

## DRUMMER SIGNS for the Deaf



The signs that will be used for Paradragons USA are tailored specifically to dragon boat. They are based on ASL (American Sign Language), but are modified and simplified to better communicate with the deaf paddlers in the boat, whether in seat 1, 5, or 10.

These signs and gestures are adapted for both two-handed and one-handed use. Both hands can be used for clear communication during coaching and marshaling, while one handed signs will be used for calling during a race as the other hand is drumming, keeping time with the stroke. Of course, this is an added element of complexity to the already stressful role of voicing commands, responding to the steersperson and keeping time with the stroke. If these signs are rehearsed and well memorized, they will become second nature to use alongside your voice.

Most of the signs that relate to paddle position will use ASL “classifiers”, which means that the hand shape represents a pre-determined object. In our case, the hand represents the paddle and the arm is the paddle shaft. Therefore, many of the commands will use the arm and closed fingers / open hand shape to represent the paddle. The palm is the power side of the blade. The movement and position will indicate the specific command. Just as important to the signs and gestures is the manner of the movement and facial expression. A deaf paddler in the rear seats is looking over many heads to see the drummer. The signs need to be large, clear, deliberate and high enough to be seen from a distance.

Some general points for all teammates to be familiar with:

**Make eye contact** and enunciate words for lip readers but do not exaggerate your enunciations.

**Wave or lightly tap on the shoulder** of a deaf paddler to gain their attention. You may need to do this on the boat if they need to look at the drummer or interpreter.

**Remain quiet on the boat** during races and marshaling unless you are asked to relay calls.

**Your steerer is in command of your boat**, listen for their commands and those of your drummer or watch for hand signals. Only carry out commands of your steerer, keep paddling unless they call you off. Stop paddling when they give the ‘let it run’ command.

**Stay focused on your boat alone** and your race program. Do not look at or react to other boats in the race. You will be coached to execute our race plan.

It’s important that the support paddler sitting next to a deaf paddler knows the signs as well. If the deaf person misses or misunderstands the command, the bench mate can quickly relate the command. Also, the deaf paddler may be intuitively conscious of the support bench mate for cues for numbered calls, responses from the steerer’s commands, when to stop paddling, etc.

This is a “cheat sheet” of the **Drummer Signs for the Deaf**. These photos are screenshots from the video, and descriptions of the signs. They are only for reference and reminders. View the video for full demonstration of the signs, gestures and motions.

<https://www.paradragonsusa.org/training>



### **Numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 20**

These are the ASL numbers that are most frequently used for commands.



### **Paddles Up! Go!**

Paddle set in ready position, ready to take a stroke, one inch over the water - start paddling.



### **Back Paddle. Go!**

Paddle in back set position - start back paddling together.



### **# Stroke Forward / Back Paddle**

Number sign prior to Paddles Up or Back Set position



### **Left Side Draw**

Letter “L” (with right hand), palm facing boat motioning draw - high enough to see. Then move hand down to Ready position, draw towards boat.



### **Right Side Draw**

Letter “R” (with left hand), palm facing boat motioning draw - high enough to see. Then move hand down to Ready position, draw towards boat.



### **Brace!**

Arms outstretched slightly downward angle, palms down, motion downward and firmly indicating blade flat on the water surface.



### **Hold!**

Arms bent down, palms facing back indicating full blade in the water, not moving. Use the same sign for Check if the boat is moving.



### **Hold for Drift!**

Arms bent down, palms facing boat indicating full blade deep in the water.



### **Easy Paddle**

Arms outstretched forward, palms down, gesture light paddling forward.



### **Breathe In**

Hand outstretched forward, fingers open. Draw hand towards mouth while closing fingers with the expression of inhaling.



### **Breathe Out**

Hand near mouth, fingers together facing out. Push hand out forward while opening fingers with the facial expression of exhaling.



**200m:** Number 2, then a C shape hand (C is the Roman Numeral for 100).  
**500m:** Number 5, then a C shape hand.  
**2000m (2K):** Number 2, then letter K.



**Rest**  
Arms folded over chest with open hands towards shoulders.



**Up Up Up!**  
Closed fist, thumb up, arm bent inward. Motion thumb up for each call of "UP". Time with drum sequence.



**Power!**  
Motion Inward bent arm with curled fist.



**Finish!**  
Same sign as Power with more emphasis and expression.



**Long / Reach**  
Extend arm out forward, palm down and draw hand back.



### **Ready!**

"R" sign on both hands spaced about a foot apart, off set to one side. Move both hands sharply, simultaneously across in front of face.



### **Attention!**

Open palms on each side of face. Short, sharp motion hands forward.



### **Leg Drive!**

Open palm, closed fingers facing forward, arm bend inward and press palm forward a few times.



### **Rotate!**

"C" shaped hands facing each other in front of chest. Rotate back and forth.



### **Deep!**

Palm facing back, plunge arm slightly forward and sharply down.



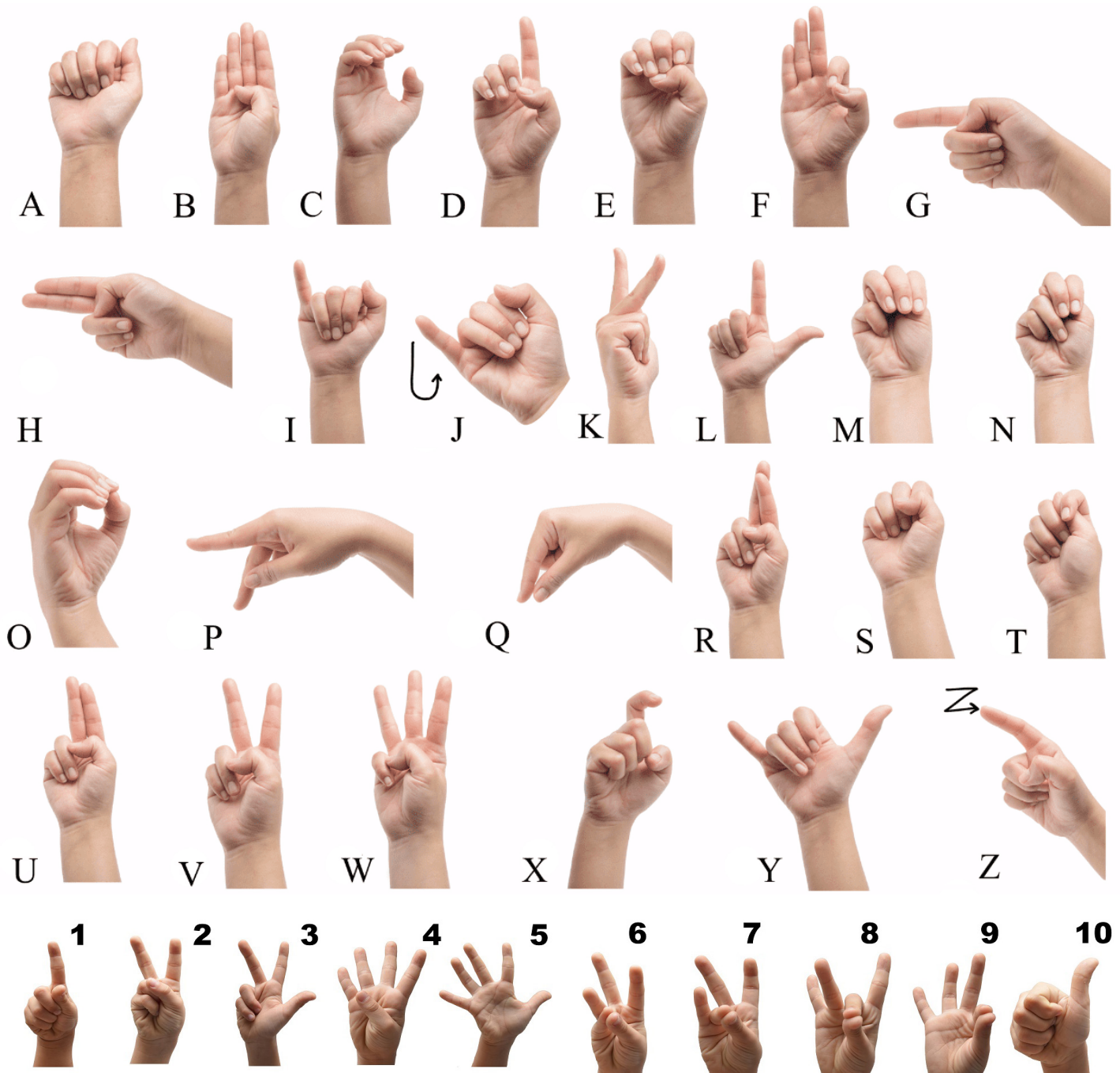
### **Smile!**

Palms facing down, fingertips touching slightly under mouth. Move hands apart while drawing upward and outward. :)

Thanks to Jeff Liu for assisting with and performing the Drummer Sign vocabulary. Jeff is a Deaf member and the Team Captain of Adaptive Fusion Dragon Boat Club in Long Beach, CA.

## ASL ALPHABET & NUMBERS

The most commonly used letters for the dragon boat drummer will be "L" and "R", and numbers 1-5, 10 and 20. The numbers 6-9 are difficult to differentiate from a distance. If the deaf paddler knows the sequence numbers ahead of time (ie: 3 Deep, 20 Ups), they will count in their head. It's helpful for all teammates to know some basic ASL signs and the alphabet. At least your name to introduce yourself, which helps build relationship.



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