

Finger spelling

The finger spelling above is what it looks like in general and by standard. It is stable and "square". Though, fluent signers have adopted some certain styles and movements for some words and certain letters.

Pause Technique

How does one recognize a space between finger spelled words. There are several subtle indicators. A person indicates a brief pause or space between finger spelled words. It is the equivalent of a space in spoken or written forms. In addition, the person also indicate a slight stress of the first or last letter of each word, along with a non-manual marker (e.i. slightly nodding). [Video will be demonstrated here shortly.]

Finger spelling Error

In the event of spelling incorrectly, a signer usually gives facial and manual cues to acknowledge the error and starts to spell again.

Double Letters

Some words have double letters, such as "Anna", "pizza", "apple", etc. There are a few techniques for finger spelling double letters in a word.

One of the techniques is the "glide". The video above shows an example of using the glide for the letter "n" in "Anna". The signer glides the double-letter sideways briefly. However, this movement does not work for other alphabetical letters (e.g. it does not fit well for "p" in "apple"), in which one has to fingerspell the double letter "individually" like any other letters.

Another technique, though unique that works only for one alphabetical letter, is the double "z" as in "pizza", in which the hand shape has double bent fingers instead of a (single) index finger. The video above illustrates the double letter "z".

Practice Tips

It takes some time to learn to finger-read. Here are some suggestions for developing receptive skills in finger spelling:

- Talk in finger spelling to yourself in the mirror.
- Practice with your sign language partner.
- Use finger spelling font in your emails to your friend. :-)

Facial Expression

There are two levels of facial expression: an emotional aspect and a facial language. Facial expression shows an emotion (and thought) of what a person feels inside. It is a non-verbal communication. On the other hand, facial expression in sign language is another level of language. It functions as a linguistic or grammatical aspect.

Facial markers in sign language contains some grammatical features, such as adjectives, adverbs and other speech forms. It also functions as a tone which can indicate a sentence type, such as a yes/no question, wh-question, a rhetorical question, a statement, etc. In a similar way, a vocal-auditory speaker uses vocal expression as a tone.

Grammatical markers in facial expression includes eye-shifting and eye-glancing, head-tilting and head-shifting, cheek-puffing, lip movement, nose-furrowing, and eyebrow-shifting. Facial signifiers can convey a wide variety of meanings.

