



BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE

Citizenship

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Some people are born deaf. This means their ears are different to hearing people's ears. Some deaf people may hear some sounds. They might use **hearing aids** to help them listen. Other deaf people cannot hear any sounds. They may use their hands, arms and faces to talk. This method of **communication** is called a 'sign language'. This means it is made up of **gestures** rather than sounds. The most used sign language in the UK is British Sign Language (BSL). This language is used by over 300,000 people in the UK. This number includes 87,000 deaf people, as well as their friends and family. Signers have a **dominant** hand for creating signs – often

the hand they write with. This might also be called the 'primary' hand. BSL has a range of dialects as different communities choose different signs. Signs are often influenced by the shape of physical objects. This means the sign for 'telephone' has changed over the years to reflect the **evolution** of the telephone. Some deaf people might prefer to describe themselves as someone with a **hearing impairment**. However, many Deaf people see their Deafness as an important part of themselves and choose to write 'deaf' with a capital 'D'.



Match the words with a synonym:

hearing aids	•	•	moving part of the body to create meaning
communication	•	•	loss or damage to the ability to hear
gestures	•	•	a system of sending and receiving information
dominant	•	•	devices for making sounds louder
dialects	•	•	the process of changes and developments to something
evolution	•	•	language variations used in a specific geographic region or by a certain group of people
hearing impairment	•	•	stronger

Read the text again and answer the questions:

- 1 Who may wear a hearing aid?
- 2 What is the most commonly used sign language in the UK?
- 3 How many BSL signers are there in the UK?
- 4 Why has the sign for 'telephone' changed over time?

Why is 'Deaf' sometimes spelt with a capital 'D'?

- 5



Discuss with a friend, teacher, or your class

What are the benefits of using a signed language? When might it be useful?

Which is your dominant hand and the one you would sign with? Why might it be important to have a 'primary' and 'secondary' hand?

What is the difference between 'someone with a hearing impairment' and 'a Deaf person'? Where is the focus in each case? Why might someone prefer one form over the other?



Challenge!

Write a paragraph arguing why everyone should learn basic sign language.

