



Student Resource Guide



10. Communication

Communication

Outcomes

When you finish this session, you will be able to:

- List the reasons for communication.
- Give examples of non-verbal communication.
- Identify modes of communication.
- Describe things that get in the way of an individual being understood.
- Identify ways to support individuals' communication in their daily routines.
- Describe a method for managing conflict.
- Follow the rules for conflict resolution.

KEY WORDS

| Key Word | Meaning | In My Own Words |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Active Listening | One person hears another's words, figures out what they mean, and responds to the words in his or her own words. | |
| Communication | Sharing thoughts, views, and feelings. | |
| Communication Boards | Mode of communication that individuals carry with them. | |
| "I" Statements | Talking about a conflict from one's own point of view. | |
| Modes of Communication | The ways in which thoughts, views and feelings can be expressed. | |
| Non-Verbal | Expressing thoughts, views and feelings without using spoken words. | |
| Sign Language | The mode of communication used in the deaf community. Sign language combines the use of hand shapes, hand and arm movements, facial expressions, gestures, and body language in a structured and conventional manner to express thoughts, views, and feelings. | |

A C T I V I T Y

What Do You Want to Know?

Directions: *Think about the topic of this training session. Answer the first two questions in the space provided below. You will come back to this page at the end of the session to answer the last question.*

.....
What do you **already know** about communicating with others and about supporting communication for individuals with disabilities?

.....
What do you **want to know** about communicating with others and about supporting communication for individuals with disabilities?

.....
To be answered at the end of the session, during review:
What **have you learned** about communicating with others and about supporting communication for individuals with disabilities?

Opening Scenario

Matthew is an 8-year-old boy with cerebral palsy. Matthew has trouble talking and being understood when speaking words. In his Individual Program Plan (IPP), Matthew has a goal to use a variety of different ways to communicate. Susan, a DSP in the home where Matthew lives is very fond of Matthew and has been trying to get him to practice talking more. Lately Susan has stopped using Matthew's picture communication system with him and ignores Matthew when he uses gestures or sign language. Matthew has been trying to ask her for a drink of juice using his picture system. Susan has ignored him, saying to him, "Matthew, you just need to learn to talk." Matthew tries using the sign he knows for drink. Susan again ignores him saying, "I don't understand that stuff. Matthew, you really can try to tell me in words." Matthew is very frustrated and just can't get the words out. He is very thirsty and angry. He falls to the floor and starts screaming and crying.

Communication

Communication is a very important tool in the DSP toolbox. Good communication will help the DSP reduce confusion and frustration and improve the quality of life for everyone in the home. Good communication is a vital component to decision making and problem solving. It is the basis for recognizing the needs of the individual and providing high quality support. Knowing how to communicate with simple, clear statements will lead to more

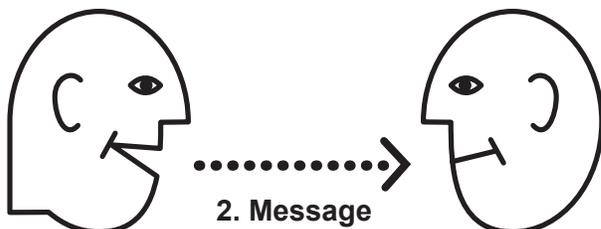
positive interactions with the individuals you support, their families, co-workers, and community members.

This session will enhance the DSP's skills related to:

- Communicating with individuals
- Supporting individuals' communication with others
- Communicating with other team members, including co-workers and community members

What is Communication?

Communication is about sharing thoughts, views, feelings, needs, and preferences. There are three parts to all communication:



1. Sender
The individual with something to communicate.

2. Message
What the individual wishes to communicate.

3. Receiver
The person to whom the message is given.

When an individual decides to send a message, the intent is to:

- Express something meaningful to him or her
- Achieve a purpose
- Share thoughts, views, and feelings with other people

Reasons for Communicating

Why do people communicate with each other? People have many different reasons to communicate during the course of each day. One very important reason for communicating is to gain more control of our lives and to participate in our communities. More specifically, people communicate in order to:

- **Give and Get Information**

For the DSP, this could mean giving information to parents or family members about an individual's progress or letting the regional center know about an unusual incident. It could mean asking everyone in the program his or her opinion on an activity before deciding what to do. Or you may need to check with the regional center, your administrator, and the family before changing the way in which you approach an IPP objective. For individuals, this could mean asking about the day's plans, meals, what to wear, or when they want to see their friends. It includes asking questions and offering thoughts, views, or understandings.

- **Express Feelings**

Individuals may want you to know when they have had a great day or when they are feeling bad.

- **Solve Problems**

You may need to communicate with two individuals at your program to work out problems and to help people solve their own issues.

- **Learn New Things**

Individuals will need to know how to gain skills, such as oral health and hygiene skills, cooking, taking care of their money, or how to make their needs known.

- **Persuade Others**

Individuals may want to have others do something differently. This could mean choosing clothing different from what was offered. It could mean convincing your supervisor to alter your schedule for a special event.

- **Make Decisions**

The DSP communicates with many people who make decisions that affect individuals in their programs. For instance, when a team is trying to figure out how to address a problem, there might be communication among the staff, the consultants, other programs, and the regional center so the best decision is made.

- **Build Relationships**

The DSP communicates with community members, neighbors, friends, and the individuals he or she supports. All relationships rely on some form of communication. Individuals use communication skills to get to know other people: find out what they like, what they do, what is important to them, and what the individuals have in common.

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is the most common way individuals exchange information. Verbal communication is a complex skill, which requires attending to another person. There are many points at which a breakdown could occur when using verbal communication. Verbal communication can be broken into four parts.

1. *Organizing the message.* This begins with the thought process of what the individual wishes to say.
2. *Sending the message.* The individual transfers the thought into spoken words, which are delivered to another person.
3. *Receiving the message.* The person receiving the message hears the message and attends to it.
4. *Processing the message.* The brain of the person receiving the message decides what the intended message means.

Excerpted from the *Caregiver Manual & Resource Guide for Southwest Florida*, Florida Gulf Coast University, 2002.

Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication is communication that is expressed without spoken words. Sometimes a sender's spoken message is not understood by the receiver. At these times, non-verbal communication may be more effective

since there is less chance for breakdown to occur. Generally the receiver needs to attend to the sender and see the nonverbal communication to understand it. Non-verbal communication can also be used to overcome other barriers to communication, for example difficulty speaking due to cerebral palsy. Following are some examples of non-verbal communication:

- **Facial Expressions**

What an individual is feeling is communicated by the look on his or her face. For example, usually a smile means the individual is happy, and a frown means that he or she might be sad.

- **Gestures**

Gestures are hand, body, and facial movements that have meaning. Examples are putting your hands up as if to say "I don't know," or shaking your head to say "Yes" or "No," or waving to an individual in order to say, "Come closer, please."

- **Volume of Voice**

The loudness or softness of a person's voice may communicate how they feel.

- **Physical Closeness**

Standing close to people usually means they know each other well. Most people try to stay about an arm's length away from the person to whom they are talking.

Modes of Communication

Now you know that communication can be either verbal or non-verbal. The variety of ways communication can be expressed are called **modes of communication**. Modes are either verbal or non-verbal.

Common modes of communication include:

- **Spoken Language**

Spoken language uses speech in words and sounds that are conventional and structured. Individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities may understand spoken language, but not have developed speech skills. They may use speech mixed with other forms of communication to make their needs known.

- **Written Language**

Written language is not always written in full sentences or spelled correctly. It is meaningful communication when the sender and receiver understand the context of the written language. For example, if an individual is in the grocery store and writes the word “cheese,” she or he may wish to buy cheese. However, if the individual is in the kitchen with the refrigerator door open and writes the word “cheese,” this time it may mean, “Help me find the cheese.”

- **Sign Language**

Sign language is the mode of communication used in the deaf community. In the United States, the standard sign language is American Sign Language. It combines the use of hand shapes, hand and arm movements, facial expressions, gestures, and body language in a structured and conventional manner to express thoughts, views, and feelings. American Sign Language has its own alphabet, words, and syntax. The American Sign Language alphabet can be found in Appendix 10-A.

- **Sign Systems**

Sign systems are based on American Sign Language and have been adapted to the needs of individuals who are in schools and whose learning styles limit their use of spoken language. Many individuals who have developmental delays use signs that combine parts of American Sign Language and local, school, or home-based signs. Appendix 10-B provides a basic list of words in American Sign Language for the DSP to use as a reference tool.

- **Communication Books**

Communication books contain pictures, words, photographs, or symbols. They can be used separately or combined in one book. Individuals who use these books might point to the message they wish to send or use the book in combination with speech or even with signing. Communication books are developed based upon each individual’s needs and abilities.

- **Communication Boards/Electronic Devices**

Communication boards are modes of communication that individuals carry with them. Some individuals use a board that has letters on it, like a computer keyboard. They point to the letters that spell words so someone can understand them. Some people have electronic systems that use pictures or symbols or that attach to computer monitors. Some systems have a voice that repeats the word, sign, or symbol to which the individual points.

- **Behavior**

Behavior can tell you a lot if you “listen” to what it is saying. Among other things, it gives you information about what individuals want, when they are unhappy, and their interest in being social.

Modes of Communication (cont.)

Some of the things that behavior can communicate are individuals’:

- Preferences or choices
- Requests for objects
- Requests for assistance
- Requests for affection
- Desire for attention
- Feelings

The purpose of all modes of communication is to support individuals as they make choices and interact. It is important that DSPs are able to identify the modes of communication that individuals use and support them in using those modes.

ACTIVITY

“Listening” to What Behaviors Are Communicating

Directions: Read about behaviors described in the left column. In the right column, write down what you think those behaviors are communicating.

| Behavior | What could that behavior be communicating? |
|---|--|
| <p>Example: Bob points to an apple on the table and then points to his mouth.</p> | <p>Bob wants to eat the apple.</p> |
| <p>Marta smiles and shakes your hand.</p> | |
| <p>Dan comes to you with a toothbrush in one hand, toothpaste in the other hand, and a confused look on his face.</p> | |
| <p>Lisa spits out peas onto the table.</p> | |
| <p>Juan tugs at your sleeve.</p> | |

Communication Disorders

You have learned about some of the ways that people communicate. In part, the mode of communication is influenced by communication disorders that an individual may have. Some of the things that can get in the way of an individual being understood include:

- Limited or no speech
- Hearing loss
- Poor control of muscles needed to produce speech (like with cerebral palsy)
- Damage to the part of the brain that controls speech
- Challenging behaviors
- Day-to-day health of the individual

When making your needs known is hard, it's difficult to meet people and to do the things you enjoy, and it may make an individual behave in a negative way.

There are two kinds of communication disorders:

1. Speech Disorders

Speech disorders relate to the muscles that people use to form the sounds of speech. There are four types of speech disorders:

- **Abnormal Pitch**

This is a condition in which an individual's voice is high-pitched or very deep. It is similar to the difference between a man's and a woman's voice. Men's voices are usually lower toned or pitched than women's.

- **Abnormal Quality**

This is a disorder in which an individual makes the sounds, but the sounds last longer or shorter than usual or are molded together in a way that make it

hard to understand. It is similar to a tape recording that has gotten too old so that the tape moves slowly or a tape recording that, at the end of the tape, moves fast so the voices sound high pitched and fast.

- **Excessive Loudness**

This is a condition in which individuals almost shout rather than talk in a normal voice.

- **Incorrect Articulation**

This is a condition where the individual's mouth makes sounds incorrectly. Perhaps a "p" is pronounced with a voice and breathing like a "b" sound. Another example is an individual's inability to make the sound at all with his or her lips, which keeps the listener wondering what he or she meant.

Sometimes speech muscles that don't work cause a speech disorder. You may hear a speech therapist who works for someone you support talk about this. Some individuals may miss sounds when they are talking, like saying "nake" for "snake," or "moke" for "smoke." Or an individual might say "dis" and "dat" instead of "this" and "that."

2. Language Disorders

Language disorders are sometimes caused by damage to some area of the brain. With a language disorder an individual might be limited in his or her ability to understand language. This is called receptive language. An individual's ability to talk might be limited. This is called expressive language. Or, a person may talk as if they are much younger.

Supporting Individuals' Communication During Daily Routines

Once the DSP has identified the individual's modes of communicating, his or her responsibility is to encourage communication during daily routines. Each time the DSP and the individual are together is a chance to initiate communication. This will help individuals have more control of their lives and participate in their communities in a meaningful way.

Following are some suggestions for supporting individuals' communication every day:

- **Create opportunities during the day to promote conversations with individuals**

For example, talk to the individual while doing personal care, oral hygiene, eating, and dressing routines. These are opportunities for you to learn more about individuals' modes of communication and their preferences.

- **Provide individuals time to respond**

Sometimes people are so busy that they ask a question and don't really wait for a response. How many times have you asked someone "How are you?" without waiting to hear their answer? It is important to keep in mind that some individuals may take longer to understand a question. Others may need time to formulate their response. Sometimes the response may take a very long time.

- **Acknowledge the individual's attempt to communicate**

Remember that everyone communicates in different ways. Even a small sound or gesture needs to be noticed. That will let the individual know that what they are trying to tell you is important to you.

- **Provide opportunities to make choices. Avoid making decisions for individuals**

If you have known an individual for a long time, you often think you know what they need and want. However, individuals' needs and preferences may change over time. It is essential to create opportunities for individuals to communicate their needs and preferences. One way to do this is to provide "choice opportunities." Choice opportunities are situations in which someone is provided with a choice between two or more items or activities. You can offer choices throughout the daily routine. For example, "Do you want to brush your teeth with Crest® or Colgate®?" "Do you want pizza or steak for dinner?" "Would you like to go for a walk or go to a movie?"

- **Talk to the individual about routines as they occur**

It is important to talk about activities as you do them. Imagine if you had to go through a day in total silence. By talking through each activity, you increase the chances that the individual will learn the words, as well as the order of the activities. You should talk through routines with the individuals you support even if you don't know if they really understand. You don't always know what the individual understands.

What the DSP teaches about communication is as important as how it is taught. If an individual is communicating through pictures or graphic symbols, the DSP may need to spend more structured time to assure that the symbol used matches what the individual wants to communicate. The DSP can also use those symbols throughout the day for routines and activities so that there are many chances to practice them. For someone who is learning to make choices

Supporting Individuals' Communications During Daily Routines (cont.)

through facial expressions, you can also make sure that there are a number of chances for him or her to make a choice and to practice facial expressions.

Strategies for Making Communication a Part of Every Day

- Use words when the individual feels something (sore, hurt, tired).
- Name objects during daily routines.
- Describe everything as you assist the individual (dressing, serving meals).
- Point to pictures of objects in books and say them clearly.
- Provide time for the individual to respond/communicate.

- Point out objects while on a walk, in the car, at the park, or in the store.
- Encourage the individual to watch your mouth as you say words.
- Speak in short sentences when giving directions.
- Be sure to pronounce the entire word.
- Encourage progress in making sounds and saying words.
- Be sure your movements are simple when teaching.
- Encourage individuals to use all of their senses.
- Listen carefully to what the individual says or attempts to say.

A C T I V I T Y

Supporting Individuals' Communication in Their Daily Routines

Directions: *Think of an individual whom you support and one routine that they do on a daily basis (for example, brushing their teeth, bathing, eating breakfast). Using the Strategies for Making Communication a Part of Every Day and your own strategies, write down three ways that you can encourage that individual's communication during that routine.*

Daily routine: _____

Strategies I use to encourage communication during this routine:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Until now, this session has focused on communicating with individuals and facilitating individuals' communication. We will now discuss how DSPs communicate with each other and with other team members.

Active Listening

Each of us shares the responsibility for good communication. Listening is a key skill to good communication. Realistically the life of a DSP doesn't always lend itself to those private moments when listening would be easy. When you add more people and their interests, you've increased the difficulty of listening. Effective DSPs develop the skills to both assist individuals to communicate and to listen very carefully. Another role of the DSP is to learn how to communicate effectively with other team members, including:

- Family members
- Regional center staff
- Licensing staff
- Administrators
- Neighbors
- Co-workers
- Work or program staff

We all need to take the time to figure out the words we hear. We may even need to ask the person who said them if we heard correctly before we respond. That means that we have to pay very close attention to each word the person is saying. This is called **active listening** because it involves a lot of energy. The steps for active listening are:

- Hear the words
- Figure out their meaning
- Respond to the meaning in your own words

Hearing what a person says is not the same as listening. It happens when you take time to see if what you understood was what the person really meant. Your response is a way to "check" if the individual or fellow DSP feels heard and that the communication was understood. The ways that the DSP can do this are to:

- Ask the speaker questions to see if the understanding is correct.
- Reword the statement and say it back for clarification. For example: "What I hear you saying is that you feel frustrated. Is that correct?"

Sometimes it is important to not only hear the words but to "actively listen" to the individual's behavior or other modes of communication.

Conflict Resolution

To this point, this session has focused on assisting individuals learn how to communicate and DSPs becoming good communicators. There will be times, even with good communication, when people disagree. For example, the planning team may disagree about the goal an individual may have, a parent may disagree with the support given to an individual, or two individuals living together can disagree about what TV program to watch. There

are many times that a DSP will encounter conflict. It is important to know how to effectively and professionally resolve conflict.

Helping individuals be more independent may also mean teaching individuals how to resolve conflicts, how to solve their own problems, and how to make decisions. With those skills, the individuals you support can be more confident in their own abilities.

ACTIVITY

Stepping into Another Person's Shoes

Directions: *Pair up with another person in the class, and ask the following questions. Write your partner's answers below.*

.....
 1. Did you share a bedroom while growing up?

.....
 2. Do you share a home with someone now?

.....
 3. Was there ever a time when you didn't like sharing a room?

.....
 4. What made sharing a room or a house difficult?

Method for Managing Conflict

Following is a method that you might use for managing conflict. This method may be helpful both at work and at home.

- **Separate the person from the problem**

Put yourself in the other person's place, like you just did in the activity. Sometimes, something about the person is just annoying to you. It could be his or her voice or the way he dresses, or you don't like the way he lives his life. But you have to look just at the problem in order to resolve things. You have to control your emotions, even if the other person is doing things that really bother you. Mostly, you want to make sure that you understand each other.

- **Figure out each person's goals and interests**

Concentrate on what each person wants most and try to find the places where there is agreement. Be open to meeting someone half way. Everyone should define how they see the problem, and the problem has to be discussed before solutions can be found.

- **Find answers that work for both people**

There are many different ways to find possible answers to the problem. One way is brainstorming, which you'll practice a little later. Explore all kinds of options before making a decision.

- **Try to agree**

You may not come to agreement on a solution the first time that you discuss the problem. Sometimes, you have to review all of the options several times. Some people may want to think it over or discuss it with others. Once there is agreement, decide what the next steps might be. Who will do what, and when will that be done? Then figure out how to decide if the solution really worked.



ACTIVITY



Brainstorming

Directions: *Break into small groups. Read the following scenario. Next, brainstorm some ways that the money could be spent. Every idea that group members suggest must be written down. Then, as a group, try to come to agreement on one of the options.*

Scenario

One of the parents whose child lives in the home where you work just gave you \$500. The parent said that the money can be spent in whatever way the whole group decides. The only restriction is that everyone has to be part of the decision making process.

Our group's ideas for how the money should be spent:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

We decided on this idea:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Rules for Conflict Resolution

Below are some rules for resolving conflict. Rules like these are often used to help couples to communicate better. When you are discussing a difficult problem:

- **Use “I” statements**

Using “I” statements means that you need to talk about the problem or disagreement from your own point of view. Look at the difference between the following statements:

“I feel much better when you call to let me know you’ll be late.”

“You never come home on time.”

The second example puts the blame for the problem on the other person and can make it difficult to resolve the problem.

- **Be willing to resolve the problem**
- **Do not engage in name calling**
- **Stay in the present and stick to the topic**

Staying in the present and sticking to the topic means that you shouldn’t bring up problems that are not related to what you are discussing right now. Consider the following statements:

“You are acting just how you used to act five years ago when you never called home if you knew you would be late.”

“And I also am sick of you leaving your dirty clothes on the floor instead of putting them in the hamper.”

Statements like these take the focus off the problem at hand and make resolving it seem much less manageable.

- **Don’t interrupt the person who is talking**
- **Recognize that the other person has his or her own feelings**
- **Ask questions to understand the other person’s side**

Spencer Johnson, M.D.



ACTIVITY

Observing for Effective Communication

Directions: *Think about the video. Make a list of the good and bad examples of communication you observed. Think of how the bad examples could have been communicated in a better way. As a group, be prepared to discuss what you observed with the whole class and to make suggestions for improving upon the bad examples.*

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

“Good” communication

“Bad” communication

PRACTICE & SHARE

During this session you learned about modes of communication and communication disorders. Think about an individual whom you support. What modes of communication do they use most often? Do they have any communication disorders? How can you assist them in communicating more effectively?

Session 10 Quiz

Communication

1. **Why do people communicate?**
 - A) To give and get information
 - B) To stay healthy
 - C) To increase their income
 - D) To isolate themselves
2. **Verbal communication has four parts: organizing the message, sending the message, receiving the message, and:**
 - A) Sending the message back
 - B) Processing the message
 - C) Repeating the message
 - D) Forgetting the message
3. **Which is an example of nonverbal communication?**
 - A) Naming the days of the week
 - B) Using facial expressions and gestures to make a request
 - C) Singing out loud at meal time
 - D) Talking on a cell phone
4. **What is one thing that may get in the way of an individual being understood?**
 - A) Television watching
 - B) Socializing with other individuals
 - C) Having many unmet needs
 - D) An individual's hearing loss
5. **Ways to support communication during daily routines include:**
 - A) Not understanding the individual's needs
 - B) Creating more opportunities for quiet time
 - C) Sitting and speaking with an individual after dinner
 - D) Talking only when the individual asks a question
6. **If an individual has poor muscle control, how might it affect their speech?**
 - A) They may make sounds that are not clear
 - B) They may not be able to hear
 - C) They may be very loud
 - D) They may only speak when spoken to
7. **Which is an example of verbal communication?**
 - A) An individual responds "Hello" to a greeting
 - B) An individual shakes a DSP's hand
 - C) An individual moves away from the person speaking to him
 - D) An individual is sitting quietly in a chair
8. **When managing conflict, it is important to:**
 - A) Enforce the rules
 - B) Separate the person from the problem
 - C) Win your argument
 - D) Separate people who disagree
9. **An "I" statement describes a problem:**
 - A) From your own point of view
 - B) With the individual's behavior
 - C) So it is clear who is at fault
 - D) With the individual's plan
10. **When discussing a difficult problem with a co-worker:**
 - A) Don't interrupt the person who is talking
 - B) Be sure to get your own way
 - C) Bring up similar problems you have had with the co-worker in the past
 - D) Try to make the co-worker angrier

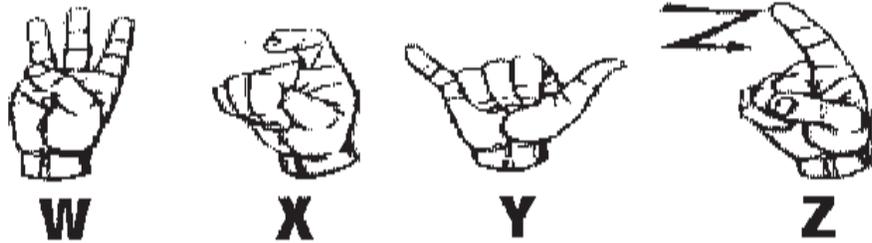
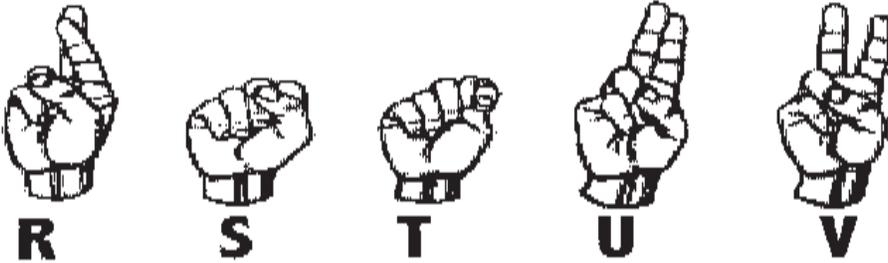
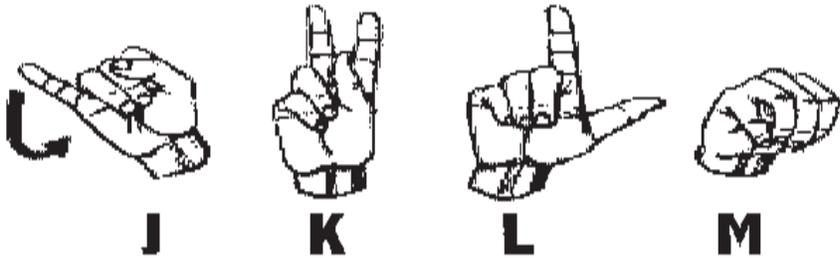
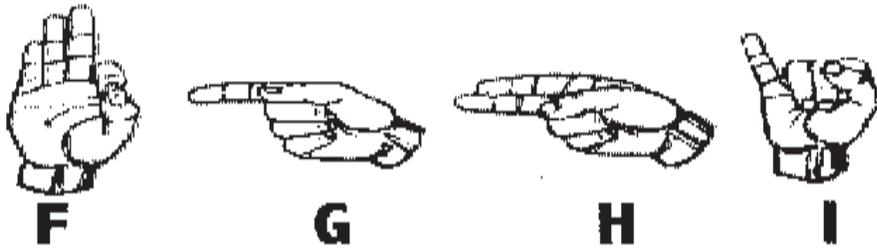


Appendices



Appendix 10-A

American Sign Language Manual Alphabet (www.lifeprint.com)



Saying Words with American Sign Language

Excerpted from Vicars American Sign Language Course Introductory Signing Concepts
@ www.lifeprint.com

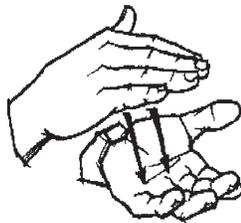
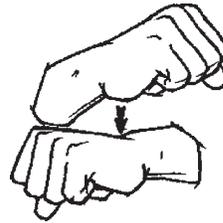


Home

The sign for “home” is made by touching your fingers and thumb together at the mouth. Then move your hand from your mouth to your right cheek.

Work

The sign for “work” is made by shaping both hands into the letter “s.” With your palms facing downward, tap your left wrist on the back of your hand a few times with your right wrist.

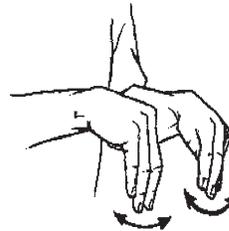


School

The sign for “school” is made by clapping your hands. Repeat two or three times.

Store

The sign for “store” is made by bending both wrists and pointing both hands down. Pivot both of your hands toward and away from your body. Repeat a few times.



Hungry

The sign for “hungry” is made by forming your right hand into the letter “c.” Move your hand down the middle of your chest, starting under your throat. Note: Some people use the sign for “wish,” and prefer to start “hungry” from a slightly lower position.

Appendix 10-B (cont.)

Thank You

The sign for “thank you” is made by touching your lips with one or both of your hands. Your hand(s) should be flat. Move your hand(s) away from your face, palms upward. Smile. Note: Most people use only one hand for this sign.

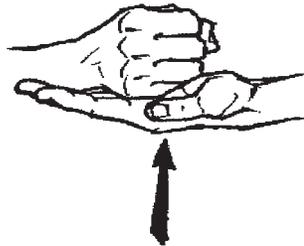


Sad

The sign for “sad” is made by placing both hands in front of your face, palms in. Bring both of your hands down the length of your face. Tilt your head forward slightly, and make a sad face.

Love

The sign for “love” is made by crossing both hands over your heart. Your hands may be closed or open, but the palms should face toward you.



Help

The sign for “help” is made by closing your right hand. Place your right hand on the outstretched palm of your left hand. Raise both hands. Note: Many people make this sign by placing the left “s” or “a” hand on the right “b” palm.

Bathroom

The sign for “bathroom” is made by forming the right hand into the letter “t.” With your palm facing away from you, shake your hand in front of your chest.

