

The Importance of British Sign Language (BSL)

Deaf Awareness



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“Sign Language
is about
seeing the voices
rather than
hearing them”
(Paarlberg, 2022).

What Is British Sign Language?

- ◆ BSL is used in the UK and is the first preferred language among the deaf community.
- ◆ BSL is a visual-gestural language with a distinctive grammar using handshapes, facial expressions, gestures and body language to convey meaning.

Why Use BSL?

- ◆ In Scotland alone there are 1 million people that are Deaf or have a Hearing Loss/Impairment (RNID, 2023).
- ◆ It is also important to note that not all deaf/hearing impaired/loss children and adults use or know BSL. This Booklet can be useful to those that have this disability as well as they can learn too.
- ◆ There are roughly 5,463,300 people living in Scotland currently and only 12,500 people in Scotland knows BSL (Cullen et al., 2023). That includes children and adults that are Deaf or have a Hearing Loss/Impairment themselves.

How would you feel if you were unable to communicate with society?

To help prevent communication barriers occurring between deaf individuals and society it is important to spread awareness and understand the importance of knowing the language of British Sign.

This booklet will allow you to learn small basics of BSL and also offer further links that will allow you to learn and study this language.

How To Communicate with Deaf People

- 1 For Deaf people with limited hearing, or lip-reading skills, speaking clearly will help.
- 2 Speak clearly in whole sentences, without using abbreviations. Be prepared to repeat yourself if the lip-reader doesn't understand you first time.
- 3 Even the best lip-readers only catch less than half of the words which are said to them, natural facial expressions and hand gestures can really help.
- 4 Don't be tempted to speak slowly, loudly or exaggerate your mouth movements, because that just makes things harder for the person trying to understand you.
- 5 Make good eye contact; look directly at the deaf person, don't turn away, and don't cover your face or mouth.
- 6 Remember to wait until the person is looking at you before you attempt to communicate.
- 7 Don't stand with a light or a window at your back; the light needs to be on your face.
- 8 Do speak clearly and slightly slower, but don't shout or over-enunciate, as this will distort your lip pattern.
- 9 Above all, relax and be patient if you're really stuck you can write something down.
- 10 Best of all, learn British Sign Language!

BDA, 2022

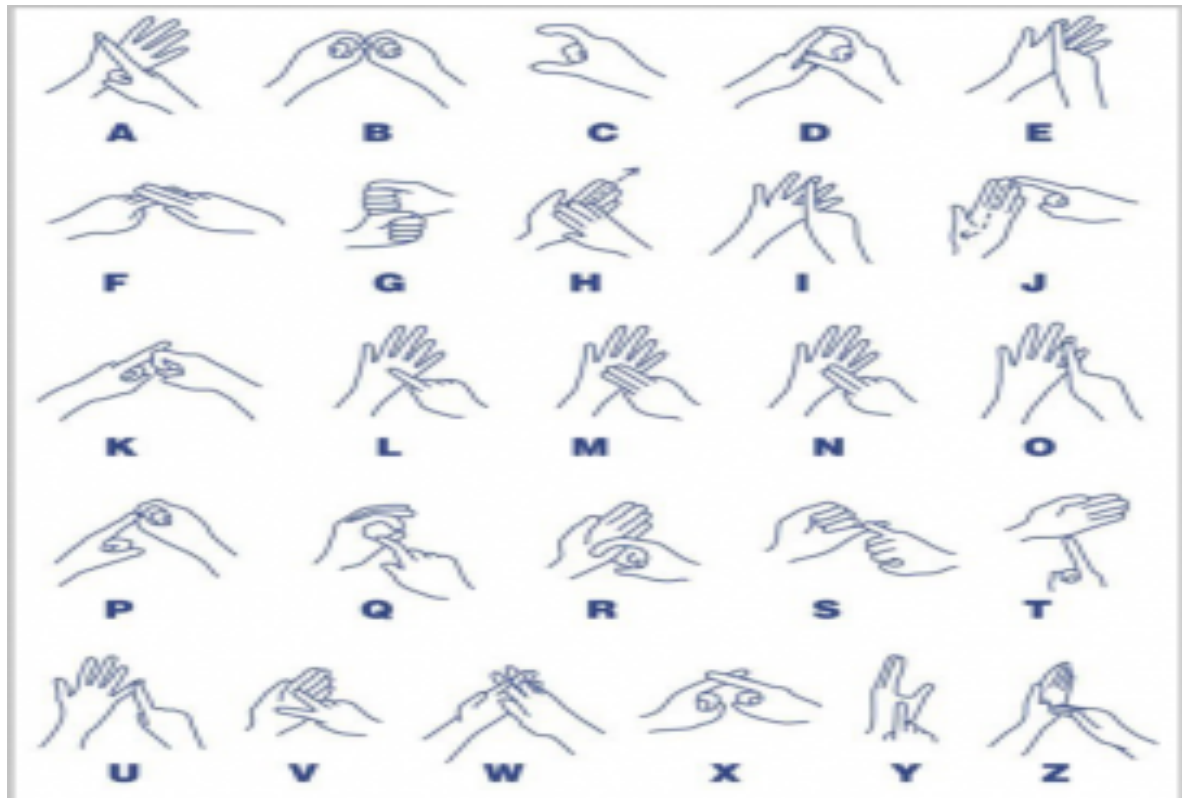


Do You Want to Learn BSL?

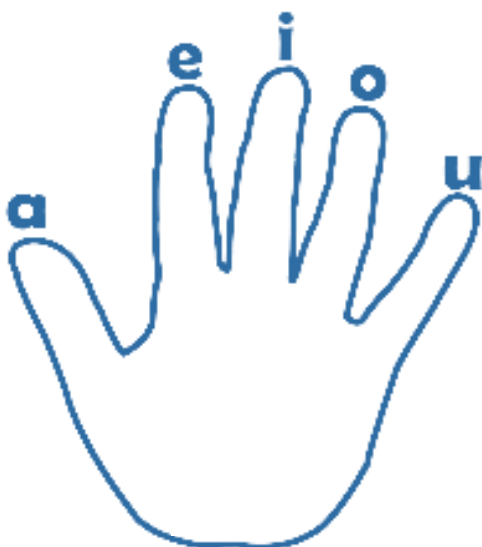
Let's start.

Fingerspelling is a great first stage as it allows you to spell words out and is quick and easy to learn.

Alphabet



The 5 Vowels



Too Complicated?

Try The 5 Vowels

Use your index finger on your other hand to point to the letter/vowel you want.

"My Name is"



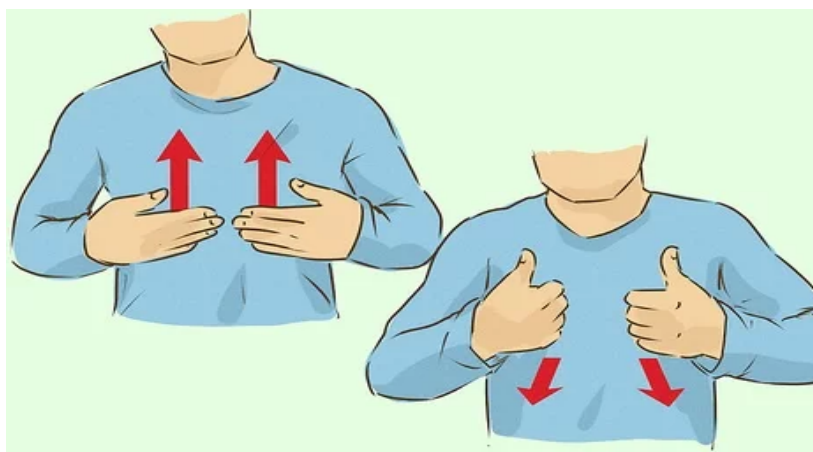
Start with a fist at your chest which signs "my".

Then with your index and middle finger joined together at your forehead, twist your hand forward.

Then begin fingerspelling with the Alphabet your name.

Can you try this?

"How are you?"



Bring your two opened hands upwards and form into a thumbs up.

"What is your Name?"

It is important to note that the word order is different in BSL.

Name



Your



What

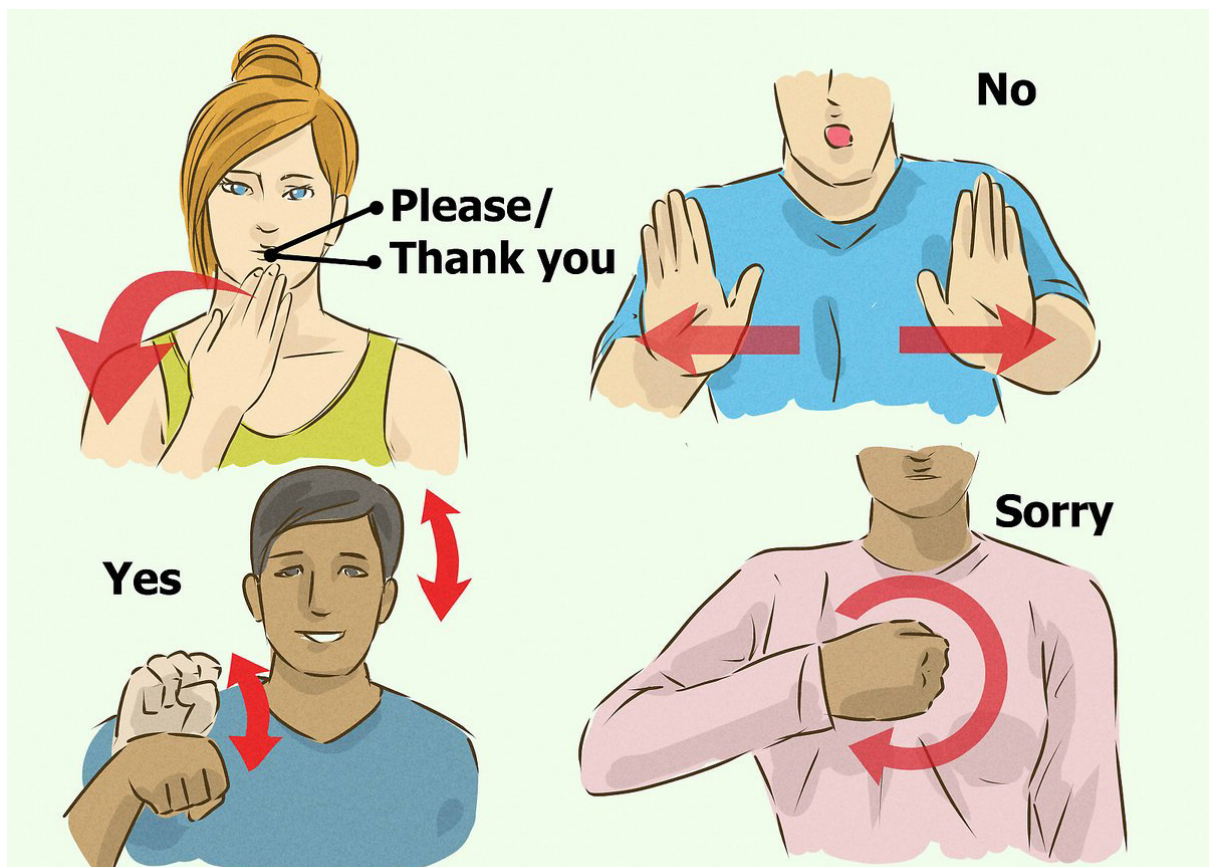


1) Begin with your index and middle finger joined together at your forehead and twist your hand forward.

2) Then point to the other person.

3) Wave your index finger side to side in front of you. Your body language needs to show you are asking a question. You do this by furrowing your eyebrows, so it looks like you are frowning whilst mouthing 'what?'

Some Extra Signs



Links to further help you learn BSL

<https://www.british-sign.co.uk>

<https://www.ndcs.org.uk/information-and-support/parenting-and-family-life/family-blogs/apps-to-help-you-learn-bsl/>

<https://schoolofsignlanguage.com/learn-online/learn-online-free-only/>

<https://www.signbsl.com>

If you are interested in the information presented in this booklet and want to further research, the references are offered below.

Reference List:

BDA. (2022). *Help & Resources For Sign Language* . British Deaf Association.
<https://bda.org.uk/help-resources/#universal>

BSL Scotland Act (2015). *Scottish Government*. <http://bslscotlandact2015.scot/>

Cullen, L. A., Grange, Z., Antal, K., Waugh, L., Alsina, M. S., Gibbons, C. L., ... & O'Leary, M. C. (2023). COVID-19 vaccine safety in Scotland—background rates of adverse events of special interest. *Public Health*, 224, 1-7.

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RNID. (2023, August 3). *Prevalence of deafness and hearing loss*.
<https://rnid.org.uk/get-involved/research-and-policy/facts-and-figures/prevalence-of-deafness-and-hearing-loss/#:~:text=12%20million%20adults%20in%20the,0000%20people%20in%20North%20Ireland>

