

Ten Easy Steps for Making and Posting a Custom Signed-Communication Instructional Video

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Learning signed communication can be a challenge for educators and family members alike. Traditional print versions of sign dictionaries can be confusing because the drawings and descriptions are sometimes unclear. Some commercially available instructional DVD series are good, but it can be time consuming to wade through signs that aren't particularly relevant to get to the ones you really need (e.g., you may not want or need to know how to sign all the zoo and farm animals). Free online sign dictionaries like WWW.ASLPRO.COM are also good, but can be time consuming and signs can vary from those used in specific schools or communities.

A custom sign video is a great alternative because it includes just what people need to know, when they need to know it. Each video is made for a specific student with signs generated from school and/or home. It can be made by anyone on a child's team who has the sign skills required (e.g., deaf and hard of hearing teacher, speech therapist, teacher, intervener, educational interpreter, etc.) and can usually be made in 30 minutes or less. It may be a little easier to make the video with someone helping you, but it is definitely doable as a one-person job. The short video is uploaded to the web so that it can be viewed wherever and whenever it is needed.

First steps (for educational staff and/or family members)

1. Tape a piece of chart paper on a wall in the classroom or home. Choose a location that is easily accessible throughout the day, and keep a dark-colored marker pen nearby.
2. When you would like to sign something to the child but don't know the specific sign(s), write the word(s) on the chart paper.
3. Once you have several words or phrases on the chart paper, send it to the person who has agreed to make the custom signed communication video.

Next steps (for the educational team member making the video)

4. Wear a solid-colored shirt or blouse that contrasts well with your skin tone. Find a quiet room with good lighting and choose a background that is as free as possible of visual distractions.



5. Place a comfortable chair against the background you've selected. Place the chart paper with the words or phrases on the opposite wall from the chair. If the room is too big to see across to the opposite wall, just tape the chart paper to the back of a chair or easel.
6. Set up a video device (e.g., mobile phone, Flip Camera, etc.) about 8 to 10 feet from the chair. Make sure that your chair is well within the frame of the video camera.
7. Press the record button on the camera and then have a seat in the chair. Go through the signs on the list and demonstrate how to make each of the signs. When appropriate, include explanations of sign origins or any memory devices you have used to remember the signs. Don't refer to a specific child or location by name so that confidentiality will be maintained.
8. Don't worry if you make a mistake or mix something up. Just correct it on the spot and move on. Remember, this isn't a big budget Hollywood film, so avoid the temptation to record over with second or third takes. No one will care if you have to say, "Oops, I messed up on that. What I meant was ..."
9. It's a good idea to stop before you hit the ten-minute mark. Some video file sharing services have ten-minute limits.
10. Once the video is finished, post it to an online video sharing site such as YouTube. Share the video's web address with anyone who interacts with the child and might be interested in learning these signs.

The video is now ready to be viewed by the child's family and by anyone on the child's educational team. Start the process over when the child's family and/or school team is ready to learn more signs. Depending on the sound quality of the recording, viewers may have the option of adding automatic captioning, such as what is currently available on *YouTube*. The accuracy of the captioning isn't perfect, but it is sure to improve as speech recognition technology advances.

If you'd like to see real life examples of custom sign videos, go to *YouTube* and type the following in the search bar: mbelote signed communication. There should be two or three examples that have been posted.

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