

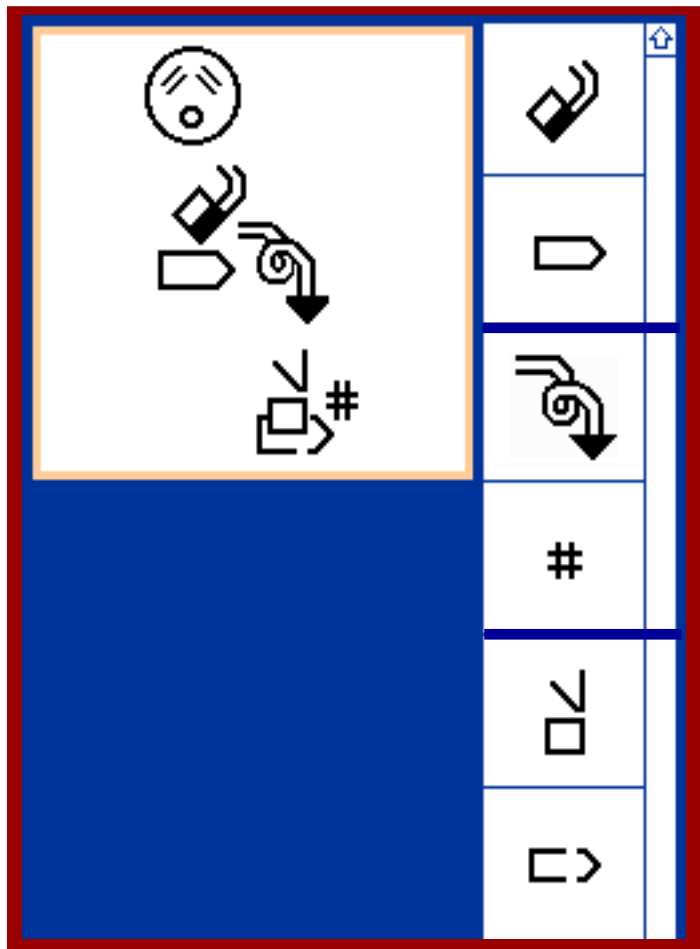


**Sutton's  
SignSpelling  
Guidelines 2008**

**The Order of  
SignWriting  
Symbols  
Within A Sign**

by  
**Valerie Sutton**

**SignWriting  
Symbols  
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use under  
the Open Font  
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This Manual

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SignWriting, a part of Sutton Movement Writing, was first invented by Valerie Sutton in 1974. Sutton Movement Writing records all body movement. The International SignWriting Alphabet (ISWA 2008) records the movements of all Sign Languages.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Spoken Language Dictionaries

Dictionaries for spoken languages, such as an English dictionary, or a Norwegian dictionary, use the Roman Alphabet to sort the dictionary in TWO ways...

First, each word has an established SPELLING, that establishes the order of the Roman Alphabet inside ONE word. So a word is a group of Roman Alphabet symbols that are placed sequentially in the order of the sounds that are made when speaking the word.

Second, once each word has its own unique spelling, then all the words are sorted by the Roman Alphabet's alphabetical order, which places the words into groups. All the words that start with "A" are grouped under "A" and so forth...

So there are TWO sequences...one for spelling inside a word, and one for finding the words in groups in the dictionary.

### Sign Language Dictionaries

Dictionaries for signed languages, such as American Sign Language (ASL) or Norwegian Sign Language (NSL), do not use the Roman Alphabet to sort by signs. Instead, sign language dictionaries are sorted by SignWriting symbols, in TWO different ways...

First, each sign has an established SignSpelling Sequence which establishes the order of reading the SignWriting symbols inside ONE sign. Signs are not written in a line, from left to right. The symbols are in visual units, relating to the "center of the sign". The reader looks for the handshapes that start the sign, and then they follow the movement symbols to the second finishing hand positions. This process, although not linear, creates the "SignSpelling Sequence". Which handshape is read first? Which movement symbol is read second? and so forth...

Second, once each sign has its SignSpelling Sequence, then all the signs are sorted by the alphabetical order of SignWriting symbols, called the Sign-Symbol-Sequence®, which places the signs into groups, such as "all signs that start with the Index Finger" etc.

## The Difference Between Two Kinds of Sequences...

Both the SignSpelling Sequence and Sign-Symbol-Sequence are necessary to create printed dictionaries sorted by signs.

### 1. SignSpelling Sequence (ssps)

The order of SignWriting symbols inside one sign. SignSpellings divide each sign into Sign-Syllables...The Sign-Syllables establish in each sign, which cluster of symbols comes first, second etc...

### 2. Sign-Symbol-Sequence (sss)

The entire list of SignWriting symbols placed in a specific order, so that once a SignSpelling Sequence is established, the dictionary can sort those signs into groups, so that dictionary users can find the signs based on their handshape and other details.

SignWriting has clusters of symbols that form to make a visual unit. These visual units do have a sequence...but it is not written from left to right. Instead, sometimes the symbol that is the first in the sign, can be placed underneath the face. Sometimes the hands begin at the bottom of the sign, following the up arrows up to the top of the cluster, and other times it can start in the center of the sign, moving out, etc. So even though the SignWriting movements are sequential, visually they are not strung from left to right, as in the Roman alphabet for western spoken languages.



The purpose of this manual is to teach the rules behind writing SignSpellings, and determining their SignSpelling Sequences.

Questions?! Feel free to write to me anytime!

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## SymbolBank and SignSpelling Databases

In SignBank Software, there are two separate databases working together to sort dictionaries by Sign-Symbols. The Sign-Symbol-Sequence is established by the **SymbolBank** database, and the SignSpelling Sequence is established by the **SignSpelling** database. The two databases are in the **SignBank Editor**:

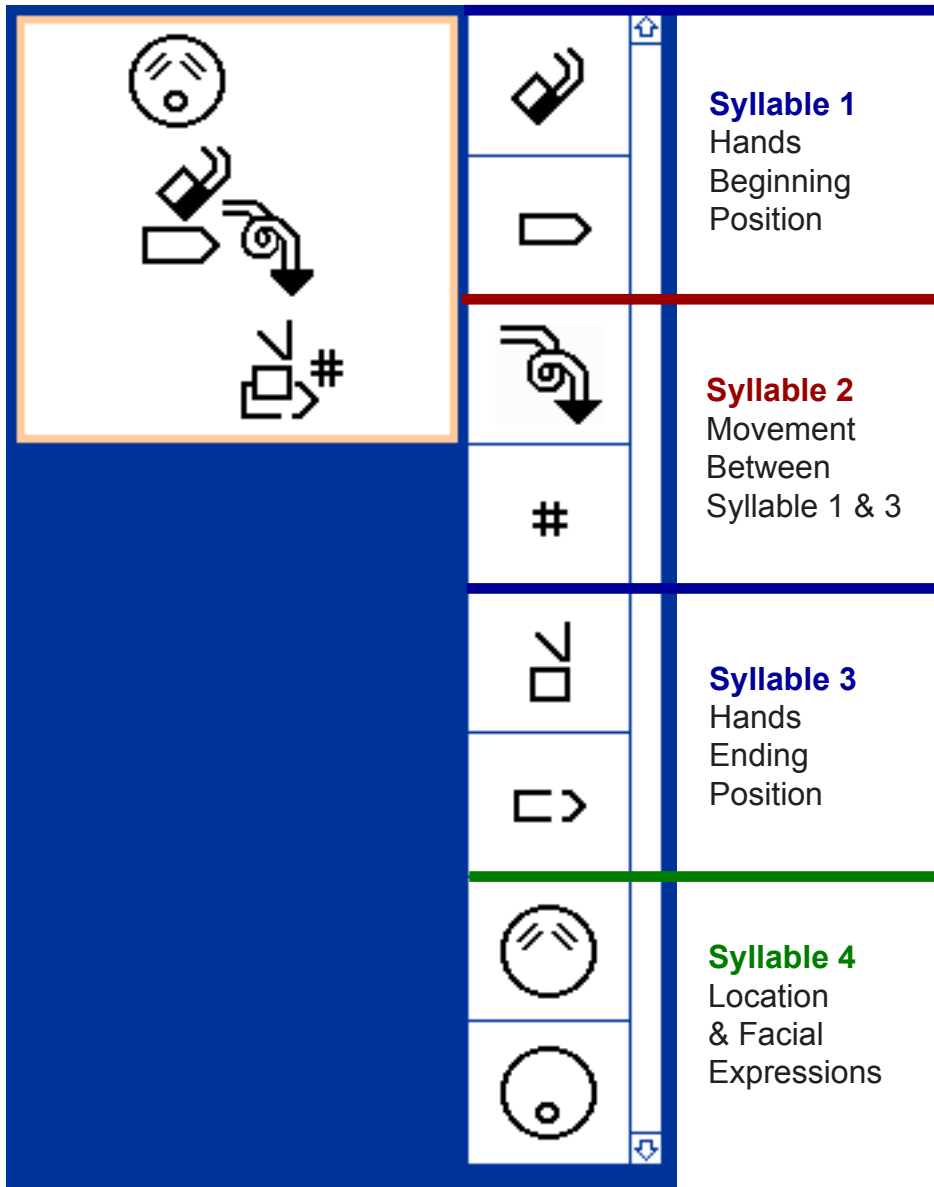
The screenshot shows the SignBank Editor interface with the following components:

- SignBankEditor.fp5**: The main window title.
- SymbolBank Database (SSS)**: A vertical list of sign symbols. An arrow points to it with the text: "SymbolBank Database creates the SSS".
- SignSpelling Database**: A list of sign symbols with associated numbers and a trash icon. An arrow points to it with the text: "SignSpelling Database creates the Spelling Column".
- Selected Symbol**: A box containing the currently selected sign symbol.

Symbol	Number
⌋	1
⌋	2
**	3

## SignSpelling Syllables

A SignSpelling Sequence consists of a series of **Syllables**. Syllables are written sequentially in time. Syllable 1 always comes before Syllable 2. But inside each Syllable, time stands still. The symbols inside one Syllable are "happening at the same time". So SignSpelling Sequences are BOTH simultaneous and sequential.



## Simple SignSpelling Sequences

Syllables 1 and 3 are Hand Syllables. Syllable 2 is for Movement. Syllable 4 is for detailed sequences, for large dictionaries.

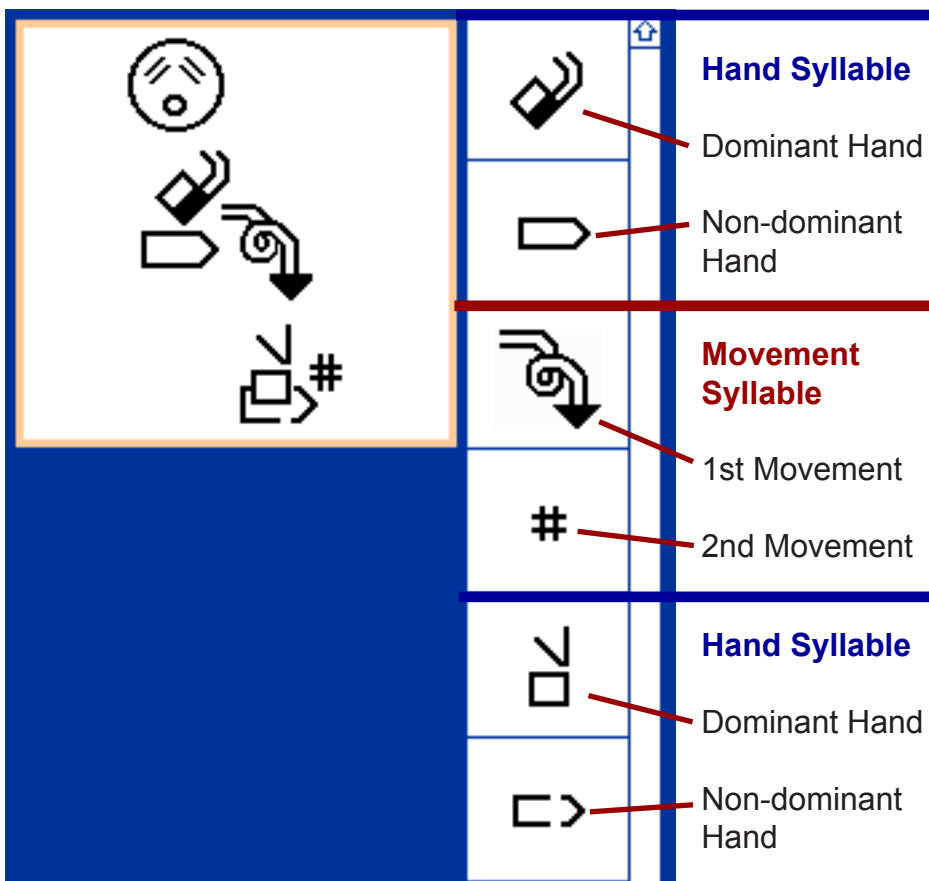
### Simple or Detailed Sequences?

A simple SignSpelling Sequence ignores Syllable 4. A detailed SignSpelling Sequence includes Syllable 4, for information on Location, Facial Expressions, Head and Body. It depends on the length of your dictionary. A big dictionary requires more details.

### Simple SignSpelling Sequences

Hand Syllables: 1. Dominant Hand. 2. Non-Dominant Hand.

Movement Syllable: 1. Movement of dominant hand. 2. Movement of non-dominant hand (in the sequence that it happens in time).



## SignSpelling Sequences

### Syllables 1 & 3: Hands

1. Dominant Hand
2. Non-Dominant Hand

### Syllable 2: Movement

1. 1st Movement Dominant
2. 1st Movement Non-Dominant
3. 2nd Movement Dominant
4. 2nd Movement Non-Dominant
5. Dynamics Dominant
6. Dynamics Non-Dominant

### Syllable 4: Detailed Sorting

1. Location Dominant Hand
2. Location Non-Dominant Hand
3. Head
4. Face (Top-Down)
5. Neck
6. Shoulder
7. Torso
8. Hips & Legs

