

# SLAAASh Project ASL Annotation Conventions

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## Introduction

These conventions have been developed by a team of researchers at Gallaudet University and the University of Connecticut (GUC). The primary purpose is for the annotation of longitudinal spontaneous production data from Deaf children of Deaf parents and from bimodal bilingual hearing children of Deaf parents. Data collection and annotation is on-going.

### Current data set

Group	#	Ages	# sessions	# annotated (sign)	# annotated (speech)
D/D	4	1;05-4;02	224	169	N/A
H/D	10	0;11-8;06	609	81	177
D/D (CI)	6	0;9-8;09	362	14	87

Annotation conventions take into consideration our analysis goals, and our attempt to use a format as consistent as possible with both common sign language annotation symbols and those used in CHILDES (MacWhinney 2000). We also are using the ASL SignBank as an external controlled vocabulary and that has affected our ELAN tier structure and annotation conventions.

## Tier hierarchy

Our tier hierarchy starts with the ASL *Right* and *Left Hand* in which signs are annotated individually for each hand. The *Append* tiers are for when contextual-based information is needed (i.e., when parentheses are required). Then on the *Free Translation* tiers we add annotations containing rough English translations for each full utterance.

## Annotator responsibilities

We aim to ask annotators to do as little analysis as possible. Our intention is to include basic information in the sign tiers, with additional details about use of space, non-manuals, etc. left to subsequent analysis passes. This principle guides our decisions. Annotators should use ID glosses and use the translation tier for further information about their interpretation of each utterance.

## Capitalization

Capitalization systematically represents a conventionalized sign (e.g., SIGN) or type of sign (e.g., DS (for depicting sign) or FS (for fingerspelling)). Lower case signifies that additional information is presented. For conventionalized signs, the lower case portion that follows the capitalized gloss indicates something about its form when distinguishing between variants of the same lemma (SOONnose, SOONchin). For information enclosed in parentheses following codes, aspects of the meaning expressed by the sign is presented in lower case. From a human-readability perspective, this allows the user to perceive patterns in the data just from scanning. Non-sign communicative acts (when annotated) use lower-case (e.g., show(toy)).

## Partly/non-lexical material

Following our principles, upper-case codes identify the type of sign, with lower-case indicating additional information. For example, the annotation for a depicting sign indicates its category (DS), and the additional information in lower case conveys a rough approximation to meaning: DS\_3 in upper case and (car-goes-down-street) in lower case. Pointing signs are annotated using IX and (referent). Further analysis takes place independently on separate tiers.

Follows file naming conventions  
SUBJECT\_SESSION#\_LANGCODES\_YYMMDD

Child free translation

Nr	Annotation	Begin Time	End Time	Duration
1	It's a horse.	00:06:21.587	00:06:23.977	00:00:02.390
2	Yeah.	00:06:23.977	00:06:25.197	00:00:01.220
3	Yes I'm riding a horse.	00:06:26.947	00:06:29.540	00:00:02.593
4	I want to ride my horse.	00:06:33.330	00:06:34.410	00:00:01.080
5	Where is my horse?	00:06:34.410	00:06:34.630	00:00:00.220
6	Mama!	00:06:34.910	00:06:35.620	00:00:00.710
7	My horse! Mine.	00:06:35.620	00:06:36.430	00:00:00.810
8	I want to ride my horse!	00:06:36.650	00:06:37.800	00:00:01.150

English conventions mostly based on CHILDES CHAT conventions.

Child free translation [8]  
 Child ASL right hand [5]  
 Child ASL RH append [2]  
 Child ASL right hand pho [1]  
 Child ASL left hand [1]  
 Child ASL LH append [1]  
 Child ASL left hand pho [1]  
 Child NMS [2]  
 Child comments [1]  
 Adult1 free translation [3]  
 Adult1 ASL right hand [10]  
 Adult1 ASL RH append [7]  
 Adult1 ASL right hand pho [0]  
 Child ASL feedback [0]

Timeline annotations:  
 HORSE  
 XXX  
 YYY  
 DS(ca)  
 HORSE  
 HORSE  
 two-handed! wow.  
 i(yes)  
 Book blocks his  
 A horse.  
 Yeah, that's a horse just like yours, Wiz's.  
 Yeah you rode a horse before.  
 SOONnose  
 HORSE  
 IX  
 FS  
 SAME-AS  
 POSS  
 NS  
 IX  
 DS\_2  
 BEFORE  
 (book)  
 (horse)  
 [ ]  
 (WIZ)  
 (WIZ)  
 (WIZ)  
 (legs-on-surf)  
 IX - index (referent)  
 FS - fingerspelling (word)  
 [ ] held signs  
 POSS - possessive sign (referent)  
 NS - name sign (name)  
 DS\_hs - Depicting sign and handshape label (additional meaning)

Notes:  
 [+]  
 repetition or lack of  
 proximalized (full body!)  
 notes can be added to the "pho" tier for extra phonetic information  
 XXX is used to identify productions that are not visible to the annotator  
 YYY - definitely a sign or word but indecipherable  
 DS(ca) - ID gloss used for constructed action/surrogate blend  
 / - false start (interruption). There are 5 types of false start codes.  
 / - interruption by other  
 // - self-interruption  
 [/] - retracing without correction  
 [//] - retracing with correction  
 [///] - retracing with reformulation  
 Sign variants are distinguished by brief form descriptions in lower case tags after gloss  
 (referents) are placed on the "append" tier

