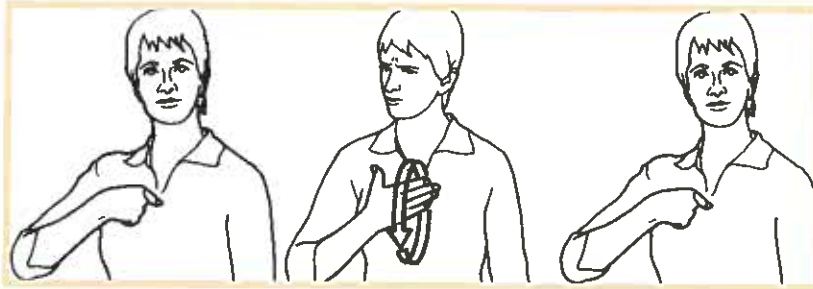




Facial Expressions & Non-Manual Signals

One noticeable difference between American Sign Language and English is the use of facial expressions and non-manual signals. **Non-manual signals** (abbreviated NMS) are the various parts to a sign that are not signed on the hands. For example, ASL **adverbs** are made by the eyes and eyebrows, and ASL **adjectives** use the mouth, tongue, and lips. One important group of NMS are **facial expressions**, which convey your tone of “voice” while you sign. Your facial expressions should match the meaning and content of what you’re signing so if you’re signing *I am happy*, then look happy!

**Why doesn't the example make sense?
How can you make the sentence clearer?**



Changing a facial expression modifies the *meaning* of the sign, even if the sign itself doesn't change. Think of facial expressions as occupying positions on a scale, like the one shown below. Unlike English which uses separate words to describe related meanings, ASL uses related facial expressions with the **base meaning** of a sign.



No meaning



Not scared at all



Scared



Very scared



Terrified

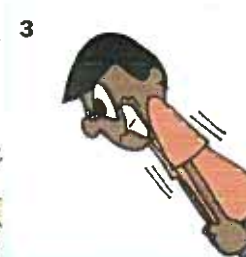
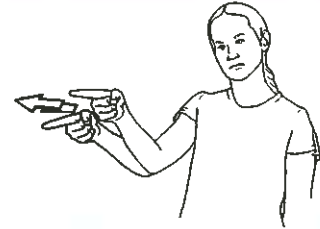
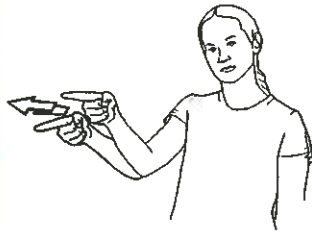
Classroom Exercise



- 1 **Facial expressions.** Using one sign you know, how many different meanings can you make by changing facial expressions?
- 2 **Comparisons.** Use the correct sign with various facial expressions to show the difference between each meaning.
 1. *I'm not afraid.....afraid.....terrified.*
 2. *I'm not busy.....busy.....overwhelmed.*
 3. *I'm not bored.....bored.....incredibly bored.*
 4. *I'm not sick.....sick.....deathly ill.*
 5. *I'm not stressed.....stressed.....stressed out.*
 6. *I'm not sad.....sad.....terribly sad.*
 7. *I'm not tired.....tired.....exhausted.*
 8. *I'm not excited.....excited.....enthusiastic.*
 9. *I'm not angry.....angry.....furious.*
 10. *I'm not happy.....happy.....joyous.*

Classroom Exercise **R**

1 Using non-manuals. What can you say about each illustration? An example is provided.



2 Matching. Pair the vocabulary word with the NMS or facial expression that best matches.

- | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------|----------|-------------|----------|
| 1. Blank face | 3. Sick | 5. Happy | 7. Tired | 9. Good |
| 2. Sad | 4. Afraid | 6. Bored | 8. Confused | 10. Busy |



Accent Steps

It is normal to feel awkward or uncomfortable making facial expressions at first, but with practice you will become more confident and skilled. Without them you can't sign questions, show interest, or carry on a satisfying conversation. Think of learning facial expressions as a fun challenge!

Classroom Exercise Q

Eyebrows and more! As you make each facial expression, think about the meaning behind the face. When would you use it?



Vocabulary Signing with Facial Expressions

