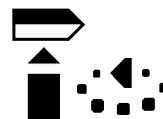
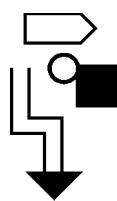
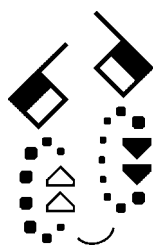


# Lessons in SignWriting®

## Video Series



## 2. SignWriting Basics



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

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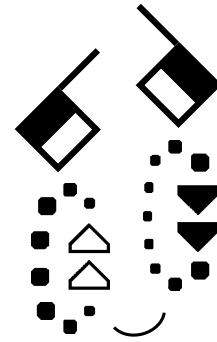
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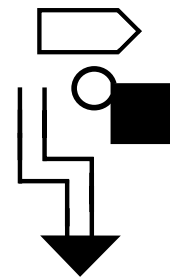
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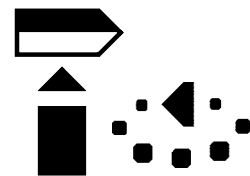
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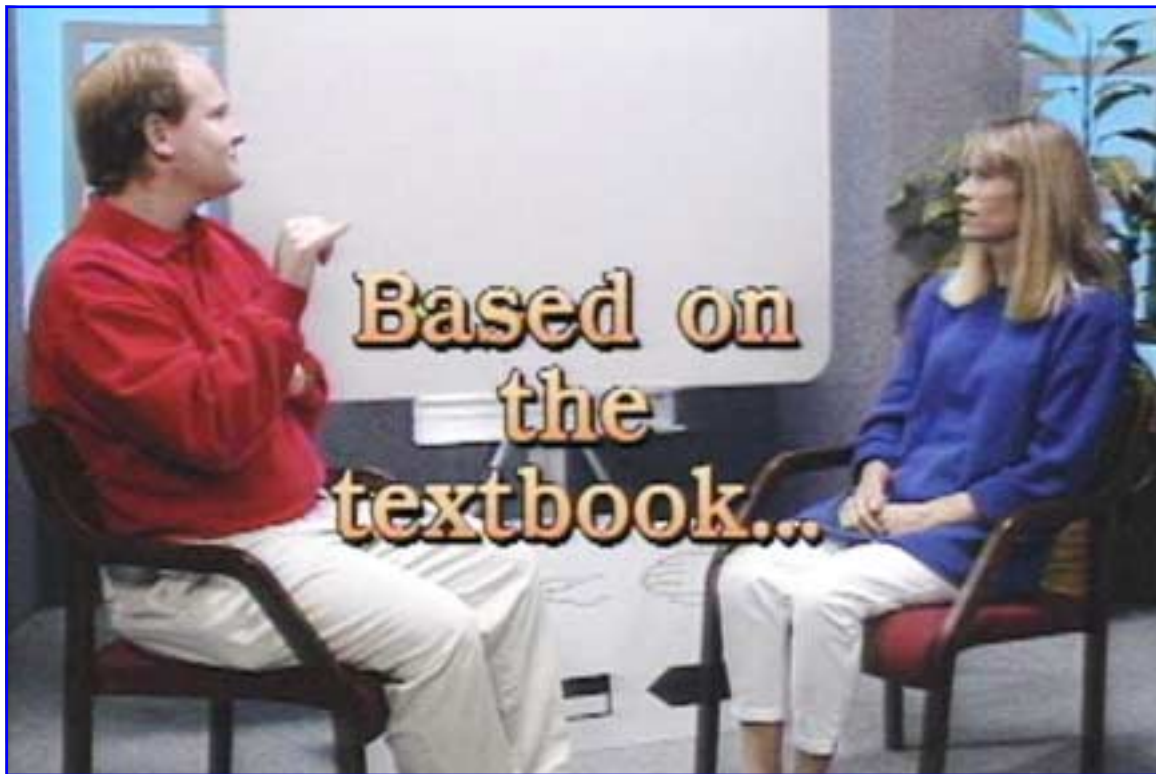
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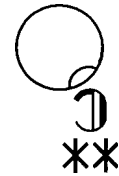
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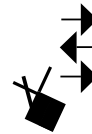
featuring...



Lucinda  
O'Grady Batch



and...



Kevin Clark



 **Cindy**

Hi! My name is Lucinda O'Grady Batch. Welcome to our video series "Lessons in SignWriting". This second video is called "SignWriting Basics". I will teach basic handshapes, contact symbols, and movement symbols necessary for reading basic SignWriting.



 **Kevin**

Hi. My name is Kevin Clark. I enjoyed the first video very much. I learned a lot too!



 **Cindy**

That's great. The first video was called "Introduction to SignWriting". Beginning students should watch that video first, then this one second. Remember what we discussed in the first video?



 **Kevin**

Yes. First we discussed what SignWriting is used for. It is used for reading, writing, and preserving American Sign Language, or ASL, our native language. Also for writing signed languages from other countries.



 **Cindy**

Yes. That's right. We also discussed the Expressive and Receptive viewpoints. We write signs Expressively. Remember what that means?



 **Kevin**

Yes..We read and write ASL from our own Expressive viewpoint, looking at our own hands. We don't write how another person signs...we write our own signing.





 **Cindy**

That's right. I showed a few basic symbols, signs, and an ASL sentence "written-across-page-from-left-to-right", also "down-the-page".



 **Kevin**

Yes. I remember. That was really interesting. I like writing "down-the-page" myself.



 **Cindy**

Yes. I too. It is important that you view the first video to receive all that information in depth. Now we will begin **SignWriting Basics**.







...referring to diagrams on pages 5 and 6...

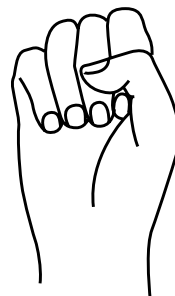
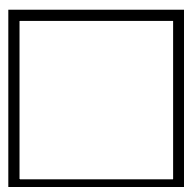
First let me show you three basic handshapes. Look at the top symbol. It is a square for the fist. It represents a closed fist. The next symbol is a circle. Why? Because the fingertips touch each other. It is not a closed fist like the square. It is an open fist, a circle. The third symbol is the flat hand. You see the palm of the hand. The fingers are tight together. That is the flat hand.

Now let's look at the next row of symbols. Remember the square for the fist? Imagine a finger sticking up. As you can see in the top diagram, you have the square for the fist with a line for the finger. In the second symbol, you can see the circle, but now a line is added to show the finger sticking up. Looking at the last symbol. We have a flat hand with the fingers spread.

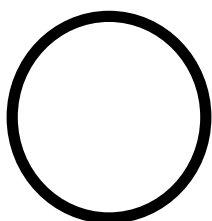


# 3 Basic Handshapes

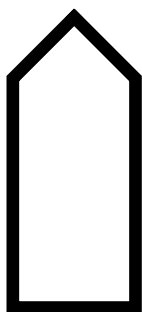
Closed Fist



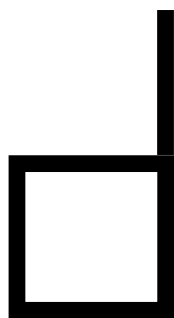
Open Fist



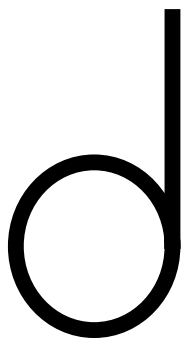
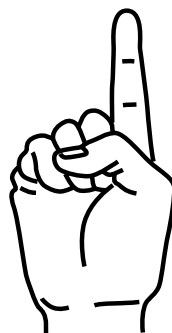
Flat Hand



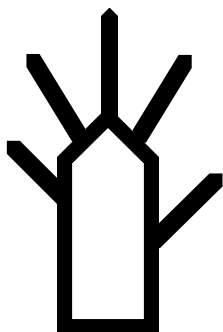
# 3 Basic Handshapes



Index Hand



D - Hand



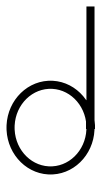
5 - Hand





**Ok. So one finger is sticking up in the "D" handshape, but what would happen if two fingers were sticking up?**

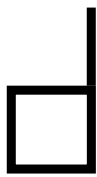
If two fingers were sticking up, you would add another line to the circle. The handshape is a circle because it is an "open fist". No fingers are touching the palm of the hand.



one finger up  
with open fist



two fingers up  
with open fist



one finger up  
with closed fist



two fingers up  
with closed fist



**You mean you wouldn't use the square symbol ?**

No. Well...if you had a closed fist with two fingers sticking up then yes, you would use the square symbol. Remember that the square means a "closed fist". The fingertips are touching the palm of the hand. But the circle means that the fingertips are touching each other.



...referring to diagrams pages 9 and 10...

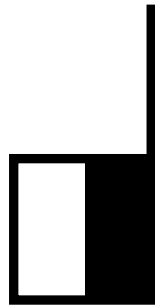
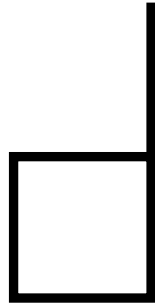
Let me explain two different planes. **Up-Down**, and **Forward-Back**. Look at the left row of symbols. The index finger is pointing up. First the palm is facing you. Then you see the side view. Then you see the back of the hand:

The right row of symbols are hands parallel with the floor. How do you know that? Because there is a break in the finger line...a space at the knuckle joint. That space means the hand is parallel with the floor.

So in review...the row of symbols to the left have the finger line connected to the square. That means the hands are up or down, parallel with the wall. When you see the space, the hand is parallel with the floor. First the palm is up, then the side view, and then the back of the hand.

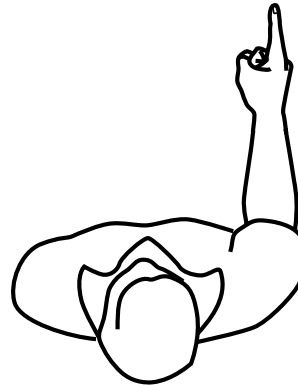
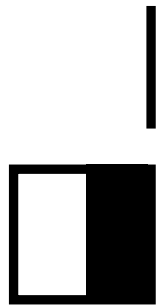
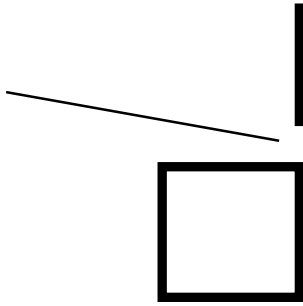


# The Index Hand



# The Index Hand

space at  
knuckle joint  
means hand  
is parallel  
with the floor



...referring to diagrams on page 15...

Now let me show you a few signs. Look at the sign for "argue" at the top left of the chart. We have the two Index Hands facing the body, and then we have the movement arrows. The dark arrowhead is movement with the right hand, and the light arrowhead is movement with the left hand. The little curved line means that the movement is done with both hands at the same time (Simultaneous Line). Look at the next sign, for "sign".



Notice the two circles. The circles are moving in an alternating fashion, and they are done twice because there are two arrowheads.

**So the finger line without a break means the hand is parallel with the wall, and the finger line with the break means the hand is parallel with the floor?**

Right!!

...referring to diagrams on page 13...

Now let me show you another handshape, the "D" hand, first parallel with the wall, or the Wall Plane and second, parallel with the floor, or the Floor Plane. Look at the top symbol to the left in the diagram. The palm is facing the body. The second symbol shows the side view, and the third symbol is the back view.





...referring to diagrams on page 14...

Now, if the handshapes are parallel with the floor, they look different...

**Because there is a break in the line for the finger?**

Exactly. Look at the diagrams to the right on the chart. The hands are parallel with the floor. First you see the palm, then the side view, and then the back view...all parallel with the Floor Plane.



...referring to diagrams on page 16...

Now let me show you some signs. Look at the sign at the top left of the chart. As you can see we have the "D" handshape facing your body.

**Does that curved line on the circle represent a frown?**

No. That is the "location" on the face where the hand contacts the face. The two asterisks represent contacting the chin two times. That is the sign for "dinner". Looking at the

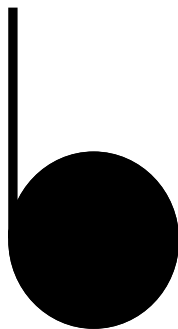
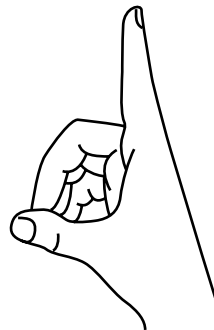
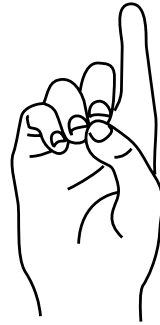
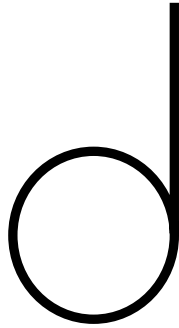
bottom, these three signs are parallel with the floor. Do you notice a difference between the signs for "dating" and "dessert"?



**Yes. The sign for "dating" has no break in the lines for the fingers, but the sign for "dessert" does, because the hands are parallel with the floor.**

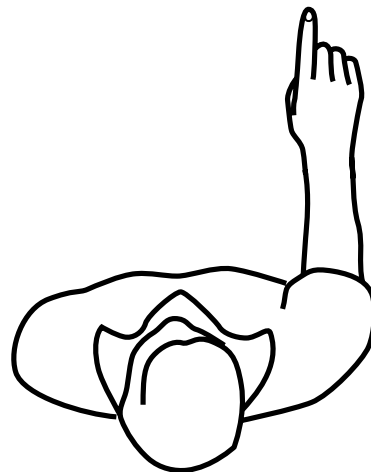
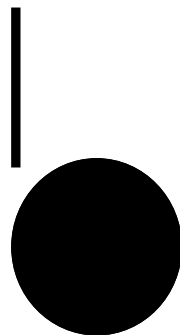
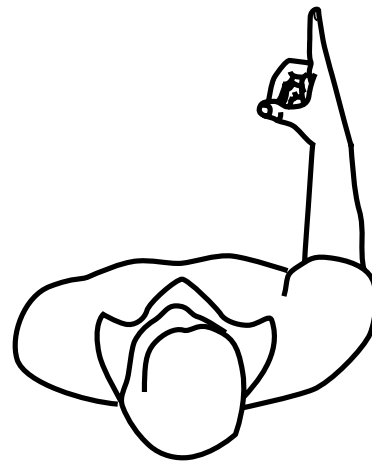
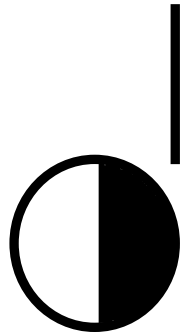
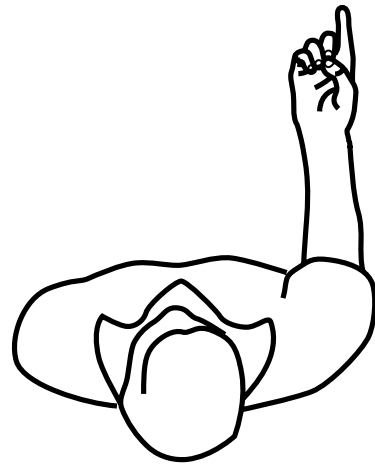
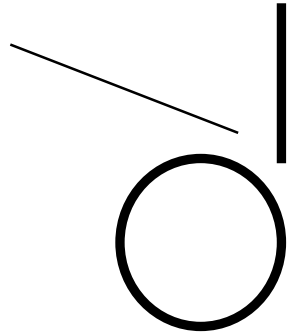
Right!!

# The "D" Hand



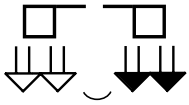
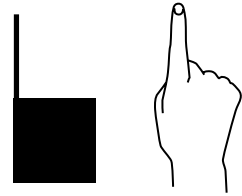
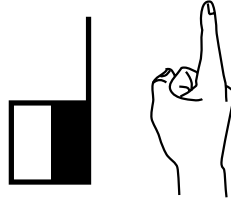
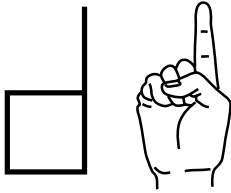
# The "D" Hand

space at  
knuckle joint  
means hand  
is parallel  
with the floor



## Front View

Hands Parallel With The Wall



argue



sign

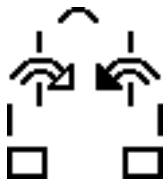
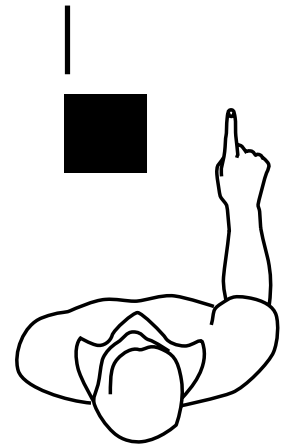
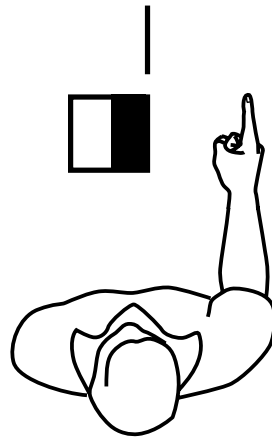
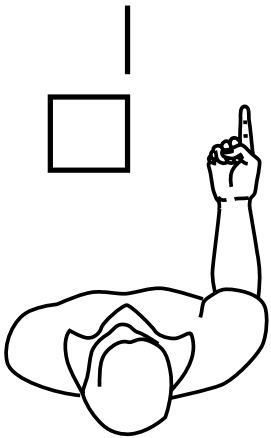


where

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## Top View

Hands Parallel With The Floor



happen



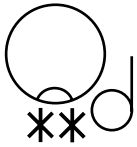
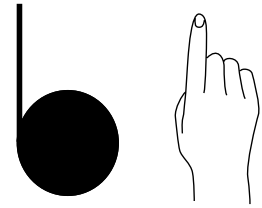
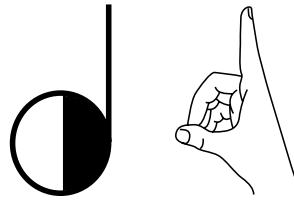
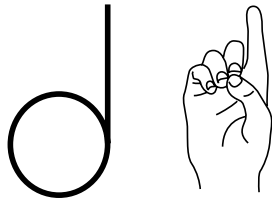
you



same

## Front View

Hands Parallel With The Wall



**dinner**



**dating**

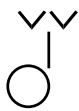
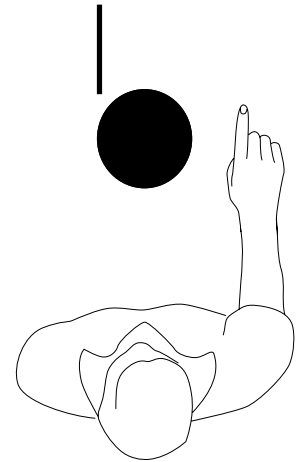
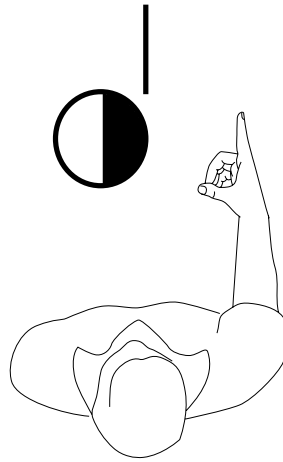
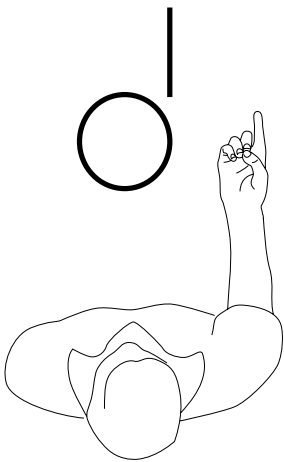


**democracy**

---

## Top View

Hands Parallel With The Floor



**do-do?**



**dessert**



**doctor**



...referring to diagrams on page 19 ...

Here is another basic hand symbol, the Flat Hand. The symbols to the left are parallel with the front wall, or the Wall Plane. The symbol to the top left has the palm



facing the body. The next symbol is the side view. And the third symbol is the back view. They are not parallel with the floor. They are parallel with the wall.

...referring to diagrams on page 20...



The symbols to the right are parallel with the floor, or the Floor Plane. The symbol to the top right has the palm facing up. The next symbol is the side view. And the third symbol has the palm facing down. They are parallel with the floor because there is a break at the knuckle joint. Whenever you see a handshape that has a break at the knuckle joint, you know it is parallel with the floor.



...referring to diagrams on page 21...

Here are some signs using the Flat Hand. On the top row you see the sign for "window", which has the palms facing the body. The arrows show movement with the right hand going up and down with contact. See the little curved line connecting the movement symbols in the sign for "house"? That means that the movements for the left and right hands are done at the same time. Looking at the bottom row, what is the difference between the signs for "things" and "children"?



**Well...the sign for "things" has the palm facing up, but the sign for "children" has the palm facing down.**

That's right! The only difference between the two signs is the palm orientation. The movement is exactly the same, it is just the palm facing that is different.

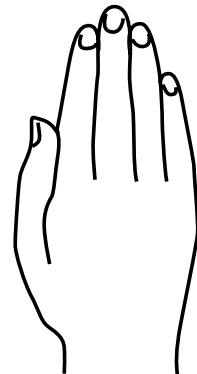
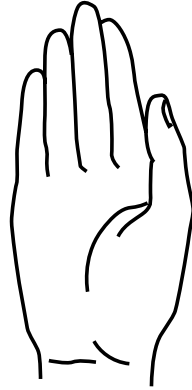
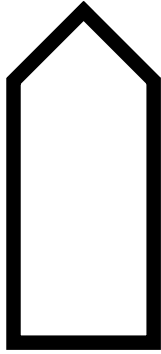


...referring to diagrams on page 22...

Now we will focus on Contact Symbols. We will present three of them. Actually there are six Contact Symbols in all, but on this video we will focus on the three that are most commonly used. The first is the Touch Contact Symbol. It is a basic asterisk. Look at the sign for "dating". As you can see, there are two asterisks, meaning "two times contact". In the sign for "Deaf", we have the circle for the face and the Touch Contact Symbol shows contact on the face with the index finger.



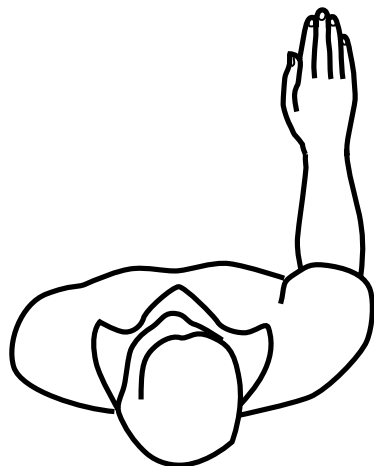
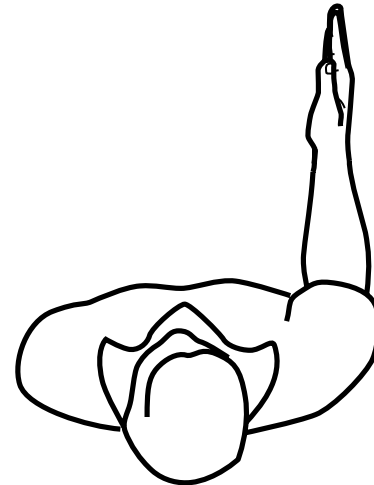
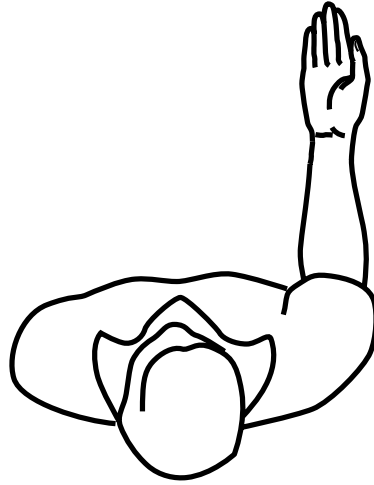
# The Flat Hand





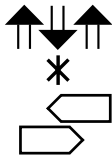
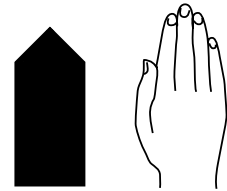
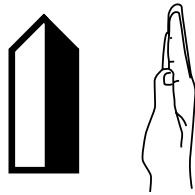
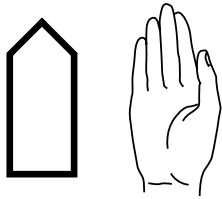
# The Flat Hand

space at  
knuckle joint  
means hand  
is parallel  
with the floor

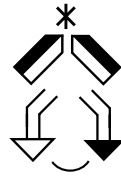


## Front View

Hands Parallel With The Wall



window



house

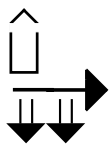
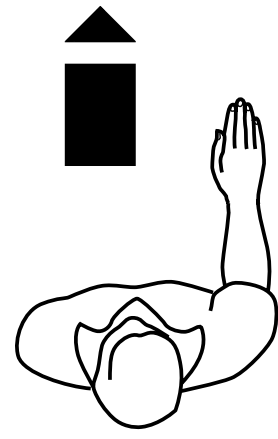
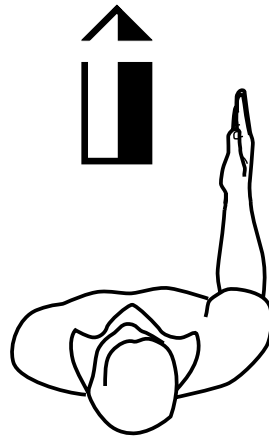
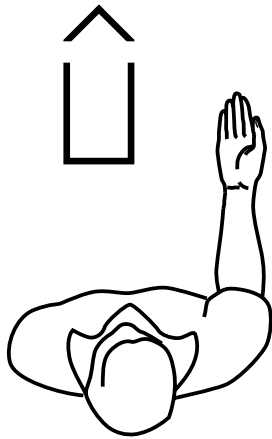


their

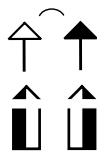
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## Top View

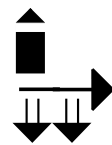
Hands Parallel With The Floor



things

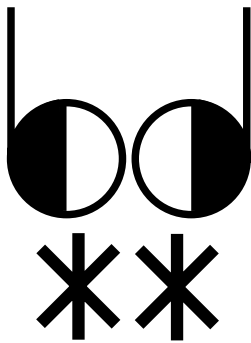
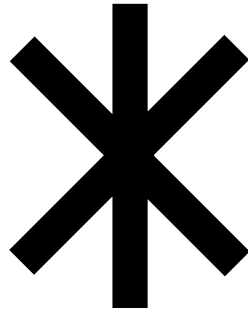


way

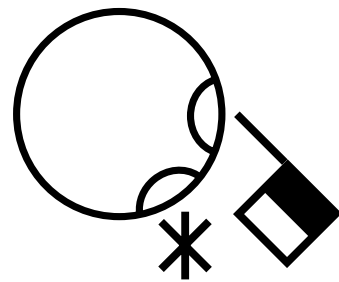


children

# Touch Contact



dating



Deaf

...referring to diagram on page 24...



Here is the Brushing Contact Symbol. The Brush Symbol means that the movement is brushing "off the surface". It is the feeling of truly brushing the hands. Look at the sign for "monthly". The movement with the right hand brushes down twice, brushing "off" the surface.

**So this indicates two downward strokes for the sign "monthly"?**

Yes. That's right.

...referring to diagram on page 25...

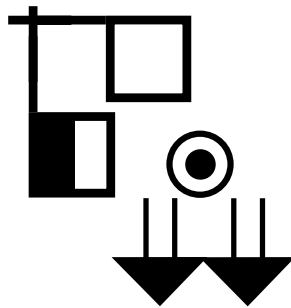
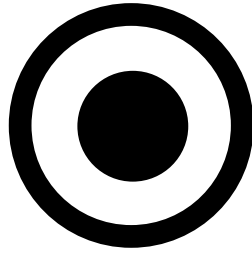
Now we see the Rub Contact Symbol. This symbol gives the "feeling of rubbing". It moves and "stays on the surface". In the sign for "coffee" it rubs in a circle, almost as if you are stirring the coffee. In the sign for "temperature", however, we have movement arrows going up and down with the right hand...



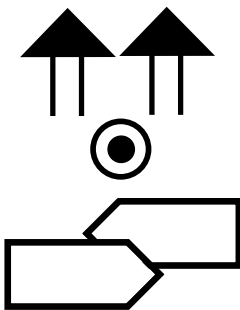
**So the Rub Symbol makes a circular motion in the sign for "temperature"?**

Oh no. It really doesn't. Imagine if you threw out the movement arrows and you only had the Rub Symbol. Then it would be rubbing in a circle...but because we have the movement arrows, it means the rubbing is going in the direction of those arrows. Remember, the Rub Symbol represents movement that "stays on the surface". If it were the Brush Symbol, then it would move "off the surface" as in the sign for "monthly", but because it is the Rub Symbol, it "stays on the surface" as in the sign for "temperature".

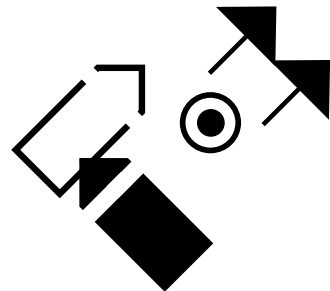
# Brush Contact



**monthly**



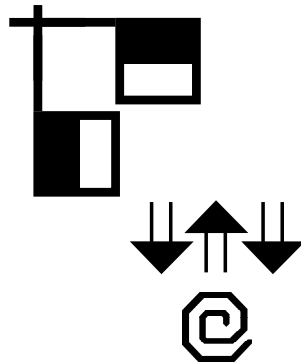
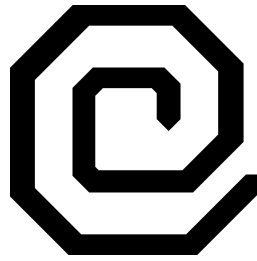
**easy**



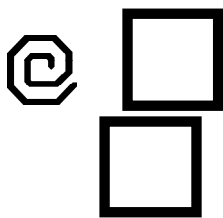
**excuse**



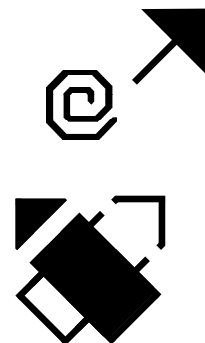
# Rub Contact



temperature



coffee



nice

...referring to diagrams on page 27...

Now we will focus on movement symbols. We will show movement arrows on two different planes...the plane parallel with the wall and the plane parallel with the floor.

Here we have the arrow with the double stem line. It means movement up or down, parallel with the wall. In this case, it is moving down. In the sign for "house", the movement arrow is a combination of first moving down diagonally and second moving straight down.



...referring to diagrams on page 28...



Now, looking at the next symbol...it is parallel with the floor. It has a single stem. It means movement "forward".

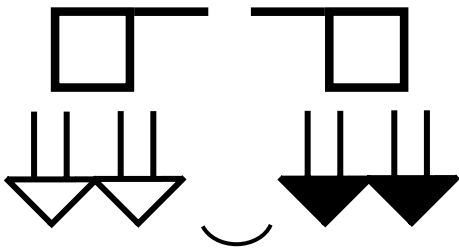
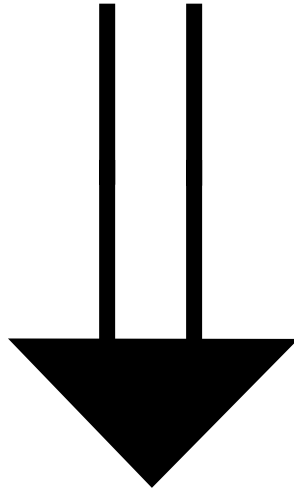
**It's not movement upward?**

Oh no. It is not movement upward. If it were upward, it would have a double stemline, but the single stemline means that it is movement forward, parallel with the floor.

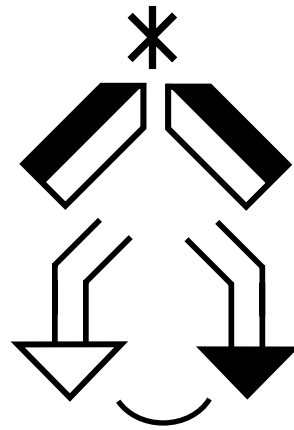


# Movement Down

Parallel With The Wall



argue

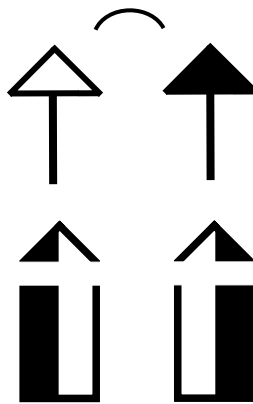
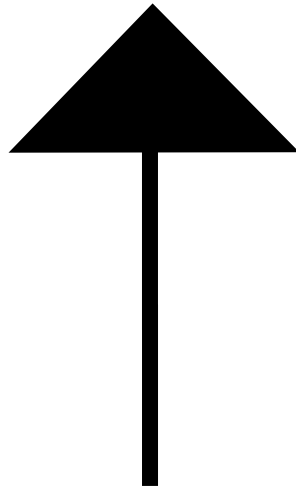


house



# Movement Forward

Parallel With The Floor



way



you





...referring to diagrams  
on page 30...

Here we have a sentence that asks a question. First, we have the circle for the head. Can you see the little arrow above the circle?

**Yes. Does that mean the head moves upward?**

No. That means the head projects forward. And then you have the eyebrows up in a question. What do you think that thin & thick line at the end means?

**The end of the sentence?**

Well. A little bit different. Do you remember before we learned that two lines can represent a pause or a break in a sentence, and a thick line marks the end of a sentence? Well, this is a combination of those two symbols. It is a little pause before the end of the sentence. It's like a question mark. An English translation of this sentence might be: "Are you Deaf?"

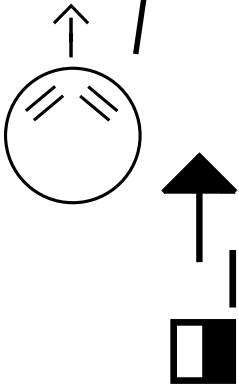


...referring to diagrams on page 31...

Now let me show you another way of writing...writing down the page. Our first sentence was written from left to right across the page, but this new sentence is written down the page. Looking at the sign at the top of the sentence. Notice the eyebrows. They are down or in. The head is projecting forward. The question mark symbol at the end of the sentence is now horizontal instead of vertical. In English, this sentence could be translated: "Where is the house?"

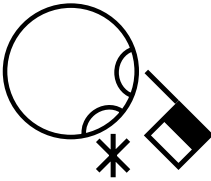


eyebrows  
up



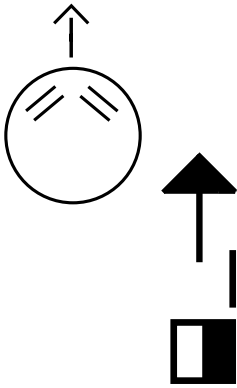
You

head  
forward



Deaf

question  
mark

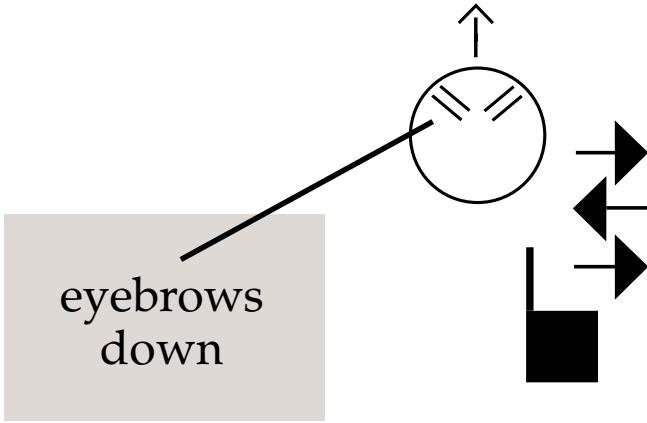


you

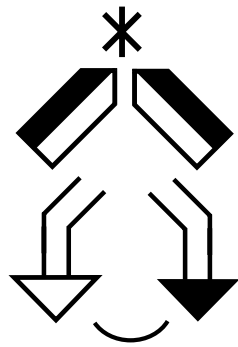


?

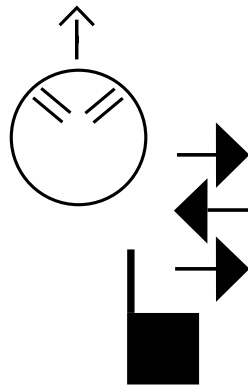




Where



house



where



?



Wow!!

SignWriting® is really nice because it has so many features that allow us to describe ASL.

Yeah. We have facial expressions, movement symbols, hand symbols, **everything** is included. You know, it's really nice, because English has been used, in the past, for writing English glosses of ASL, but glosses just don't do justice to ASL, as SignWriting® does. It's nice to have our **own** way of writing our **own** language!





**And it's easier to read too!**

Ok. Well...I guess that's the end of this lesson!

**Goodbye!!**