

What is a classifier?

Things (objects, people, animals, vehicles, etc.)

Shapes (including outlines, perimeters, surfaces, configurations)

Sizes (amount, largeness, smallness, relative size, volume, etc.) Sometimes they can be called SaSS's

Usage (movement paths, speed, interactions, etc.)

Can a classifier also be a sign?

Yes. In most cases, it started as a classifier and evolved into a sign.

- Door, butterfly, cup, tape, worm etc.

The reason we use classifiers in ASL is to:

Classifiers can help to clarify your message, describe a person or a thing, show the movement of an object, show the relationship of objects, highlight specific details, and provide an efficient way of conveying information.

How many classifiers are there?

There are several classifiers in ASL, and they fit into these 8 categories. Do you have to remember these categories? No! Within these categories, there are many commonly used classifiers but to assign them a number is impossible. Especially if you include modified classifiers (ex. CL:5-**bent**). I would say at least 40 though!

Classifier Categories

These eight classes simply let you know how they can be used.

Semantic Classifiers

Function as a placeholder to replace a noun but it's not actually a noun or a verb. A person, dog, or group of people but rather a descriptive handshape that can be used to give additional information about both nouns and verbs, like their size, shape, location, or movement; essentially acting as a visual descriptor to enhance the meaning of a sign

- People group move together, a pipe, a person walking.

We use handshapes associated with specific categories (classes) of size, shape, or usage.

Over time certain handshapes have been used so often to show certain types of things, shapes, amounts, or sizes, that when you hold up or use one of those handshapes people (who know the language) automatically think of a part.

Basically, we use them so often we automatically use the CL. You'll get there too,

Descriptive Classifiers

Describes the shape, size, texture, or pattern of a noun

- Box...small, average, large

Element Classifiers

Use handshapes and movements to describe the properties of fire, water, and air

- Water rising or running

Instrumental Classifiers

Instrumental shows that you are holding something

- Holding a broom, knife, tea cup

Locative Classifiers

Indicate the location of something, how it's moved or its position relative to another

- Next to another person, or Cane's across the street Wendy's
- Crossroads, Wendy's here, across the doctor's office

Body Classifiers

Use direct contact with the upper frontal part of the body to refer to a part of the body. You, as the signer take on the animal or person and what it looks like

- Nodding of head
- Scratching head, slap on forehead CL:B, attitude crossing arms

Body Part Classifiers

Refer to parts of the body that are outside of the signing area, such as the legs, back, or feet Ex. bottom of foot I have a spot the doctor needs to look at.

- Using the S to show the nod of the head.

Plural Classifiers

Indicate that a noun or subject is plural

- A row of cars, a row of houses, many people, hordes of people,

Again, these 8 classes simply let you know how they can be used.

Classifiers and how they are used in ASL

This is not a comprehensive list but these are the most commonly used.

CL-1:

- A thin, long object. A person, legs, outline, pencil, toothbrush

CL-3:

- A vehicle, car, boat, bicycle, tricycle, 4-wheeler, roller coaster, train (not a plane)

CL-4:

- Parallel lines: stripes, bars, fence, upright boundaries
- People standing in line. The movement of lines of people.
- Objects that flow or leak: bleeding, drool, running water, draining (ear, sink, pipes)
- Objects that stream or extend: curtains, hair, streamers, rainbows
- Group of 4:4 people standing or walking together
- Traffic: (also "CL-5"), certain types of traffic movement, multi-lane freeways
- Bandwidth, streaming (video, audio), download

CL-5:

- Stiff and straight: hairs or fur that stand on end, Mohawk
- Extremely porous Objects: filters, screens
- The movement of air, wind, and breezes
- Group of 5: 5 people standing or walking together
- Large flat object: a serving platter, flat lid
- Using a modified CL-5 > CL-O or CL-O > CL-5: headlights, flashing lights, sunlight, shower
- Objects that have projectile movements: vomit, diarrhea, flash flood, tears

- Can show height or movement of water: ocean, flood, rising water, waterfalls, rivers
- Traffic: (using a modified 4 or 5 handshape) traffic jams, multi-lane freeways
- Upright objects viewed while traveling very fast: commonly used to describe blurred scenery while driving very fast
- The movement of a fan (blowing air)
- The position or movement of a leaf
- Flame

CL-5-claw:

- Place of a building (such as a house), office, restaurant.
- Scads of people
- Audience - orientation will determine if the audience is looking at you or you are looking at the audience

CL-A:

- An object in a specified location: a house on a street, a statue or vase on a table, a lamp on a desk.
- Positioning in relationship to other people or objects: ahead, behind, fall behind, chase, catch up, accompany, spaced apart, above, beneath, facing each other
- An object or person that commutes: A person going to the bathroom repeatedly, a person going to work repeatedly. Things that go back and forth. Declining, credit card, microphone, hair brush

CL-B:

- Flat things like roof, flat, wall, shelves, feet, doors, windows, shutters, mini-blinds, eyes falling asleep. Median on highway

CL-C:

- Thick things, round pole-like things
 - Wad of money, Einstein brain, a mobile home, groups of people

CL-C: (Claw)

- cookies, sheriff's badge

CL-C (small C):

- campaign buttons, police or sheriff badge.

CL-F:

- Small round things: pepperoni, buttons, coins, tokens, eyeballs, being distracted, instrumental classifier for holding on to small things like paper (also for showing movement of small flying insects)

CL-G:

- Thin things (or degree of thinness), also "eyelids", putting on earrings, a necklace, thickness of dust in the house.

CL-I:

- Very thin objects. Thread, string, noodles, stilettos, a mole, a thin person.

CL-L (bent):

- Check, card, square, lake or pond, pan, tiara/crown, pan

CL-L:

- Check, card, square

CL-S:

- Holding something, pan, suitcase, broom, mop, your head, throwing an object

CL-V:

- legs, a person walking-(upside-down V), two people walking, [stand, walk-to, lay down, toss-and-turn, dive, jump, skateboard, scooter, get up]
- CL-V (bent fingers) = a small animal or a larger animal sitting

CL-X:

A person or animal that is crouched or hunched over (using a modified version of CL-1): a person who skulks, slinks, shrinks, or slouches.

- A scratching or digging device: scratch or scar, a digging or chipping apparatus (such as a pick ax or mining tool)

- Anything with a hook: boat anchor, door latch, fishing hook, talons, tow, bat (animal), beaked nose, scorpion's tail, clothes hanger
- Long curved sliding device: ice skates, skis
- The movement of bent legs: running furiously, cross-legged, kicked-back-(relax), a bull pawing at the ground before charging, etc.
- The movement of a convertible car's top

CL-Y:

- Wide things. An oversized person walking, how you feel after Thanksgiving, pregnant woman
- A hippopotamus's mouth
- Something is being poured (i.e., dressing syrup)
- It can also be used to show how tall something is

CL-ILY:

- Airplane, jets
- Modified for drone

Having our classifiers move

Facial expression
 Body movement
 Role shifting etc
 Mouth morphemes
 Miming, becoming the person or animal
 Eye gaze

Some of these classifiers will lend themselves to movement better than others, while some require more than one CL to show the concept.

CL-1

Pen on table rolling off, brushing teeth, different sizes of an object like bee sting, people meeting, walking away, different ways they can walk, putting on mascara

CL-3

Jet ski on water, 3 people walking together, roller coaster, roller coaster with loops (CL:3 to CL:1), talons on a bird, a line of traffic, a vehicle weaving in and out of traffic

CL-4

Hair standing on head blowing, fence, gate opens and car drives through traffic, people standing in line, someone cutting the line

CL-5

Leaves falling off a tree and floating through the air, show movement of water, wind blowing face. High ocean waves, cruise on high waves, river, headphones

CL-5 claw

Placement of a building, spots on face, chicken pox, freckles, headphones take off, stars in the sky, combing hair.

CL-A

Row of houses, commuting, boogie board, credit card, now credit card, microphone, brushing hair, boogie boarding

CL-B

Roof blowing off of a house, walls falling, person walking (representing feet), surf board or boogie board, creek, very steep slope

CL-C

Large pot for cooking and pouring, moving cup

CL-C modified

Move a pan to counter, camera, (portrait/landscape)

CL-claw

Dog growling or barking, balloon floating in the air, eyes falling out of head, group of people moving together

CL-F

Eyes look upward with attitude, insect flying around, button pops off

CL-G

Picture frame, someone winking, thin person, put on earrings, bikini. Earbuds, upper case and lower case, ice, dust on your shelf.

CL-I

A person walking in high-heeled shoes. Putting on eye make-up. A toothpick.

CL-L

Computer monitor adjust, picture move, goal post, turn down, license expired, welding, drilling, electric screwdriver

CL-L (bent)

Pan moves to counter, ticket, voucher, card, check, spray deodorant, or perfume, plate (wash)

CL:V

Two people walking side by side and looking in each other's eyes. Standing for a long time.

CL-V (bent)

Cochlear implant, animal running (how), animal hopping/running

CL-X

Hearing aid, hunched over person, skiing steep slope, furrowed eyebrows

CL-Y

Hippo yawning, pregnant woman walking, swimsuit, Thanksgiving day full

CL-ILY

Drone flying, (variation) airplane landing, airplane spinning in air ILY to 1