

NZSL FACTS



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Sign language is not universal



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Just like spoken languages, there are many different sign languages all over the world, including local variations and dialects.

For example, New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) is a different language from American Sign Language (ASL). Kiwis may not understand ASL, and Americans may not understand NZSL.



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Signs are formed by a combination of hands, facial expressions, lip patterns and body language to convey meaning.

New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) is a natural language used by New Zealand's Deaf community. There are signs for Māori concepts too. It is unique to Aotearoa!



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NZSL is closely related to British Sign Language (BSL), as well as Australian Sign Language (Auslan). BSL was brought over from the UK in the 1880s.

Deaf pupils in various Deaf schools since 1880 began to develop a distinct variety of NZSL, which has evolved into Aotearoa's sign language as we know it today.



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NZSL is part of a language family called BANZSL (British, Auslan and New Zealand Sign Language), that's why it can be easy to understand BSL and Auslan because of the similarities!

NZSL is complex, beautiful and unique, and it became the second official language of Aotearoa on 6th April 2006.



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Just like there is no universal spoken language, there is no universal sign language. Sign languages have their own grammatical structure and rules, just like spoken languages.

Like any other language, there are differences in vocabulary, signing style, local variations and dialects.



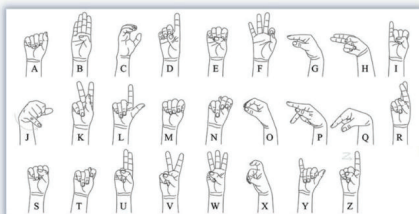
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Spot the difference between NZSL and ASL



NZSL

ASL



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SOURCES

TeachSign - NZSL Level 1 - Unit 1
Handout - An Introduction to NZSL

Learning NZSL - Deaf Society of Canterbury -
<https://deafsocietyofcanterbury.co.nz/tips-and-ideas/nzsl-classes/>

NZSL Facts - NZSL Online Dictionary
- <https://www.nzsl.nz/nzsl/>

American Sign Language -
www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/american-sign-language



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