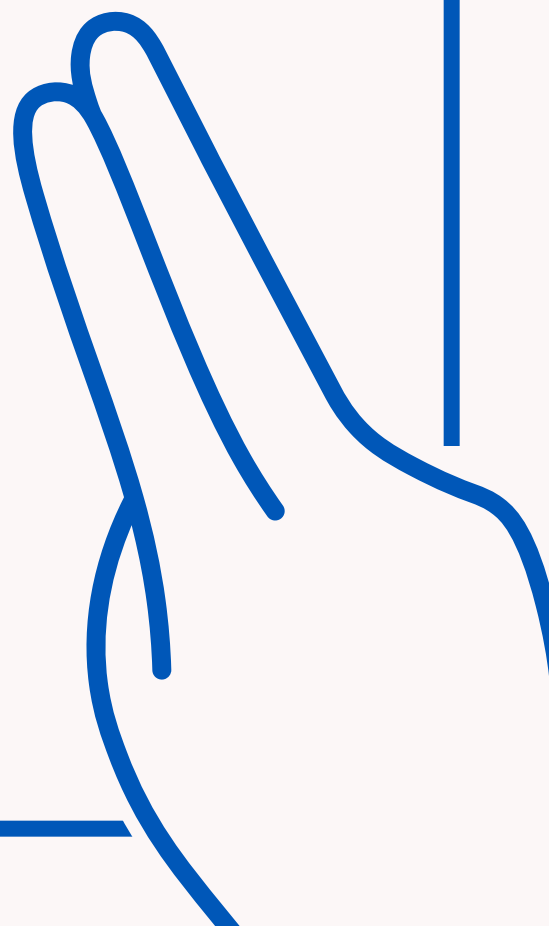
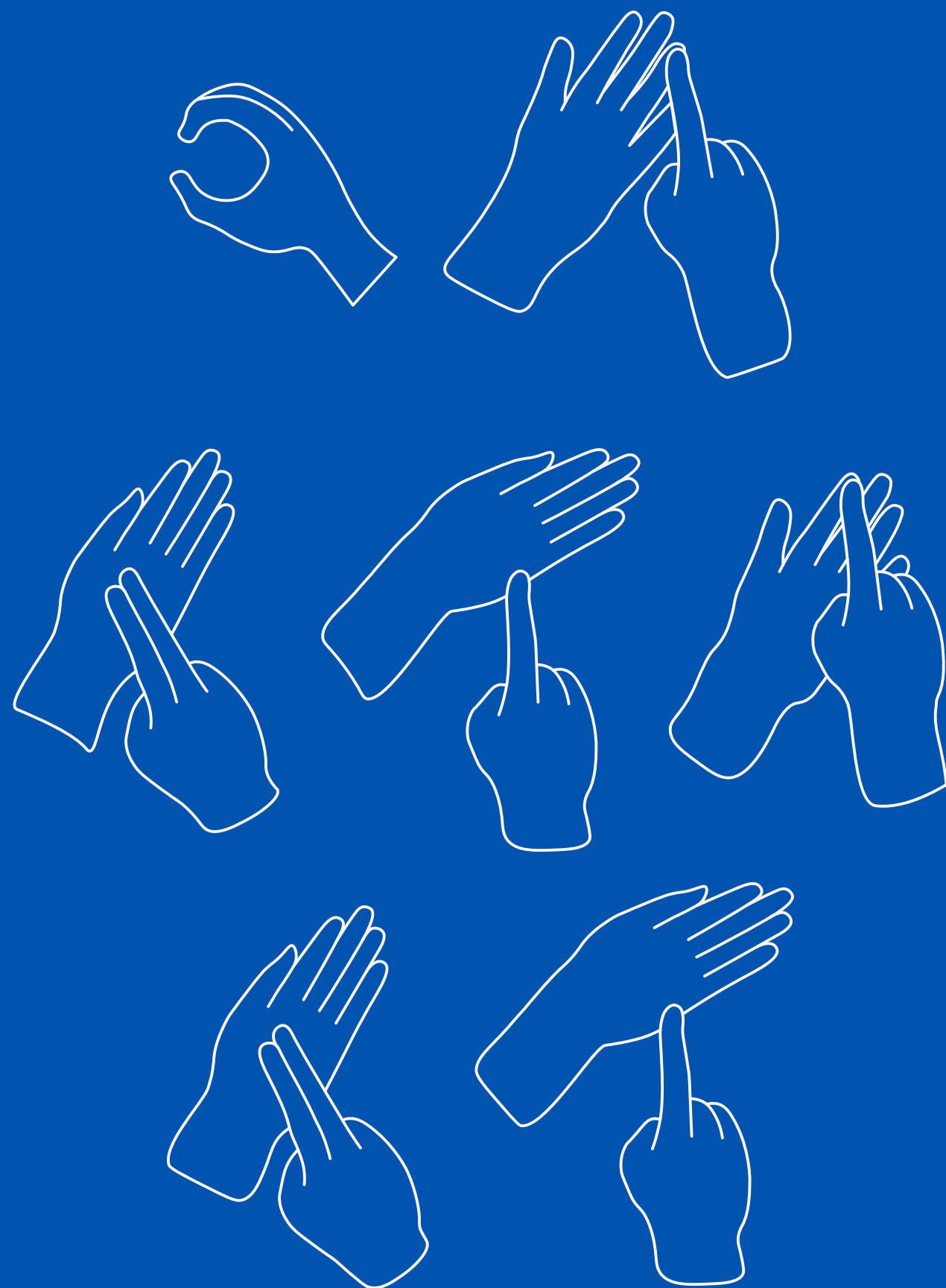


DEAF





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NEW ZEALAND SIGN LANGUAGE

New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) is the main language used by the Deaf community in New Zealand. It's been around for over 100 years, and in 2006, it was officially recognised as one of the country's official languages through the New Zealand Sign Language Act.

NZSL isn't just a visual version of English, it has its own unique vocabulary and grammar that have developed within the Deaf community over time. Instead of using sounds, it uses hand signs to show meaning, along with facial expressions, head movements, and upper body gestures to add detail, emotion, and grammar. There's also a fingerspelled alphabet, which is mostly used for spelling out names or words that don't have a sign yet.

DEAF IDENTIFY AND LANGUAGE IN AOTEAROA

In 2018, around 23,000 people in New Zealand had some knowledge of New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL). Out of that number, about 3,000 to 4,000 are Deaf people who use NZSL as their main language. People in this community often refer to themselves as "Deaf" with a capital D. This reflects more than just hearing loss—it's a way of identifying with a shared language and culture.

Most Deaf people who use NZSL have been deaf since birth or early childhood. Interestingly, only about 5 percent of deaf children are born to deaf parents. These kids usually grow up with NZSL as their first or native language. The majority of deaf children, however, are born into hearing families who often have no experience with sign language or connections to the Deaf community. Some of these families choose to learn NZSL along with their child, while others may take a different path, depending on what's available in their schools and communities.

There are also hearing children who grow up in Deaf families. These kids usually learn NZSL at home, alongside a spoken language, and grow up fluent in both. They often play an important role in bridging both Deaf and hearing worlds.

DEAF HISTORY ORY

New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) has its roots in the country's first residential school for deaf kids, which opened in 1880 in Sumner, Christchurch. The government brought in a man named Gerrit van Asch from the Netherlands to run the school. He was a big supporter of the "oralist" method—an approach that started in Germany and focused on teaching deaf students to lip-read and speak, rather than use sign language. At the time, this method was seen as modern and a way to "normalize" deaf students, and it was very different from the French style of teaching, which successfully used sign language to teach reading, writing, and other subjects.

To keep the school focused purely on speech, they refused to admit kids who already used sign language, fingerspelling, or who didn't speak at all. Van Asch believed that kids who preferred signing over lip-reading or speaking were "too feeble-minded" to be properly educated—a harmful and completely wrong assumption. Because of this, some deaf children had to learn from private tutors or be sent to schools in Australia where sign language was actually used in teaching.



Hands tied behind their back



Deaf children were taught to speak

Even though signing was banned in the classroom—a rule that stayed in place until 1979—students still found ways to communicate in sign. It often happened in secret, especially out in the playgrounds or dorm rooms. As more residential deaf schools opened in New Zealand, older students passed signs down to younger ones, helping NZSL grow and evolve.

Unfortunately, students caught signing were often punished. These punishments ranged from getting their hands slapped or tied behind their backs to being forced to wear gloves or sit alone as a form of public shaming. Despite all that, students kept using sign language informally. It became a way to connect, support one another, and build strong friendships that lasted into adulthood.

These close-knit deaf communities became the backbone of NZSL. Even though the language was banned in schools, it continued to grow and thrive through social groups, clubs, and everyday interactions in the deaf community.

Hey!

Did you know?



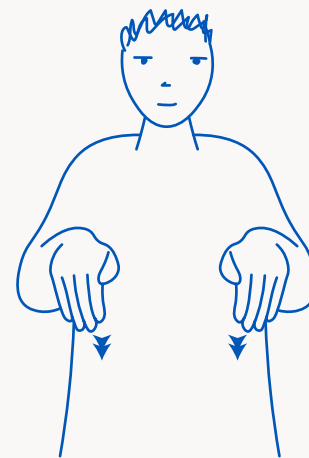
There are over
different **300**
sign languages
around the world!

Each one is a unique, fully developed language with its own grammar, vocabulary, and rules. They've evolved in distinct communities, often shaped by cultural influences and regional differences.

For example, American Sign Language (ASL) and British Sign Language (BSL) are entirely different languages, even though both are used in English-speaking countries. This happens because sign languages grow independently within their communities. In fact, some deaf communities even have their own regional dialects!

Cool examples around the world!

Dog



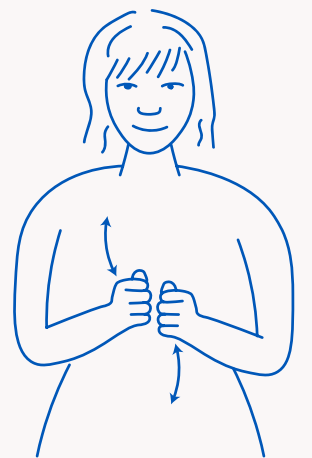
New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL)

Coffee

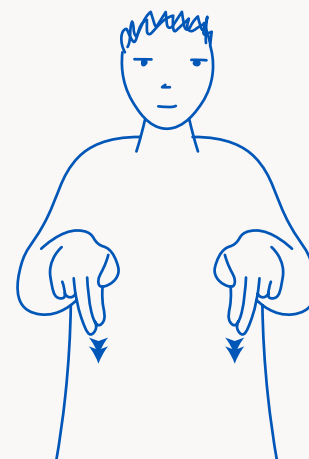


New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL)

Brother



New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL)



British Sign Language (BSL)



Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN)



Japanese Sign Language (JSL)

“We have our own culture,
our own community. A lot
of people don’t realize that.
They just assume that deaf
people are very unfortunate,
very disabled, but no.”

– Nyle DiMarco



Talk Without Talking

Sign across a room, through windows, or in a noisy crowd!

Talk in Silence
Need to be quiet but still say something? Sign it instead!

Look Smart
Learning a second language keeps your brain sharp and your CV looking flash. Plus, it's a skill not everyone has!

WE WANT YOU NEW ZEALAND SIGN LANGUAGE TO LEARN

It's fun!
Once you start learning, you won't want to stop.

Faster Than Talking
NZSL can be super speedy - in some situations, it's even quicker than speaking!

Future-Proof Yourself
Accessibility is the future.
Knowing NZSL keeps you ahead of the game.

NZSL RESOURCES



First Signs is a Deaf Aotearoa program that supports families of Deaf children to learn NZSL.

Pros: It offers free, practical support and builds strong family communication using NZSL.
Cons: It's mainly for families, not general learners, and might not be available in all areas.



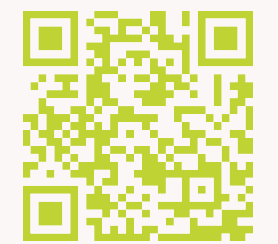
YouTube is a popular platform where many people go to start learning sign language.

Pros: It's free, easy to access, and has lots of videos for different skill levels.
Cons: The quality can vary, and not all content is focused on NZSL specifically.



NZSL4U provides NZSL classes taught by qualified Deaf tutors, both in-person and online.

Pros: Their lessons are customized for different needs and promote both language and culture.
Cons: Courses may not be free, and online learning options are more limited without joining a class.



Auckland Deaf Society offers in-person classes and events for learning NZSL within a community.

Pros: You get to learn directly from Deaf tutors and be part of the local Deaf community.
Cons: It's based in Auckland only, and classes may cost money or have fixed schedules.

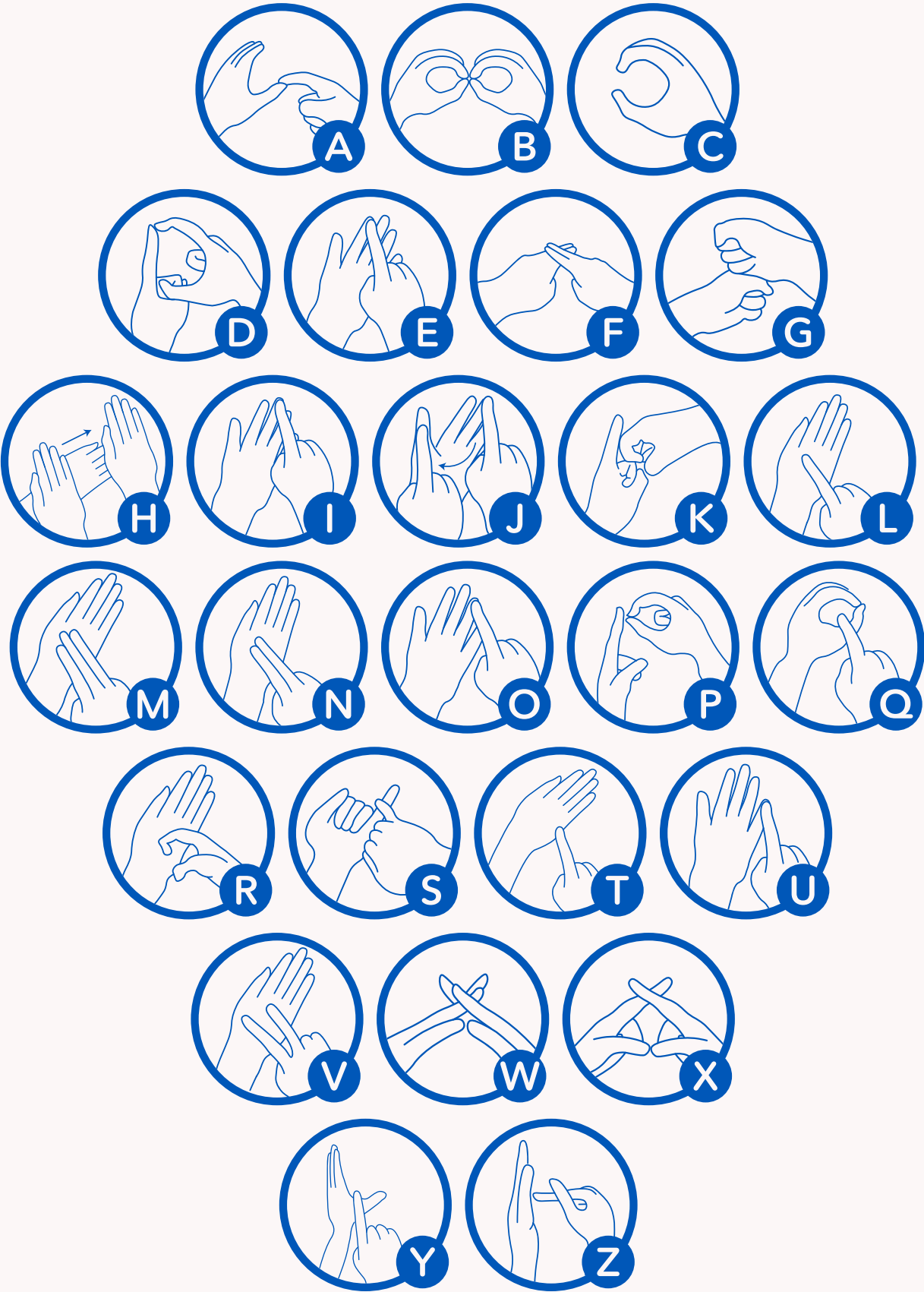


LearnNZSL is a free online learning platform designed for beginners to learn NZSL at their own pace.

Pros: It's well-structured, official, and a great place to start learning the basics.
Cons: It lacks live interaction or advanced-level content for learners wanting to go further.



NZSL ALPHABET



DEAF is not just an ordinary magazine you often see; it is unique in that it breaks down the barriers between hearing and Deaf people. It offers a fresh and fun approach to New Zealand Sign Language, along with the richness of Deaf culture that has never been seen before. It is the powerful stories that connect us all.

Ever wondered what it's like to write, design, and create from the Deaf perspective? Now's your chance to dive in and experience it firsthand.

So what are you waiting for? Let's turn the page and open up a whole new conversation.

