

## Spatial Agreement

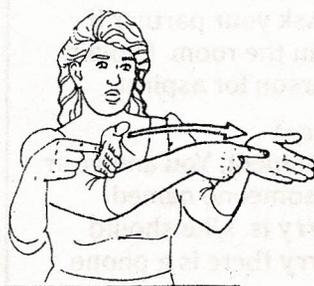
**Talking About a Third Person.** When you talk about a third person, it is important that you use your signing space, verb inflections and pronouns appropriately. (By a "third person" we mean someone other than yourself, the "first person," and the person with whom you're talking, the "second person.") The third person can be present and in view, or out of sight, whereabouts known or unknown. The important thing is to *set up the referent for the third person in a certain location, and then use pronouns and inflections on verbs that agree with that location.*

**Talking about a third person who is present:** When you talk about someone who is present in the room, refer to that person's actual location. If that person moves to another location in the room, refer to the new location to talk about that person.

What if someone was present and then left the room? Usually a new location is established in the direction in which the person was last seen: if s/he went out the front door, point to the direction of the door. If you don't know where the person went, use the location previously established for that person.

**Talking about a third person who is not present:** When you talk about someone who is *not* present in the room, you need to establish a particular location to refer to that person.\* You and the person you are talking with should refer to the same location for subsequent references to that third person.

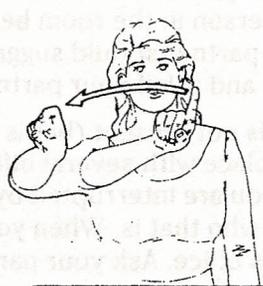
**Using Agreement Verbs.** One verb type in ASL is called **agreement verbs**.\*\* These verbs are inflected to show who did what to whom by incorporating the subject (the person doing the action) and the object (the person receiving the action) in the movement of the sign. The movement *agrees with* the locations established for the pronouns. (Sometimes the palm orientation rather than the movement of the verb indicates the subject and object, for example, in the sign for "look at.") When using agreement verbs, begin the movement of the verb sign near the location of the subject, and end the movement near the location of the object. See the illustration below showing how the movement path of the verb changes to agree with different pronouns.



(you to third person)



(third person to you)



(you to third person)



(third person to you)

**Using Pronouns with Plain Verbs.** What if you want to talk about a third person but the verbs you use are not the type that can change movement or orientation to reflect the subject and object? (These verbs are called plain verbs—see the Level 1 *Student Workbook*, p. 55.) You must use pronouns with these verbs to specify the subject and object. As discussed previously, using personal pronouns in ASL involves pointing to certain locations. Where you point needs to be consistent within a conversation, and follow the guidelines discussed above.

\*A general rule for establishing locations to represent non-present persons is: if you refer to one person, designate a location on your dominant side; if you refer to two persons, designate a location for the first person on your non-dominant side, then a different location for the second person on your dominant side.

\*\*This is a revised term for the type we called "inflecting verbs" in Unit 9 of the Level 1 *Student Workbook*, p. 55. We use this term based on Carol Padden's paper "The Relation Between Space and Grammar in ASL Verb Morphology" in *Sign Language Research: Theoretical Issues* (Ceil Lucas, ed.), Gallaudet Univ. Press, Washington D.C., 1990. Many of the verbs illustrated in the "Making requests" category of the Vocabulary Review at the end of this unit are agreement verbs.\*