

20 THINGS

YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT SIGN LANGUAGES

In the world, more than
70 MILLION

people use a local sign language or more than one local sign language as their primary means of communication. And more than 150 million people use sign languages in communication with others in their everyday lives.

There are **MORE THAN 300**
sign languages worldwide.



SIGN LANGUAGES HAVE REGIONAL VARIETIES

Like spoken languages, sign languages can vary from one region to another.

Signers may use different signs, expressions or styles while still using the same sign language.

THE CEFR ALSO APPLIES TO SIGN LANGUAGES

Like spoken languages, sign languages can be taught and assessed using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) proficiency levels (A1–C2), providing a common framework for learning across Europe.

Martha's Vineyard (USA) Sign Language was widely used by both deaf and hearing residents in parts of the island community.

In several countries, deaf people have successfully challenged inaccessible

CINEMA AND THEATRE PROVISION,

leading to improved access through sign language interpretation and captioning.



One of the earliest written references to visual-gestural communication appears in Plato's Cratylus, dating back to the 5th century BC.

AMERICAN and **BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE** are among the internationally most widely known national sign languages, but many other national sign languages have large communities of users.

Geographical neighbours don't always share the same signs! British (BSL) and

IRISH SIGN LANGUAGE (ISL)

have different historical origins and are not mutually intelligible in any simple way. In fact, Irish Sign Language has historical roots to the French Sign Language family, whereas BSL belongs to a different historical tradition.



THE SIGN LANGUAGE FLAG WAS DESIGNED BY A DEAFBLIND FRENCH ARTIST

It was created by Arnaud Balard. The flag features three meaningful colours: dark blue for Deafhood and humanity, turquoise for sign language and the Deaf community, and yellow for enlightenment and hope.

WHY NOT LEARN YOUR LOCAL SIGN LANGUAGE?

Learning some basic signs and discovering how sign language grammar works can open new ways of communicating with Deaf signers in your communities.

IN 1760, CHARLES-MICHEL DE L'ÉPÉE FOUNDED ONE OF THE EARLIEST PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR DEAF CHILDREN IN PARIS.

His work contributed significantly to the institutional education of deaf children using signs and to the emergence of French Sign Language and Deaf communities.

INTERNATIONAL SIGN (LANGUAGE)

is a flexible contact signing practice used in international settings by signers who do not share the same national sign language. It is regularly used at international conferences and its successful use depends on participants' experience with International Sign and a shared cultural context.

MONASTIC COMMUNITIES DEVELOPED THEIR OWN SIGN SYSTEMS

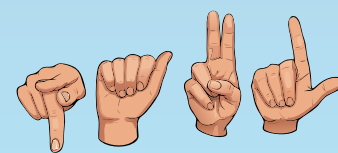
For centuries, some monastic communities observed periods of silence. They developed conventional signs to communicate without speaking.

SIGN LANGUAGES HAVE THEIR OWN GRAMMAR

Sign languages use hand movements, signing space, facial expressions and body movements to create well-formed sentences, utterances, texts and express grammatical and discourse relationships.

The Deaf community has its own rich FILMMAKING TRADITION.

Since 2003, the Clin d'Œil Festival in France has brought together Deaf filmmakers, performers and artists from around the world to celebrate sign language and Deaf culture.



In many Deaf communities, PEOPLE MAY RECEIVE OR USE NAME SIGNS

instead of fingerspelling names. It's a deeply personal identity marker within the community!



At the Eurovision Song Contest, some broadcasters provide signed performances or sign language interpretation of songs, including visual interpretation of rhythm, emotion and meaning by Deaf professionals.

MANY DEAF SIGNERS REPORT DREAMING IN SIGN LANGUAGE!

Research has shown that people who are born deaf and use sign language as their primary language dream in sign language, just as hearing people dream with spoken dialogue.

AI RESEARCH has begun exploring sign language recognition and translation, but reliable real-world translation remains a major challenge.



European Day of Languages
26 September

