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What is Finger Spelling

The manual alphabet is a set of standardized hand signals that represent different letters. Finger-spelling is the use of the manual alphabet to represent letters when communicating. One signal, or sign, is used for each letter of the alphabet.

When finger-spelling, the palm of the hand should be facing the audience with the arm comfortably positioned along the side of the body. It is OK to move the arm a little, but arm motion should be kept to a minimum if possible.

Each letter should be made clearly, with a little pause between words. When signing words with double letters, such as "LETTERS", the hand can either be opened slightly between letters, or positioned a bit to the signers right for the second sign.

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About the Program

Finger Spelling for Windows was developed as an aid to learning finger spelling using the manual alphabet. The program is intended for anyone wishing to become proficient in communicating with the manual alphabet. This includes sending and receiving signs to and from others.

The program's use centers around three main options. Each option was designed to provide a different emphasis in learning the signs. Further information on each option can be obtained by reading the appropriate information in this help file.

Each options provides a means of working with the signed letters, and two options also work with the digits 1 through 9.

It is hoped that this training aid will provide a more stimulating way of learning the signs than simply reading them from a book. It should provide hours of useful, fun, and interactive learning.

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Getting Started

When Finger Spelling is first started, the title screen is presented. To use the program, one of three options must be selected from the OPTIONS menu.

As soon as an option is selected, the screen's contents will change. Some options simply require clicking on letters and signs, and others have other controls. To learn more about choosing options, see the Choosing Options choice below.

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Choosing Options

There are three options available for Finger Spelling for Windows; Click-a-Sign, Flash Cards and Matching.

To choose an option with the mouse, use your mouse to position the tip of the arrow pointer directly over the word Options in the menu bar at the top of the window, then click the left mouse button. This should pull down a list of options. To select an option from the list, position the tip of the arrow pointer directly over the option, and click the left mouse button.

To choose an option with the keyboard; hold down the Alt key, and while keeping it down, press the "O" key. Then let go of all depressed keys. This should pull down a list of options. To select an option from the list, tap the key of the letter that is underscored in the option you want.

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Click-a-Sign Option

The Click-a-Sign option was designed to provide a simple, interactive, and easy-to-use method of becoming acquainted with the manual alphabet. The idea is to simply start with a screen of all letters, or all signs and then click on them.

When you click on a letter, it becomes the respective sign, and vice versa. The idea is to test yourself by visualizing what the sign or letter will become when it is clicked on. To make the task more difficult, you can select the **Random** check box at the bottom of the screen to randomize the letters or digits, otherwise, they are shown in sequential order. The check box entitled **Auto Switch Back** is used to tell the program to switch the letter or sign back to what it was after a short pause. To work with the numbers between 1 and 9, simply choose the **Numbers** radio button in the group box at the right of the screen.

Finally, if you wish to have all signs shown on the screen, click on the **All Signs** button, and conversely, to show all letters first, click on the **All Letters** button.

Items can also be selected by using the arrow keys on the keyboard to navigate, and use the Enter key to switch it's symbol. The controls can also be selected from the keyboard by holding down the Alt key and then pressing the key of the underlined letter in the controls wording.

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Flash Cards Option

The Flash Card option was designed to provide a means for a single person to have the signs shown to him/her in such a way as to improve speed in recognition of the signs. The Flash Card option allows for individual letters, digits or words to be presented at a wide range of speeds. The speed can be controlled at will. The 'flashing' can also be stopped and started at any time.

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Matching Option

The Matching option was designed to provide a means for the student to challenge their skill. The idea is to match up each letter with its associated sign as quickly as possible. Once a sign is clicked on, it displays in reverse video, the object then, is to click on the appropriate letter. If the appropriate letter is clicked on, then the sign is removed from the screen, else it is not.

Once all signs have been eliminated, a new set of randomized signs are displayed with their associated letters.

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Maintaining Words

The word maintenance system was designed to allow the user to add and delete words from a word list as needed. The Flash Card option allows for words to be signed on the screen, and then have the actual word displayed. Many different word lists can be maintained by opening the appropriate word list file. To add a word to a list, choose Maintain Words from the Words menu. A dialog box should appear with a listbox and a text box.

To add a word to the list: Click in the text box to place your blinking cursor there and type the word you want to add. Then click on the **Add** button. The word will be placed in the list in alphabetic order.

To delete a word from the list: Select the word to delete in the listbox, then click on the Delete button. A confirmation box will be displayed. Click on yes to confirm the deletion. The word will be deleted from the list.

When finished maintaining the list, click on the OK button if you want any changes you made to remain in effect, otherwise choose Cancel to undo any changes made.

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Word List Files

Word list files provide a means to save separate lists of words. The list can be saved to disk, and retrieved from disk. A default list is provided initially. The default list of words can be changed, by adding and deleting words. The list can then be saved to the disk. Files stored on the disk will have an extension of .FSD (for Finger Spelling Dictionary).

To save a file to the disk, choose Save from the File menu. A dialog box will appear, and you can enter the name of the file, including the .FSD extension. If you do not use the extension, then Finger Spelling will not list the file when you perform a retrieval.

To save a file under a different name, you choose Save As from the File menu

To retrieve a file, simply choose Open from the File menu. A dialog box will appear that allows you to locate the file on the disk. Only files with an extension of .FSD will appear in the file list..

Choose the file you wish to retrieve by clicking on it, then click on the OK button.

To start a new list from scratch, choose New from the File menu, then add the words to the list using the methods described in the Maintaining Words section of the help file.

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Exiting the Program

To exit the program. Choose Exit from the File menu.

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