



Long Activity
Ages 0-3
45–60 minutes

Sign Language Around the World

Description

Participants will listen to a story about sign language, sing a song together and learn a few words in other languages and international sign languages.

Number of participants

Any number of participants

Space considerations

An indoor space where participants can be seated to do an activity

Competencies

- Language building
- Cognitive development
- Communication and expression
- Motor skills and dexterity

Materials

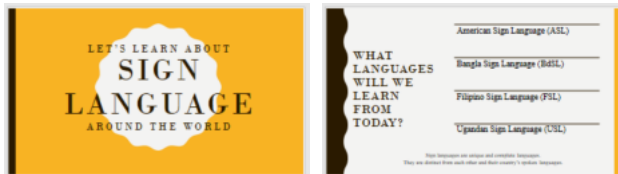
- Laptop with projector
- Printed copies of song (optional)
- Sign Language Around the World presentation
- Books about sign language

Preparation

- Prepare a display of books about sign language that would appeal to a wide range of children, with an emphasis on younger children and infants.
- Print or display the lyrics to the song (optional).
- If you plan to use the song as part of your program and are unfamiliar with it, take a few minutes to read ahead and practise the signs.

Implementation

- Begin with the optional song “**The More We Get Together.**” Distribute printed copies to parents and caregivers or display on screen.
- Read aloud the book **Dancing Hands** by Joanna Que or another suggested title with sign language content.



Introduce some simple words in different sign languages around the world by showing the signs and saying the word, using the provided **presentation.**

- Explain that while many international sign languages have signs in common, they are distinct languages with unique vocabulary, alphabets and structures.
- **As with spoken languages, there can be more than one sign for the same word.** Words in sign languages have regional differences and variations.
- The sign languages we will explore are
 - **American Sign Language (ASL)**, commonly used in the US as well as most parts of English-speaking Canada
 - **Filipino Sign Language (FSL)**, used mostly in the Philippines
 - **Bangla Sign Language (BdSL)**, used mostly in Bangladesh and some parts of India
 - **Ugandan Sign Language (USL)**, used mostly in Uganda, which was the first country to make its sign language one of its official national languages

Let's sign these words:

FRIEND

BOOK

WATER

THANK YOU

Let's sign the word for

"friend"

ASL	BdSL	FSL	USL
friend	bondhu	kaibigan	mukwano



Hook your pointer fingers together, and then switch them back and forth.

This is the same sign in ASL, FSL and USL.

A similar way of signing "friend" can be seen in BdSL: To sign "friend"/"bondhu," clasp hands across each other and shake firmly.



Let's sign the word for "book"			
ASL	BdSL	FSL	USL
book	boi	libro	ekitabo

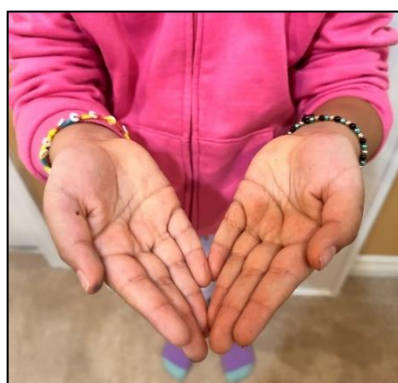
ASL and FSL

Palms touching, fingers pointing away, then open up hands, pinky fingers still touching, as if opening pages of a book.



BdSL

Palms touching, fingers pointing up, then open up hands and drop them down, with just fingertips still touching



USL

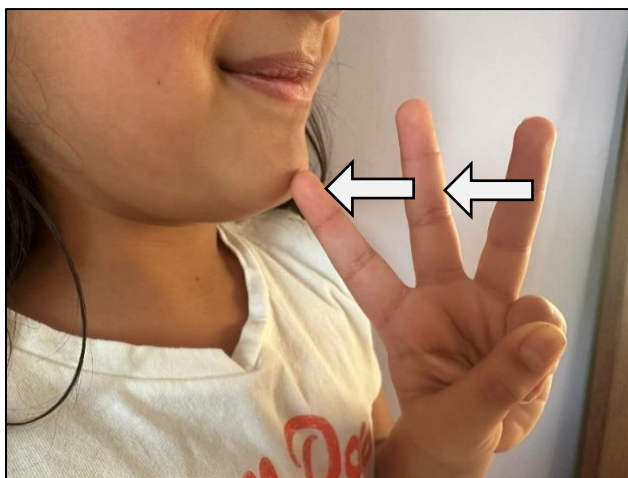
Palms touching, fingers pointing away, then open hands out and apart.



Let's sign the word for "water"			
ASL	BdSL	FSL	USL
water	paani	tubig	amazzi

ASL, FSL and USL:

Make 'W' with fingers and tap sideways against chin



BdSL

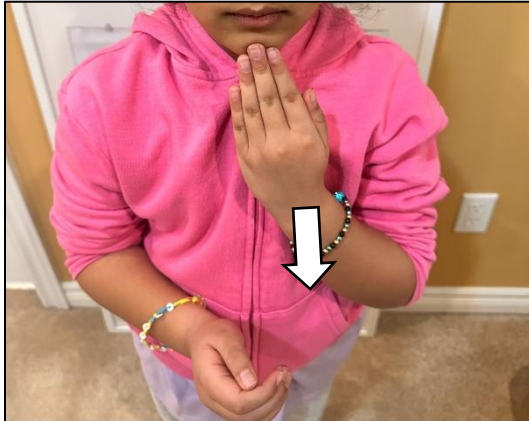
One variation is to make "c" cup shape and bring to lips and back down.



Let's sign 'thank you'			
ASL	BdSL	FSL	USL
thank you	dhonnobhad	salamat po	webale

ASL and BdSL

Lift hand up to chin, then down and out.



USL and FSL

The same as ASL, but with both hands.

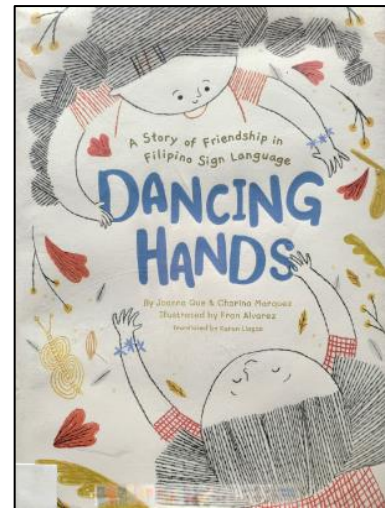
Lift both hands to chin. Lower hands down and out.



Have participants practise and follow along. Very young children may not be able to precisely create every sign. Encourage everyone to do their best!

To extend this program or enhance it, consider going through additional signs with participants. More FSL words can be found in **Dancing Hands**.

You can also practise some of the spoken language words from the languages explored today. The words have been provided, but common online tools (Google, YouTube) can offer pronunciation help. If you have other language materials in your library, share these resources. This can be particularly encouraging for new Canadians and multilingual families.



Accessibility considerations

- Select just a few words to share or use just one or two languages
- Display the words of the optional song using a projector
- Use a microphone when speaking

Book suggestions

- **Dancing Hands: A Story of Friendship in Filipino Sign Language** by Joanna Que, Charina Marquez and Fran Alvarez
- **Butterfly on the Wind** by Adam Pottle and Ziyue Chen
- **Next Door** by Deborah Kerbel and Isaac Liang
- **Same Here! The Differences We Share** by Susan Hughes and Sophie Casson
- **Meena Can't Wait** by Farida Zaman

Download links

- Sign Language Around the World—Full Activity PDF
- The More We Get Together—Song Lyrics and ASL Signs
- Sign Language Around the World—Presentation

Selected resources

ASL

1. [Our Languages \(Gov't of Canada\)](#)

BdSL

1. [United Nations Development Programme Bangladesh](#)
2. [National Deaf Children's Society \(UK\) program books](#)

FSL

2. **Dancing Hands: A Story of Friendship in Filipino Sign Language**
by Joanna Que, Charina Marquez and Fran Alvarez

USL

1. [National Deaf Children's Society \(UK\) program books](#)
2. [UNICEF](#)