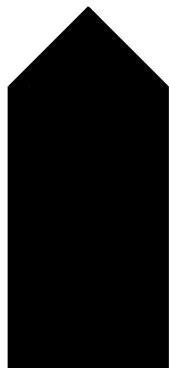
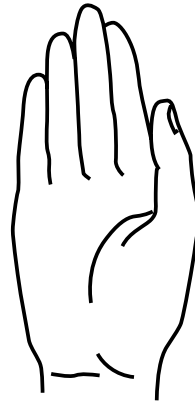
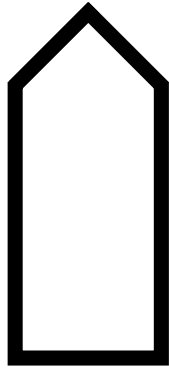


Back in 1981, we wrote signs Receptively, but we learned through experience it is better to write Expressively. Why? Because we're not demonstrating signs. We are expressing our own language.

Here is the flat handshape. Remember we are using the Expressive point of view. The palm of the hand is always light. The side of the hand is one-half dark, one-half light. The light shows where the palm of the hand is facing. The back of the hand is always dark.



# The Flat Hand





...referring to diagrams on pages 7 & 8...

**Do you have an example? Like the sign “to know”?**

Yes. Let me show you a few things. The circle represents the head. Look at the hand symbol. The dark part means the “back of the hand”. The two contact stars mean “two times contact”.



**So the two asterisks mean “two contacts”?**

Yes. That’s correct. The sign is “to know”. It is from the Expressive point of view. Imagine that you are looking through the back of the head and feeling it on the right side of the head.





...referring to diagrams on pages 9 & 10...

**Can you represent exact locations on the head?**

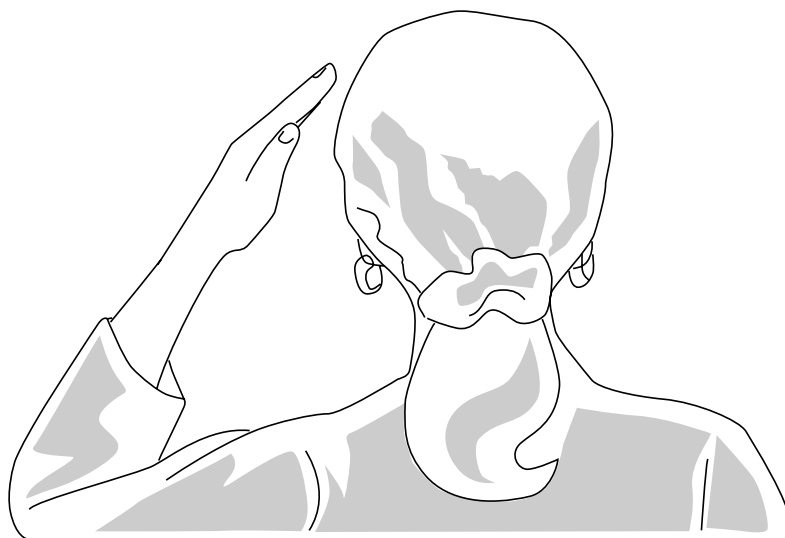
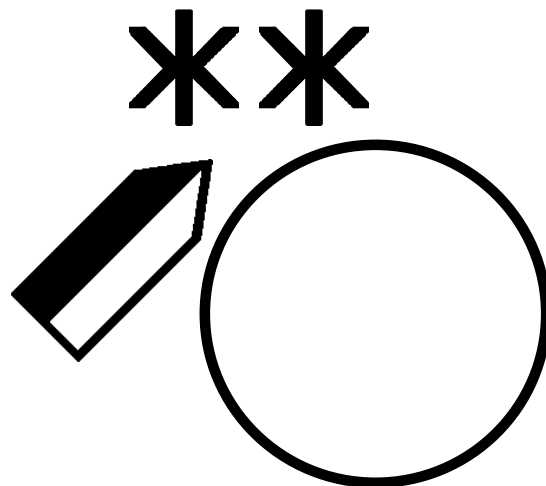
Oh yes. We can do that. Let me show you the sign for "know" lower on the cheek. The circle represents the head. The handshape is at an angle, touching the cheek. We have two stars for contact. Next we have the facial expression with the mouth up on the right side.

**So is this face looking out toward the viewer?**

Well, not really. Try to imagine looking through the back of the head and feeling it for yourself on the right side of your own face. In this diagram one sign is for the right side, and the other one is for the left side.



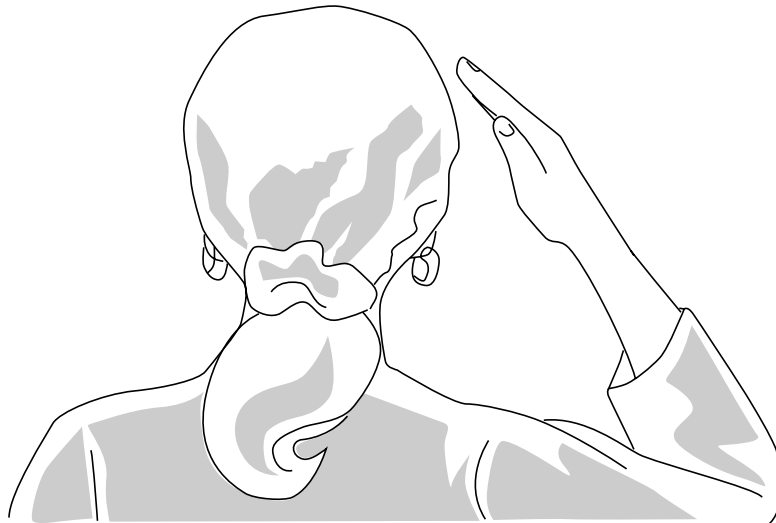
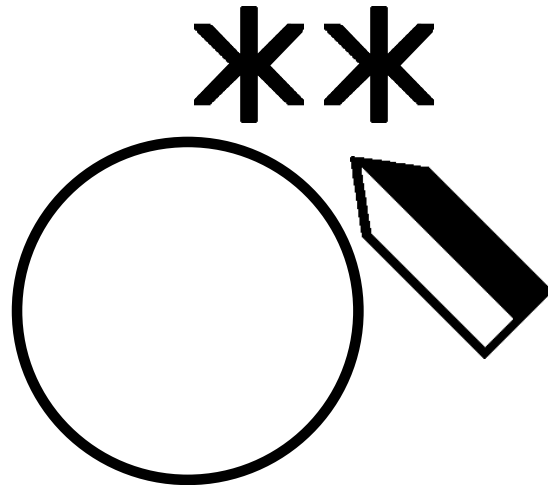
# Left Side of Head



**know**

(hand on the left side)

# Right Side of Head



**know**

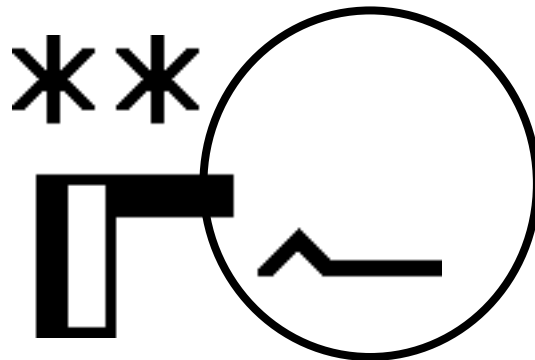
(hand on the right side)



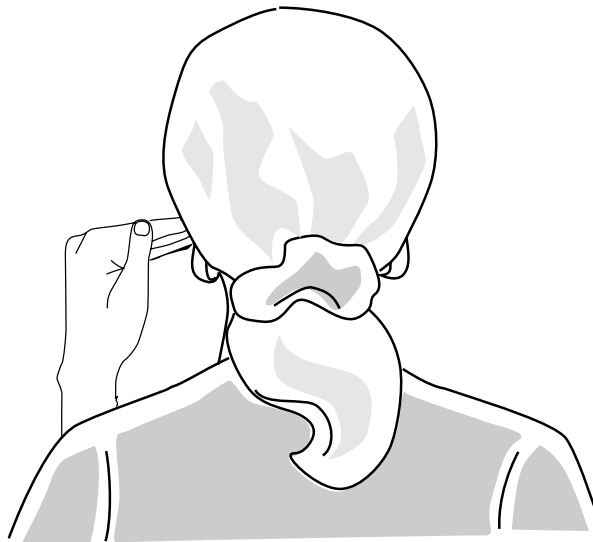
# Left Side of Face

Pretend you can see **through** the back of the head.

You are reading and writing how your face "feels" when you sign:



Your face  
**feels**  
like this:



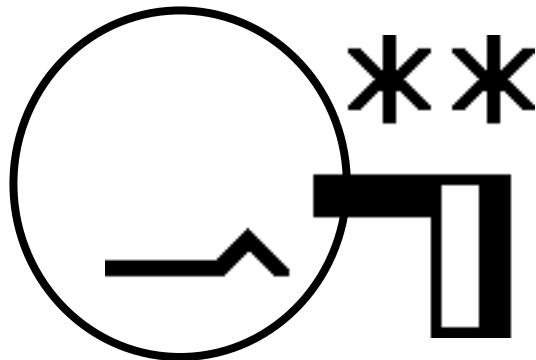
**know**

(mouth pushed up on the left side)

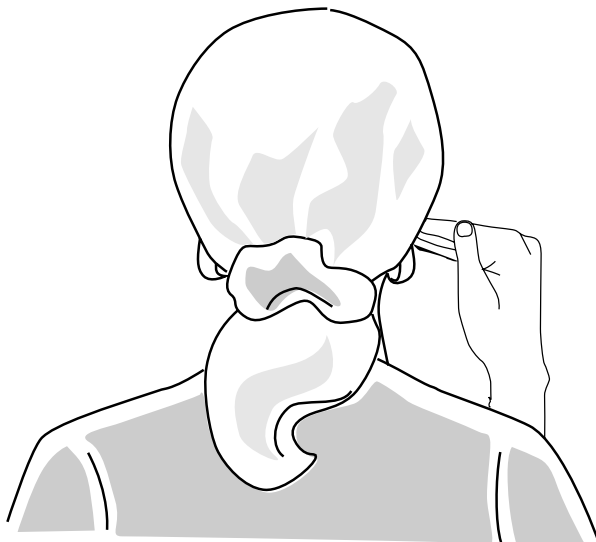
# Right Side of Face

Pretend you can see **through the back of the head**.

You are reading and writing how your face "feels" when you sign:



Your face  
feels  
like this:



**know**

(mouth pushed up on the right side)





...referring to diagram on page 12...

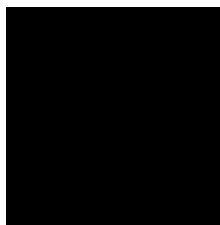
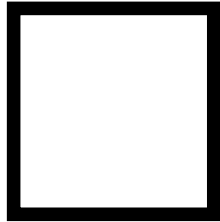
This is the symbol for the fist. Look at the first symbol at the top of the diagram. The palm of the hand is a light square. Look at the second symbol. It is one-half dark for the back of the hand, and one-half light for the palm of the hand. The light part shows where the palm of the hand is facing. Then, looking at the third symbol, you see the back of the fist, which is dark.

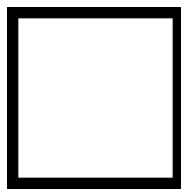
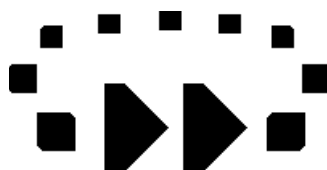
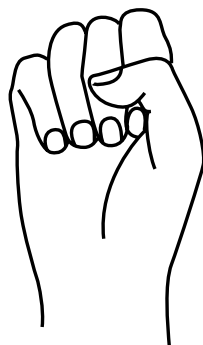
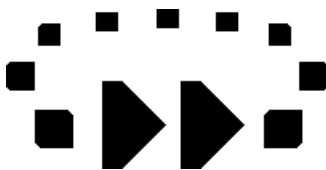


...referring to diagram on page 13...

Now I will show you a sign. You can see there is a square for the fist. Then you see circular movement two times with the right hand. That's the sign for **Saturday**:

# The Fist Hand





**Saturday**

...referring to diagram p. 15...



Now let's look at the next symbol. Look at the first symbol at the top. A line, representing the index finger, is sticking out of the square for the fist. The square is light because the palm is facing you. In the second symbol, you see one-half dark for the back of the hand, and one-half light for the palm of the hand. In the third symbol, you see the back of the hand, which is always dark.



**Is that handshape the "D" handshape?**

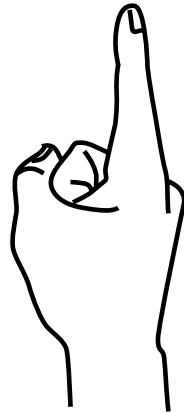
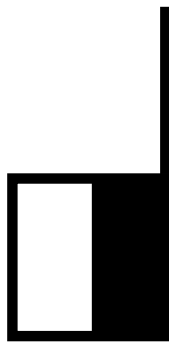
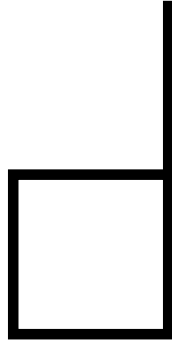
No. It is not a "D" handshape. It is the "index" handshape. It is the closed fist with the finger sticking up.

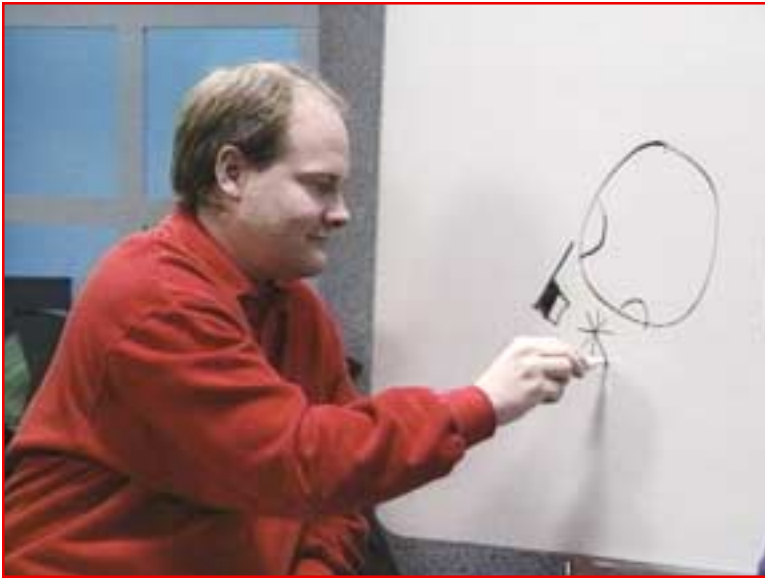


...referring to diagram p. 16...

Here is a sign that uses the index hand. We have a circle for the head. Then we have two places for location showing where it is contacting on the face. Then we have the hand symbol showing the index finger and the contact star showing contact. It is the sign for "Deaf".

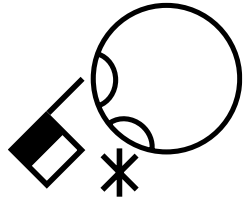
# The Index Hand





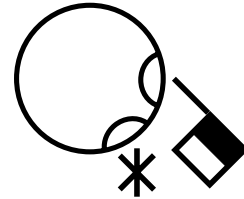
Would you like me to try writing this?

Sure. Remember to write the sign, signed with the left hand.



**Deaf**

(signed with the left hand)



**Deaf**

(signed with the right hand)



That is very good. Let us see if it fits. Perfect! If you compare them. That's the sign for "Deaf". Wonderful.





...referring to diagrams on pages 19 and 20...

Now we have a sentence written in ASL, written from left to right, just as English is written from left to right. Let me explain a few things. Let us look at the first sign. We have a circle for the head, and two lines showing the eyebrows up. And then we have the next sign which says "ASL" in fingerspelling. And then you see two vertical lines. Those two lines mean a pause, or a break.

In the next sign, you see the head with the eyegaze looking right diagonally, and a facial expression with a tense mouth. The hand is also moving two times right diagonally, in the same direction as the eyegaze. Then there is a thick line at the end of the sentence, which means the "end of the sentence". An English translation of this sentence might be: "Writing ASL from Deaf people's perspective".





...referring to diagram page 21...

Another way to write. We just saw the sentence going across the page, but now we see it going down the page. How did it happen that Deaf people started writing down the page? Well, we Deaf people found through experience that it was natural to write down the page. We think perhaps it is connected with space and location, but anyway, of course, we are still experimenting.

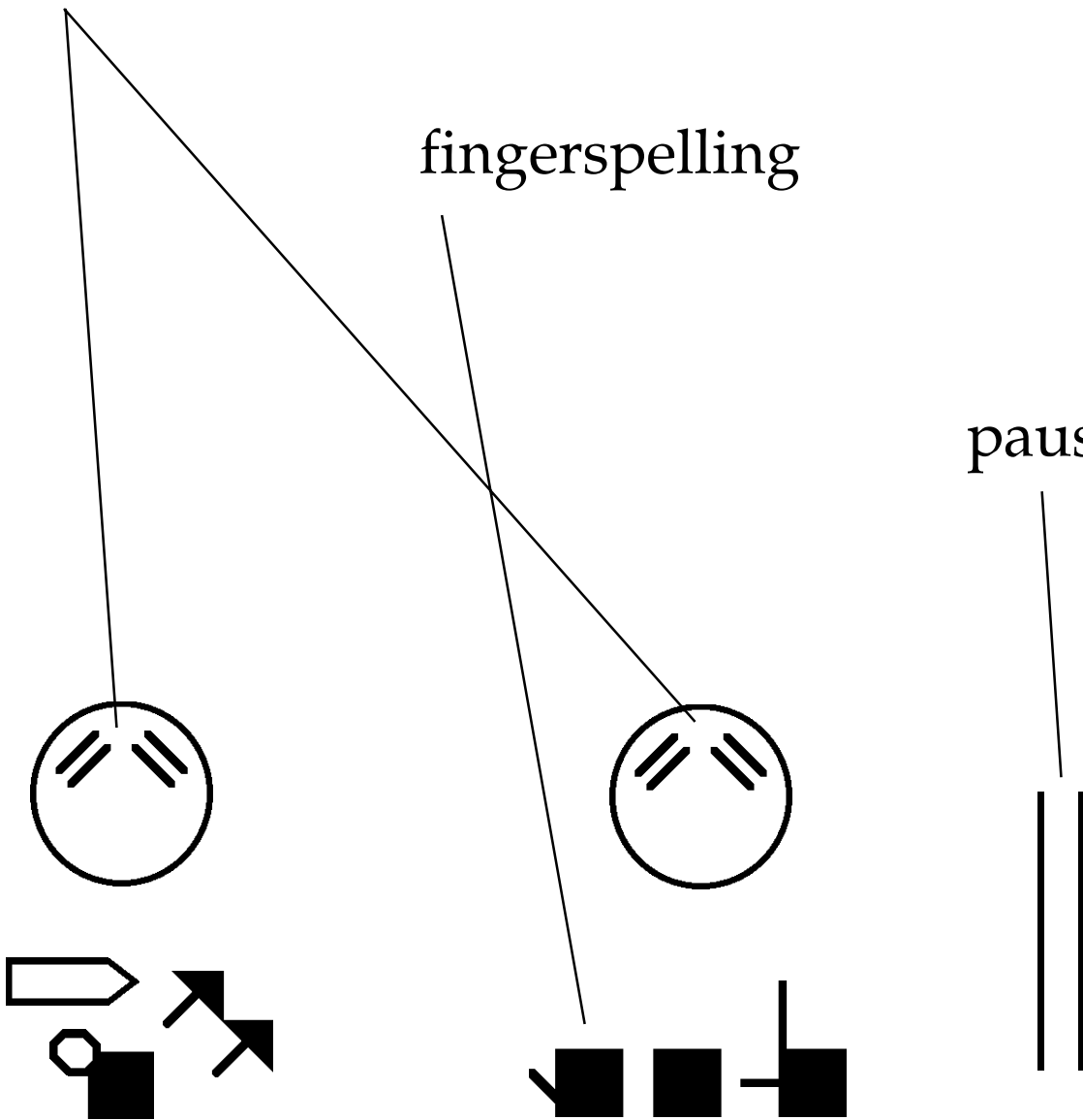
Let me show you a few things that are different. They are the same signs we saw written from left to right across the page. They are now simply written down the page. The two-lined symbol representing a pause was vertical before. Now it is horizontal. And the thick line marking the end of the sentence is now horizontal as well:



eyebrows up

fingerspelling

pause

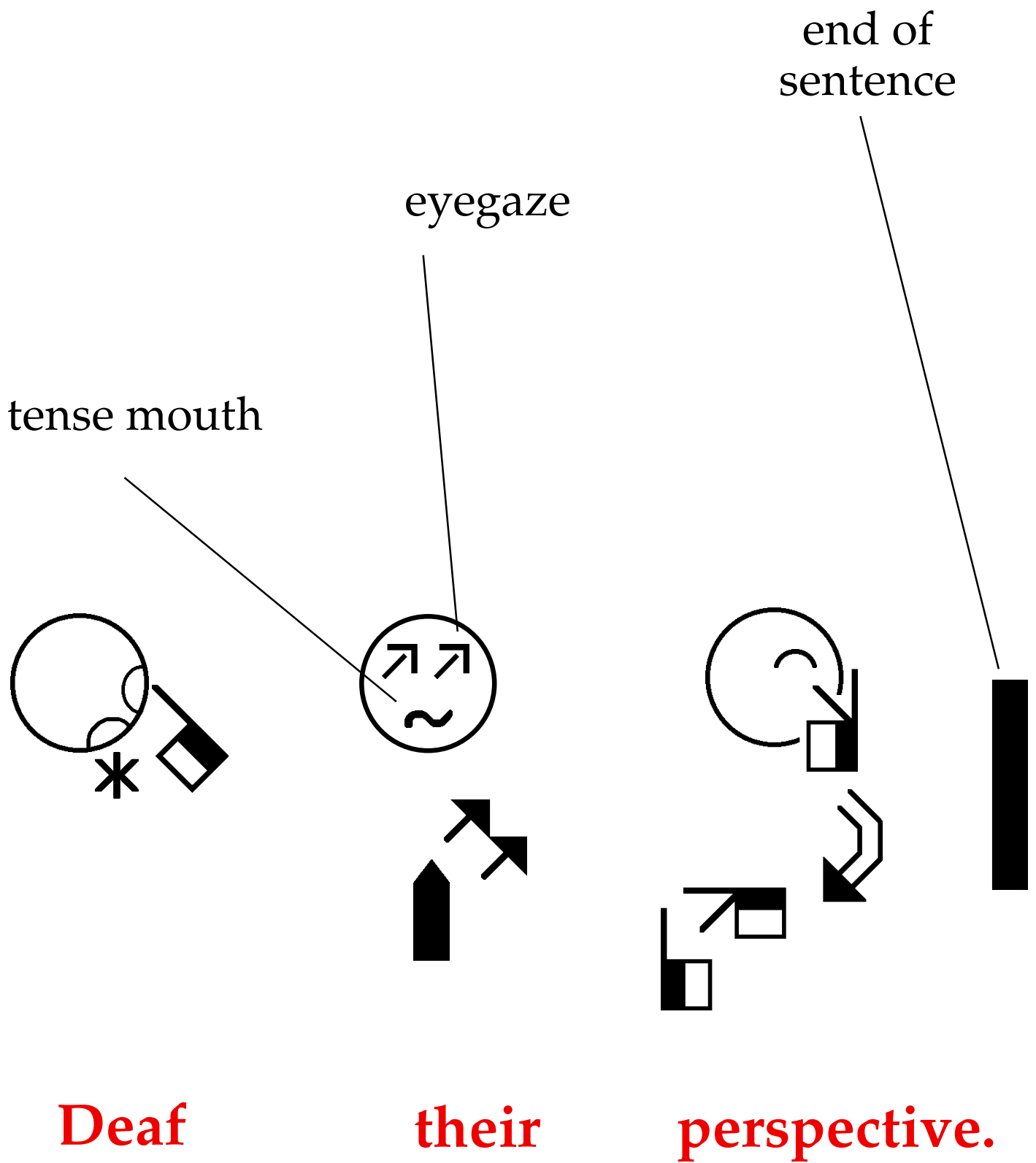


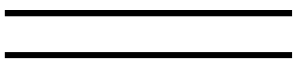
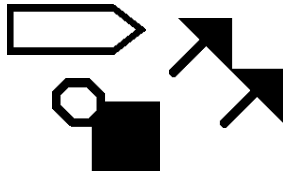
**Written**

**ASL**

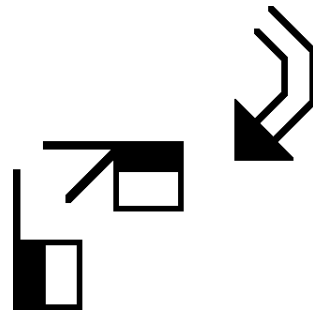
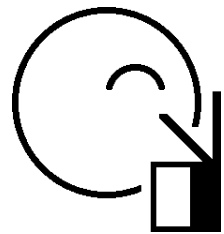
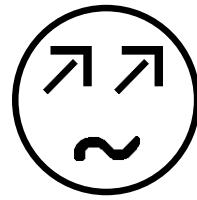
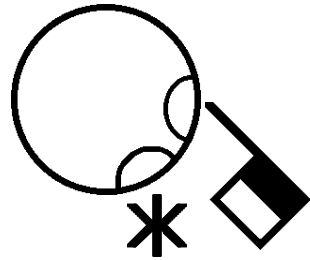
**,**







written horizontally





**This seems more comfortable reading it this way.**

Yes. I think so. It seems that we Deaf people prefer to write down the page, but of course, we are still experimenting. Maybe we'll throw out writing from left to right, and start writing down the page all the time. Who knows?!



**This seems to be printed by computer. Is that right?**

Yes. That's right. This was printed by computer. We have a computer program called "SignWriter®" that is really a "sign language processing program", a little like a "word processing program", but now the signs pop up while you are typing along the screen. It is a nice way to write SignWriting.



I personally prefer to write by hand because way back when I started writing SignWriting we had no computers. Then computers came into the picture. But other Deaf people love to type by computers. Really, a person can continue to write by hand or choose the computer. It's their choice. It really doesn't matter.



Yeah.  
It seems like this offers a  
person a choice to write by  
hand or use the computer.

Yes. That's right.  
Well, I guess we are finished  
with this lesson.

**Goodbye!!**

