



Usage & Development of Fun & Safety Signing

Divers often ask question regarding the usage and background of signs and methods employed by SeaSigns. This information is provided to answer some of those questions.

How to Use the Signs	2
Hand usage while signing	2
Agreement with sign language dictionaries	2
Use of scuba certifying agency signs	2
Successful signing	2
Methods Development	3
Underwater communication basics criteria	3
Words choice	3
Sign choice	3
Learning methods selection	4
Signing suggestions choices	5
Presentation method options	5
Logo design	6

SeaSigns, Inc.

www.SeaSigns.com E-mail: info@SeaSigns.com
Phone & Fax: 727.581.-2881 Cell 727.41518.7152
10265 Ulmerton Road #170, Largo, FL 33771

How to Use the Signs

Copyright SeaSigns, Inc. 2003

Hand usage while signing

SeaSigns shows the almost all signs in what is considered to be a “right-handed” orientation.

Signing right-handed

All videos and illustrations of persons signing in SeaSigns materials show how a right handed person would make a sign -- from the point of view of the person reading the sign. The model's right hand is on the reader's left. Most people are right handed, so signing using the right hand is easier for them. Reading signs that are made consistently on the same side are easier for most divers. They lack the practice reading signs of people who use sign to communicate every day.

Occasionally, if there is a good reason, SeaSigns will change the hand that makes the sign. SeaSigns makes “shell” with the left hand. We found that our right hands got mixed up with the regulator hose when we tried to sign it right handed!

Signing left-handed

SeaSigns, Inc. suggests that you sign right handed, as we show you, unless it is difficult for you to sign with the right hand. In that case, you will have to reverse all SeaSigns instructions. Be aware that some other divers may have difficulty reading your signs.

Signing two-handed

If both hands do the same motion there is no problem. If the hands make different motions, the right hand will usually be the hand doing the action. The left hand will usually be the hand to which the action is done.

Agreement with sign language dictionaries

The signs we have chosen may not always agree with your sign language dictionary. Like English, ASL and SE are living languages which is changing through time and have regional variations. The various sign language dictionaries of different sizes written at a variety of different times for a variety of purposes reflect this. In larger dictionaries you may find several signs for the same word. Even dictionaries which appear to use the same sign for the same word may describe how to make the sign differently, if they describe how to make it at all.

Use of scuba certifying agencies' signs

If you and your buddy were taught signs by the same certifying agency, by all means, use the signs you learned. Just remember to communicate to you buddy before the dive what signs you will be using. You may dive with divers who were trained differently than you were. If you are both trained by the SeaSigns™ method you can communicate under the water even if you were trained by different agencies or do not even speak the same language!

Successful signing

Although signing is made up of many elements, the following are the keys to successful signing:

- * Practice making and reading signs
- * Use signs in an order that conveys your idea understandably and rapidly.
- * Have fun with signing, and practice will be easy.

Methods Development

Copyright SeaSigns, Inc. 2003

Suzanne Kiffmann decided that she wanted to provide for herself and other divers the power and speed that signing gives to underwater communication. She had seen her deaf niece, Mavis Irwin, and her brother, James Irwin, share all sorts of information very quickly during dives using sign language.

Underwater communication basics criteria

Suzanne listed the things that were important to her about communicating when diving.

- * Fun - Sharing experiences with others while diving
- * Safety - Sharing concerns or asking for aid
- * Speed - Communicating rapidly
- * Ease - Being able to learn and use signs readily
- * Economy - Learning and using the system affordably

Words choice

James, Mavis, Suzanne, and our diving friends wanted a vocabulary that was specific for scuba diving. We discussed which words we might find most useful underwater in various situations. We chose words that

- * Could be used in the most ways in the most underwater circumstances.
- * Could be used alone without additional word and convey the meaning.
- * Did not have more than one significant meaning likely to be used under water.

Sign choice

Choosing signs turned out to be much more challenging than we anticipated.

Scuba certifying agency signs

We looked at the signs used by different scuba certifying agencies. We chose only the signs for up, down, and out of air, upon which agencies and ASL books seem to more or less agree. We found that the different agencies may

1. Use different signs for the same word
2. Make the sign for the same word somewhat or quite differently
3. Have signs which are not used by any other agency

American Sign Language (ASL) signs

We wanted to choose signs that would be understood by the largest number of people. We discovered that there is no universal deaf sign language. There are reported to be 103 deaf sign languages, used by varying numbers of people in various cultures. We chose ASL, reported to be the third most used language in the US. It is also used in a number of other countries. ASL signs were also a good choice because they can represent words, phrases, or concepts.

Underwater signs criteria

Lorna (Mavis' mother and Jim's wife), Jim, and Mavis all suggested signs. We soon realized that we needed criteria for choosing the signs. We decided the signs should be

1. Easy to make underwater in full gear
2. Easy to read underwater in full gear
3. Easy to remember how to make
4. Possibly able to be made with one hand, if such a sign was available

Methods Development

Copyright SeaSigns, Inc. 2003

Signs backgrounds

We then spent hours poring over signing books and signing dictionaries.

1. If we could find a sign that met the criteria in ASL, we chose it.
2. If we could not find a sign in ASL, we turned to Signed English (SE) signs. In SE one sign represents one English word.
3. If we could not discover the sign in ASL or SE we made up a sign using ASL rules for creating signs. That is, the sign created should resemble in some way the word, phrase, or concept it represents.

Approval of signs

ASL is a living language. We agreed that all signs, no matter what their derivation, had to be approved by a nationally certified sign language interpreter. We also wanted the interpreter to be a certified scuba diver in order to understand the realities of underwater signing.

Learning methods selection

We decided to use methods that worked with words when we learned to speak and read as children. These methods or very similar ones also worked when we learned other languages when we were older.

Basic learning methods

The methods we chose were to

1. Introduce a one sign at a time and repeat that sign
2. Use the few signs just introduced in a simple message to show how they might be used in communications
3. Add new signs to the vocabulary while using the ones already presented as needed
4. Present the signs in small sets so as not overwhelm the learner
5. Give the learner a chance to practice reading as well as making the signs

Memory aids for signs

Suzanne was still concerned. She remembered signs best if she knew why they were made the way they were made. She then created mental image that she used to remember those signs. Unfortunately, all other pictures of how to make the signs seemed to look alike after a while. Since it has been reported that about 70% of people learn primarily visually, easily understandable pictures might help others remember signs too.

Suzanne mentioned to Lorna how much easier it was for her to remember a sign, no matter how she learned it, if she could relate it to an image. Lorna combined her graphic art skills, signing classes, years of practice in signing, an advanced degree in biology, and a sense of whimsy to create colorful memory aids. Lorna chose to use marine subjects. They seemed natural for a book on underwater signing!



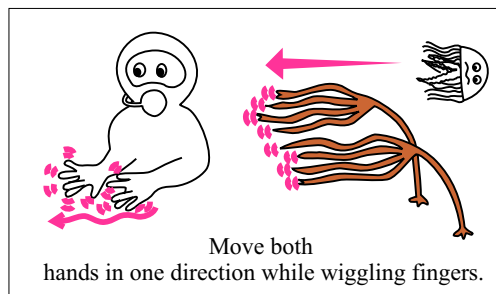
Mavis Irwin, SeaSigns' muse, practices signing "current" in a mirror as a child.

Methods Development

Copyright SeaSigns, Inc. 2003

We asked people who were unfamiliar with signing to look at our system. We noticed that they usually remembered the signs better if the memory aid made them chuckle. For example, the memory aid for current was much more effective with the anxious jellyfish.

We found, too, that divers related better to cartoons of real marine organisms and situations than imaginary ones. (We have to admit the sea already contains some weird specimens.) Suzanne used her collection of books on marine organisms and their environments to be sure we used actual organisms, their habits, and their habitats as models.



Flash card for "current" showing how to sign and memory aid

Signing suggestions choices

Lorna often explained to Suzanne ways to make signing easier as well as helpful practice techniques. Making and reading signs is different from learning to read and speak oral languages. We decided, therefore, to present Lorna's suggestions to make sign reading easier. We also included her suggestions for practicing signs alone and with others, but tailored them to divers.

Presentation method options

We looked at which methods were best for learning signs and which were best for practicing.

In-person classes presentation method

We realized that in class students could learn how to make each sign. If they cannot understand how a sign seeing it at one angle, they can ask to see it at another angle. They can get feedback, if they are not making a sign correctly. They may meet others with whom they can practice signing. We realized that students still need to have methods of reviewing the signs after the class is over, however.

Video presentation method

Suzanne remembered taking signing class. It was easy to learn the signs when the teacher signed in class. After she got home Suzanne needed something to remind her how to make the signs. If it was an easy sign, a drawing in a book would be fine. If it was a more difficult sign, what she really needed was a video. We decided that videos showing people making the signs would be best for learning the signs and/or for reviewing when someone had just learned the signs. We added the memory aids to help them remember the signs.

The tape version of the video came first because it was the most common method available to most people at that time. Unfortunately, because it is in the VHS format, it is not playable world wide. We have since made the video available in PAL and SECAM formats.

We then added the DVD version, which is designed to be playable worldwide. We gave the DVD a menu to assist viewers in getting to the section they want to study.

Methods Development

Copyright SeaSigns, Inc. 2003

Printed materials presentation method

We realized that printed materials can be taken and used almost anywhere. In printed matter, the method of making a sign must be presented with written words and with pictures. These pictures many times need to contain arrows and other symbols to signify a movement's nature, direction, and speed. These devices are often confusing to someone who is not somewhat familiar with how to make the sign. We decided printed materials would be most useful for anyone reviewing how to make the signs they had already learned.

Lorna, a graphic artist with many signing classes and years of practice signing, drew a diver making each of the signs for the printed material. She assisted Suzanne with the written sign descriptions too.

Flash Cards - Our first printed materials were flash cards containing graphics of a diver signing each sign and its memory aid as well as written descriptions of how to make and remember each sign. Cards are convenient for taking with you and for practicing specific signs. Their disadvantage is their tendency to get lost if one is not careful with them.

E-Book - We then published this E-book. It is designed to be readable and printable by most computer operating systems worldwide. The Adobe Acrobat Reader to read its PDF files is available FREE on the Internet.

The E-book contains the same basic information as the flash cards. It also has sample communications, practice reading, methods for effectively practicing and using signs, and information about SeaSigns™ method sections. The E-book contains a table of contents and an index making it easy to go directly to the section you want. The E book can be printed out again if part is lost or destroyed.

Logo design

SeaSigns, Inc. wanted a logo which reflects the philosophy of our learning methods and the whole system. We wanted a logo to which people, including the deaf, could quickly relate. We felt our previous logo, which you see on some of our products, gave few clues to the nature of our business.



We kept the seahorses. We feel they remind people of the ocean.

We felt that almost everyone can relate to the hands under the graphic and written representation of the water's surface as being underwater signing.



We felt the sense of underwater communication is conveyed to most people by the written words. It is also conveyed to signers graphically by the use of the drawing of a common ASL sign for "communication". This sign is made by moving the two "C" hands alternately to and away from the signer's body. (Did you wonder why one hand is shown larger than the other?)