

**COMPREHENSIVE REFERENCE  
MANUAL FOR  
SIGNERS AND INTERPRETERS**

## KEY

**AX** = form X handshape and place ball of right thumb on tip of right index finger

**bent** = handshape formed by making a right angle at the junction of base of fingers and palm, fingers straight and together

**bent 5** = handshape formed by slightly curling all the fingers of the usual 5 handshape

**bent L** = usual L handshape, but the index finger is crooked, as it is in the X handshape

**bud** = handshape formed by touching tips of fingers & thumb together without bending them

**(def #)** = definition number: indicates which of several definitions should be applied when referring to a particular entry

EXAMPLE: **ACCOMPLISH** = 1)DO 2)SUCCEED 3)FINISH

Explanation: while “DO”, “SUCCEED” and “FINISH” are all different signs, they can each be used individually to convey the meaning of “ACCOMPLISH”

**(finger) tip** = refers to the direction that the fingertips are pointing (except when referring to the “X”, “bent V”, “bent 3” or “bent 5” handshape; in which case it refers to the direction the fingertips would point if the fingers weren’t bent)

**HEX** = handshape formed by extending index & pinky fingers; other fingers closed

**in** = (when referring to palm or fingertip orientation) means toward the signer’s body

**index** = handshape formed by extending the index finger with the other fingers closed in a fist

**open 8** = 5 handshape with the middle finger extended so that it forms a right angle with the palm

**palm** = handshape formed with the fingers straight & together (unless otherwise indicated). For clarity, the “palm” (orientation) of a “bent” handshape will be the palm side of the fingers, rather than the palm itself

**small C** = C handshape formed with index & thumb only; other fingers closed

**( )** = Sign descriptions and/or handshapes in parenthesis are optional

**-** = words connected with dashes are to be considered as a single sign or entry

**+** = a plus sign connects signs which should be signed consecutively

**/** = choose one of the words separated by the slash mark(/) in order to form a new sign

EXAMPLE: **COORDINATOR** = COOPERATE/TAKE-CARE-OF/JOIN/MESH  
+ AGENT

Explanation: In order to convey the meaning of “COORDINATOR”, you must sign “COOPERATE + AGENT” or sign “TAKE-CARE-OF +AGENT” or sign “JOIN + AGENT” or sign “MESH + AGENT”

EXAMPLE: **CURE** = 1) DISSOLVE (noun) 2) IMPROVE 3) MAKE + BETTER/  
HEALTHY/GOOD

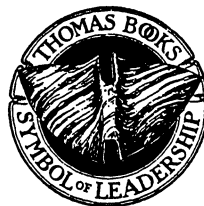
Explanation: In order to convey the meaning of “CURE” you must sign “DISSOLVE” (for the noun form); or sign “IMPROVE”; or sign “MAKE + BETTER”; or sign “MAKE + HEALTHY”; or sign “MAKE + GOOD”



**COMPREHENSIVE REFERENCE  
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FIFTH EDITION**

*By*

**CHERYL M. HOFFMAN**



**CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.**  
*Springfield • Illinois • U.S.A.*

*Published and Distributed Throughout the World by*

CHARLES C THOMAS • PUBLISHER, LTD.  
2600 South First Street  
Springfield, Illinois 62704

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ISBN 0-398-07447-X (spiral paper)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number:

First Edition, 1984  
Second Edition, 1985  
Third Edition, 1988  
Fourth Edition, 1994  
Fifth Edition, 2003

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*Printed in the United States of America  
R-3-CAMRDY*

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Hoffman, Cheryl.  
Comprehensive referece manual for signers and interpreters  
/ by Cheryl Hoffman.--5th ed.  
p. cm.  
ISBN 0-398-07447-X  
1. Sign Lanuage--Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Title.

HV2474.H655 2003  
419--dc21

2003059655

## PREFACE

The *Comprehensive Reference Manual for Signers and Interpreters* (Fifth Edition) contains almost seven thousand entries, including vocabulary and idioms, with cross references and sign descriptions.\* It is intended primarily for interpreters but can also be used effectively by signers who have at least a working knowledge of Sign Language. This manual is employed most profitably when the user reads the *entire* sign description before manually executing the sign. Since it is written for the right-hand dominant signer, those who are left-hand dominant must reverse the handedness and direction of the descriptions when and where appropriate.

Due to the three dimensional nature of Sign Language, it is difficult, if not impossible, to learn how to sign from the two dimensional pages of any book. Additionally, knowledge of Deaf Culture is critical to contextually appropriate signing. Therefore, a qualified teacher is of utmost importance to the Sign Language student who wishes to build real competence in sign production, proper grammatical construction and the all-important understanding of Deaf Culture.

Dedicated and motivated interpreters and signers are constantly striving to increase their inventories of internalized signs. Sometimes, however, this knowledge can slip away if it is not frequently called upon, wither expressively or receptively. It is with the aforementioned human frailty in mind that this book has been written; not for those who have had no Sign Language experience, but for serious signers and interpreters whose memories need occasional assistance with seldom used signs and who also wish to increase their Sign Language repertoires.

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\* This manual contains some explicit signs which might be deemed offensive by some people. However, the inclusion of these signs is necessary because responsible interpreters must be able to faithfully interpret or transliterate without censoring the information they receive and transmit.







**ABACK** = 1] SURPRISE (def #1) 2] JAW-FELL-OPEN 3] MIND-STUNNED 4] MIND-FROZEN

**ABANDON** = NEGLECT (def #2)

**ABASH** = ASHAMED

**ABATE** = REDUCE (def #1)

**ABBREVIATION** = 1] BRIEF (def #1) 2] CONDENSE

**ABET** = 1] HELP 2] ENCOURAGE

**ABEYANCE** = SUSPEND (def #4)

**ABHOR** = 1] left 5 palm right tips up, right 5 palm left tips up, closer to you, at chest; simultaneously arc up, out, down so that they end with left 5 palm right tips out, right 5 palm left tips out (can be done with right 5 only) 2] HATE

**ABILITY** = 1] POSSIBLE 2] EXPERT

**ABJECT** = 1] FULL (def #1) 2] DEEP

**ABLE** = S's or A's palms down side by side not touching; move up, down, up, down simultaneously without bending wrists

**ABNORMAL** = 1] pinky side of right hand palm left tips out moves forward on left hand palm up tips out then right makes sudden left turn to become right bent palm right tips in (perverted) 2] NOT/LESS-THAN + NORMAL

**ABODE** = 1] HOUSE 2] HOME

**ABOLISH** = 1] DESTROY 2] REMOVE

**ABORTION** = BABY (def #1) + REMOVE at lower abdomen

**ABOUT** = 1] left bud palm in tips right; circle left bud vertically with right index finger palm in tip left 2] H's crossed, palms in, right H on left H; circle right H forward, down, in and end crossed with right H palm left tips out on left H palm right tips out 3] right 5 palm down tips out circles horizontally (approximately) 4] RELATE-TO

**ABOVE** = 1] circle right hand palm down tips left horizontally above left hand palm down tips right 2] MORE-THAN

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN** = thumb of right L palm out tip up touches right side of forehead

**ABRASION** = 1] at appropriate location, mime "peeling" skin off with right bent 5 which becomes right A 2] ROUGH

**ABRIDGE** = CONDENSE

**ABRUPT** = 1] QUICK 2] FAST (def #2)

**ABSCOND** = ESCAPE

**ABSENT** = 1] REMOVE 2] GONE 3] CUT-CLASS

**ABSENT-MINDED** = FORGOT-ALL-ABOUT

**ABSOLUTELY** = REAL

**ABSOLUTELY NOT** = NO-WAY

**ABSOLUTION** = EXCUSE (def #1)

**ABSORBED IN** = right bent V palm in tips up moves down from face level into left C palm right;  
right bent V continues downward

**ABSORB KNOWLEDGE** = 5's palms to each other tips up move to middle of forehead alternately as  
they close to become buds palms in when they touch forehead then move out to become 5's,  
repeat

**ABSTAIN** = 1] ON-THE-FENCE 2] REFUSE 3] FAST (def #3)

**ABSTINENCE** = 1] SUSPEND (def #4)/NONE + SEX/INTERCOURSE 2] THUMBS-DOWN

**ABSTRACT** = 1] right A palm left at right temple circles up, out, down, in, up, out while moving  
diagonally up and out 2] CONFUSE (def #1) 3] BLURRY

**ABSTRUSE** = BLURRY

**ABSURD** = SILLY

**ABUNDANT** = 1] MUCH 2] MANY

**ABUSE** = 1] TAKE-ADVANTAGE-OF 2] HIT 3] WRONG + USE

**ABUT** = JOIN (def #1)

**ACCEDE** = 1] AGREE 2] GIVE-UP

**ACCELERATE** = 1] FAST (def #2) 2] QUICK

**ACCEPT** = left 5 palm right tips out, right 5 palm left tips out, in front of you, not touching each other;  
close to become buds as they move to chest; then tips of buds palms in tips to each other touch  
chest side by side, not touching each other

**ACCEPTABLE** = 1] ACCEPT (+ CAN def #1) 2] ALL-RIGHT 3] ENOUGH

**ACCEPTANCE** = 1] QUIET but sharper motion, becoming bent handshapes palms in tips down 2]  
ACCEPT

**ACCEPT RELUCTANTLY** = STIFLE with right hand only at throat; don't move down + puff cheeks  
or purse lips

**ACCESS** = 1] ENTER 2] CONTACT (def #1)

**ACCESSIBLE** = OPEN (def #2)

**ACCESSORY** = ADD (def #1) (+ THING)

**ACCIDENT** = 1] TERRIBLE + HAPPEN 2] WRONG 3] S's palms in hit each other, arc up and to  
sides (vehicle)

**ACCIDENTALLY** = WRONG + HAPPEN

**ACCLAIM** = APPLAUSE

**ACCLIMATE** = BECOME + HABIT

**ACCOLADE** = clap twice

**ACCOMMODATE** = 1] CHANGE (def #1) (slowly and deliberately or several times) 2] HELP