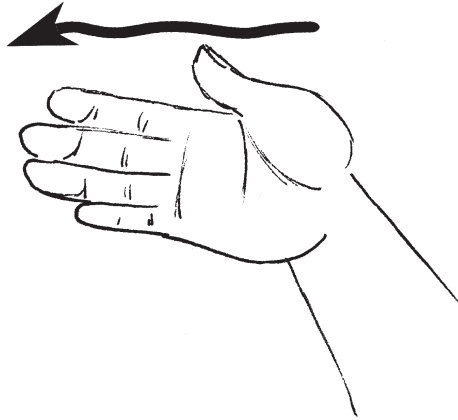


# Classifiers

We discussed how to represent things with shapes. We'll now discuss how to move things through space. These are called classifiers. Classifiers are similar to shapes in that they are pictures rather than signs. Consider *fish*.



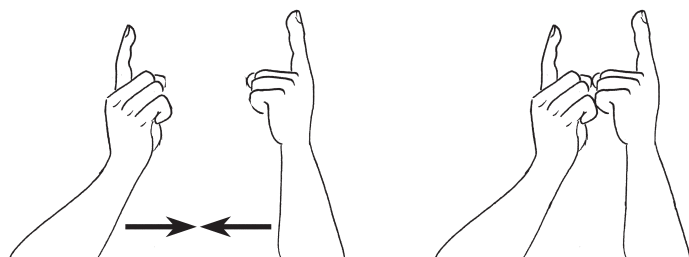
## FISH

Keep the fingers together, and wiggle the hand as it moves forward. Is it a sign or a classifier?

*Fish* could be a sign. As a sign, it's merely a translation for the English word fish. Its meaning is rooted in our mind rather than our eye. The sound fish automatically triggers *fish*. It's the same every time.

Or *fish* could be a classifier. It could *skirt hungry jaws*, or merely *hide in the rocks*. A really big fish might involve the signer's whole body. A *school of fish* could be shown with wiggling fingers in orchestrated flutters. The possibilities of this *fish* thing are endless.

Consider *meet*.



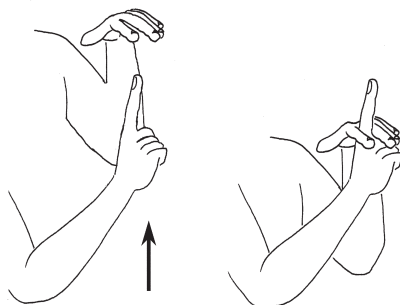
## MEET, ENCOUNTER

*Meet* is a sign found in any ASL dictionary, but it should be thought of in a broader sense. The raised index fingers are two classifiers, representing two people in an upright position. As such, one person could **TURN AROUND**, and **LEAVE**. One person could **APPROACH** another, **PASS BY** or **BOW**. There are many possibilities for this classifier.

“The man approached me” is signed *man – approach*, where *man* is signed, and the classifier for one person, representing the man, is brought to the signer, palm facing the signer. The palm side of the hand represents the person’s front, and it can travel in any direction.

Notice that *man – approach* does not include the sign *me*. It’s included in the classifier by its direction of travel. “It’s nice to meet you” translates to *nice – meet*. One hand of *meet* comes from the signer, and the other hand from the other person. The classifier includes the pronoun, which doesn’t need to be signed.

Here are some other signs that utilize the index finger classifier.



**APPEAR, ARISE, COME UP, POP UP,  
EMERGE, SHOW UP**

The dominant index finger *emerges* through the subordinate index and middle fingers. Simply reverse the drawings for **GONE** and **DISAPPEAR**. Begin with the right drawing and move the dominant hand horizontally away for **GONE, LEAVE** and **GO**.

*Appear, arise* and *pop up* are really signs, because anything can arise. It could be something as wispy as an emotion, a memory, a flight of fantasy, things having no physical presence and nothing to see. On the other hand, things do pop up. It's actually a sign with roots in classifiers. It's included here because grouping it with classifiers makes it easy to remember. In fact, many of the signs in this section are not classifiers in and of themselves. They're placed in this group merely as an aid to help us remember their meaning.

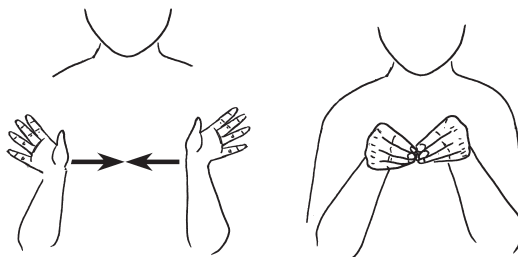
We're not limited to one person on each hand. Replace the index finger with the appropriate number, one to five fingers on each hand, to show more than one person doing something. For example, *one person bumping into two friends* is the index finger of one hand bumping into the index and middle finger of the other hand.

The *4* and *5* – *hand shapes* represent a lot of people. Place the parted upright fingers of both hands in a line, and move the hands apart from each other to represent a *line of people*.



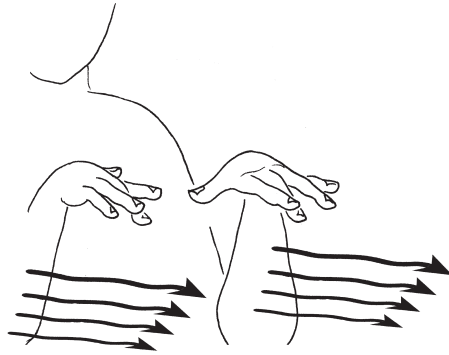
### LINE OF PEOPLE

The palms may face the same or opposing directions. Both hands may move, or just the dominant hand. The line may go in any direction, even *around the corner*.



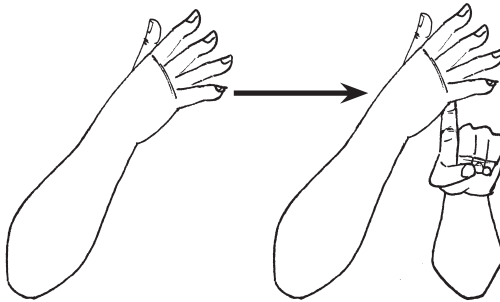
### MEETING, ASSEMBLE, ASSEMBLY, CONVENE, CONFERENCE, CONVENTION, GATHERING, CONGREGATION

These fingers aren't sticking straight up, and they aren't in a line, but they're still people, lots of them. **BIG MEETING** brings the hands together in slow motion. Wiggling the fingers as the hands approach each other indicates a *very big meeting*.



### **CROWD, HORDE, MOB**

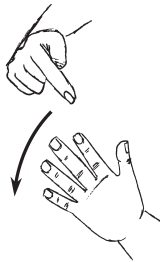
Moving wiggling fingers represent moving people. As a crowd, these hands are free to roam. In general, crowds tend to **CONVERGE** or **DIVERGE** from a particular spot, and that's what these fingers can do. If it's a really big crowd, puff up your face, expand your whole body, make motorboat sounds with your lips. It's okay to make noises, we're talking **BIG CROWD**.



### **POPULAR**

This is a group of people hanging around one person. It's actually a sign. It doesn't move about or do anything different. It's always the same.

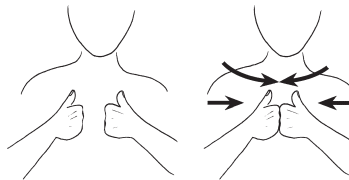
Fingers can represent many *things*.



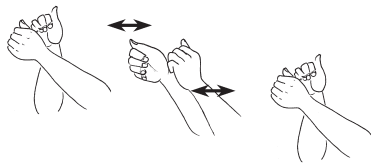
**THINGS, OBJECTS, STUFF, DETAILS,  
PARTICULARS, ITEMS**

The dominant index finger may come down in one smooth arc, or *stutter* at the *details* on the way down.

Here are some signs that use thumbs to represent people.

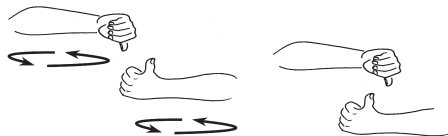


**GAME, VERSUS, GOING HEAD TO HEAD**



**RACE, COMPETE, COMPETITION,  
CONTEND, CONTEST, VIE**

The movement is from the wrist.



## EACH OTHER, ASSOCIATE, FELLOWSHIP, ONE ANOTHER

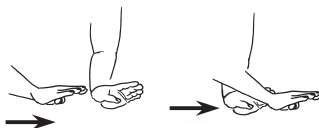
Replace the thumbs with the eight extended wiggling fingers for **MINGLE**, **SOCIALIZE** and **CIRCULATE**. It's a picture of what crowds do.

The upside down *V* – *hand shape* is another classifier, representing a person's legs.



## WALK

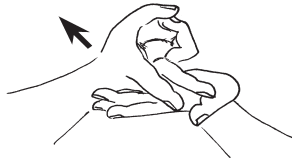
The index and middle fingers alternate back and forth, showing a person walking.



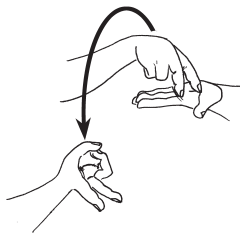
## WALK, STEP, PACE

Here is an off topic *walk* that also uses a classifier to represent walking feet. These feet can *skip* or *sludge through the mud*. Use your imagination.

Back to our topic, *V* – *hand shapes* that represent a person’s legs.

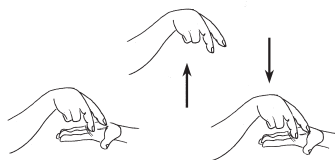


**LIE DOWN, RECLINE, PASSED OUT**



**FALL**

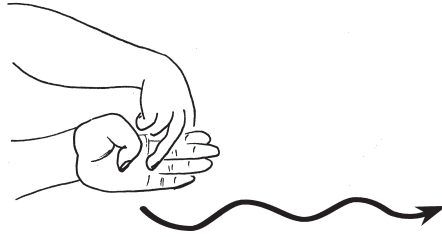
The platform of the subordinate palm isn’t necessary. The *fall, legs flailing all the way*, could be from a tall building that was set up in space.



**JUMP, HOP, BOUND, LEAP**

The synonyms *jump, hop, bound and leap* are alike and also different. The movement should mimic the action. The dominant hand jumps up and down repeatedly for **EXCITED** and **JUMPING FOR JOY**. The downturned classifier alternates sideways above the dancefloor of the upturned subordinate palm for **DANCE**.

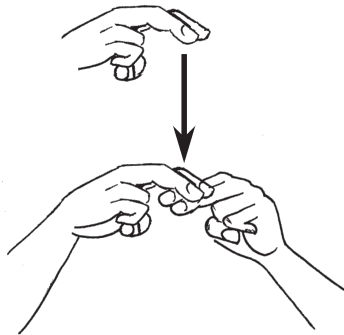




## RIDE A HORSE

This is a picture of a person bouncing along while straddling a horse. The sign remains in one place while the dominant hand rocks sideways for **SITTING ON THE FENCE, UNDECIDED, UNCERTAIN, UNSURE** and **AMBIVALENT**.

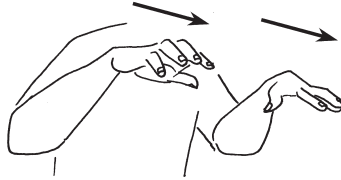
Here are some legs hanging over a seat.



## SIT

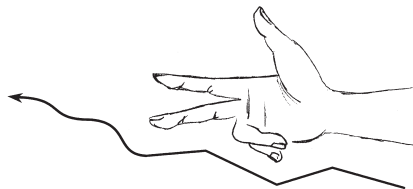
**CHAIR** repeats the movement of *sit*. Remember our noun/verb pairs? Move both touching hands in tandem for **CAR RIDE** or **BUS RIDE**, showing a person moving along while sitting. **SWINGING** moves both touching hands back and forth in an arc. **SLIDE** has them moving down together as if going down a slide.

The following **C – hand shape** with the fingers spread can represent **lots of things**.



### LOTS OF THINGS, TEEMING, SWARMING

Both hands move forward in tandem. These hands represent a lot of whatever it is that's under discussion. It could be the **non-stop houses** in Los Angeles, the **million people** at Woodstock or the **prairie that stretches for miles and miles of sameness**. Slowing down the sign movement while grimacing add emphasis for **very, very** large amounts.



### MOVING VEHICLE

It's a vehicle moving through space, a pure classifier. There's not much to say about vehicle classifiers, but there's a lot you can say with them. A vehicle could **go uphill, downhill, fast or slow**. It could go down a **smooth or bumpy road**. It could **sit**, ready to **make a left**, or **speed around a curve and roll over**. This classifier can do anything a real car can do.

Create a **LINE OF VEHICLES** by using both hands. Place one vehicle next to the other, and move them apart. The cars could be side by side, or one behind the other. **PARK** sets the classifier down on the up facing subordinate palm. **GARAGE** moves the classifier under the down facing subordinate palm, which represents a roof.

Here's a classifier for a *plane*.



### **AIRPLANE RIDE, FLY**

It can *take off* and *land*. It can *fly straight up doing twirlies, free fall* to the ground or execute a *fancy loop the loop*. Follow the straight arrow and double up the movement for **AIRPLANE** and **PLANE**, because they're nouns.

Classifiers and shapes are tools for drawing pictures. As a picture is worth a thousand words, so too are classifiers and shapes.

