

Answers on p. 137.

LANGUAGE IN PRACTICE

Telling Locations of Things in a Room

There are various ways to tell locations in ASL. In previous units you have practiced pointing to actual locations, i.e., down the hall to the right; practiced waving up, down, left or right; and learned certain expressions that relate one location to another, i.e., signs for next to, across from, near. You have learned to use non-manual behaviors (facial expressions) to add specific information about how close or how far away things are.

In this unit, we focus on describing the furniture arrangement in a room and on telling locations of objects.

Using Classifiers to Tell Locations

One way to tell where things are located is by using certain signs called **classifiers**. Many languages use classifiers, usually to categorize nouns by certain shared characteristics. In ASL, classifiers are specific handshapes used to represent nouns according to their *shape*, i.e., flat objects, cylindrical objects; their *location*, i.e., on the wall, on a shelf; their *number* (often including how the things are arranged), i.e., many things stacked, several things in a row.*

The classifiers practiced in this unit are used to indicate the location of nouns such as furniture or other objects around the house. Each classifier is signed in the area of your signing space that corresponds to the object's location in the room. The classifier handshapes you use should agree with the *general shape* of the objects they represent, or with the *type* of object; they also may show how the object is *oriented* in the room.

Pictured on the following page are some of the classifier handshapes used for telling locations. Beneath each illustration we indicate in parentheses whether the classifier shows the shape, type, or orientation of the objects it represents. Then follow some examples of the nouns the classifier may represent. In the next videotaped segment, you will see these classifiers used to represent each noun listed.**

*ASL has other kinds of classifiers that are not introduced in this unit, including semantic, body, and bodypart classifiers, and classifiers that indicate how an object moves. The information about classifiers in this workbook is adapted from Ted Supalla's paper, "The Classifier System in American Sign Language," *Proceedings of the Fourth National Symposium on Sign Language Research and Teaching*, National Association of the Deaf, Silver Spring, Md., 1986.

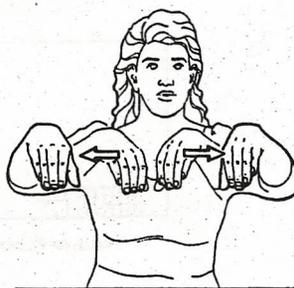
**If you're not sure which classifier to use to represent an object, *point* to the corresponding location of your signing space instead. Pointing is always an acceptable way of referencing.



(shape)
pictures on wall
cabinet doors



(shape and
orientation)
refrigerator
dishwasher
dresser



(shape and
orientation)
kitchen island
counter top
sink cabinet
sofa



(type and
orientation)
chair



(shape)
window
mirror



(shape and
orientation)
table
bed



(shape and
orientation)
long thin windows
built-in oven
grandfather clock



(type)
vase
potted plant
table lamp

Describing the Arrangement of a Room

ASL users often include information about spatial relationships when describing things. Describing physical arrangements requires skills in visualizing the room and in using the interplay of both hands to show where objects are located in relation to each other. Both these skills will help you convey an accurate image to your listener.

When you want to describe how a room looks, i.e., its shape, decor, or the arrangement of the furniture in it, follow this general sequence:

- Identify the room and begin your description from the perspective of the doorway.
- Describe the shape of the room, if it is unusual or relevant.
- Identify the furniture or features in the room, starting with the most noticeable, i.e., fireplace in a living room, island in a kitchen, bed in a bedroom.
- After identifying each feature or piece of furniture, indicate its location in the room or in relation to previously mentioned objects by using classifiers or pointing.
- Do the same for each part of the room using an orderly or logical sequence, i.e., from left to right, from near to far, or area by area.