

Handshape exercise

Select one handshape only from the list of 57 handshapes. Create a short sentence with that handshape and no other allowed. Use plenty of expressions and movements to demonstrate intended meaning or near intended meanings.

The purpose of this exercise is to force you to use expressions in place of relying on signing and signing forms. The face, head tilt, eye brows, mouth patterns (as in non English wordings), eyes, shoulders, body positioning, etc can say so much more than the sign alone.

Many of you have learnt BSL by watching the hands only and fail to observe all the other details which show variations in meanings.

A useful method is to watch other native or near native signers, or to watch DVDs of signers, or watch TV programs. Observe how this is done and copy the expression until you feel quite at home with using expressions.

English people are well known for their stiffness in body language and lack of expressions. Consider the French and Italians and the way they use expressions and gestures to convey additional meaning that words alone cannot do so.

For BSL you need to learn to let go and just be expressive. BSL is known to be a very rich language but still many people don't begin to realise just how rich it is. Just one sign with different expressions can say far more than trying to search for another sign to use with it, and then it does not demonstrate BSL as a true language.

Why laugh when you mean to be angry? And just how angry are you? You need to show this.

Then you can try and use just two handshapes for a more complex example. Also try to make longer sentences as well.

Expression is not just about the emotions but also about variations in size, weights, efforts, speed, distance, measures, etc, etc.

Be expressive!!!