

The ASL Alphabet

Fingerspelling is the act of spelling English words with the ASL alphabet. This is an important tool for beginners, because it can express anything.

While anything can be expressed with the ASL alphabet, it's a bit cumbersome to spell and read everything. The ASL alphabet is used during normal communication, but not as a substitute for signs. Things that are normally fingerspelled include names of cities, states, people, books, movies, product names and English words that don't have sign equivalents. Everything else should be signed.

A good way to practice fingerspelling is in front of the television or near the radio. Fingerspell whatever is said. It should be smooth and fluid. Another way to practice fingerspelling is to fingerspell business or street signs, or anything that pops into your head. It'll become automatic. The fingers will eventually know without asking the mind.

Mouth the words while fingerspelling, and let your fingers follow. When fingerspelling a word with a repeating letter, such as "letter," hold the ***T-hand shape*** while moving it slightly to the dominant side.

Learning to fingerspell and read fingerspelling is much like learning to read and write any language. We first focus on the individual letters. We turn our focus to entire words as we become more comfortable. Try to see the shape of the whole word instead of the individual letters. Don't worry if you miss a letter. The art of reading fingerspelling is much like doing a crossword puzzle. It's difficult to catch every letter of a word, so we use the context of the conversation to help us infer what we miss.

When reading fingerspelling, focus on the other person's lips, and view their hands through your peripheral vision. Lastly, ***pause*** between words while fingerspelling.

Place the hand to the dominant side of the face with a comfortable bend at the elbow. The hand should be mouth high, or a little lower.



A



B



C



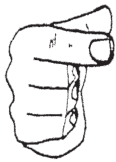
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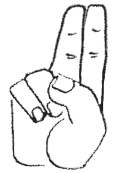
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