

KEY WORD SIGNS FOR EMPLOYERS



Individuals with intellectual disabilities employ various modes of communication. While some individuals primarily rely on speech, others utilize Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) methods like Proloquo to Go, or use sign language such as key word sign.

Key word sign, defined by Key Word Sign Australia, is a beneficial tool or strategy for individuals—both children and adults—who require communication support. It involves supplementing spoken language with signs, emphasizing, and clarifying key messages within a sentence. Key word sign can greatly enhance understanding and facilitate communication for individuals who struggle with verbal expression. Moreover, for those who primarily use speech, incorporating familiar signs can be particularly valuable during periods of stress or distress.

As an employer, familiarity with key word signs can significantly enhance communication and support inclusion within the workplace. This resource provides a selection of key word signs that may prove useful in professional settings. Most signs are accompanied by a QR code linking to a video demonstration, showcasing various angles of how to perform the sign effectively. Signs included in this resource are the ones most commonly used in QLD. Other states may use other signs.

Key Word Signs for Employers



help

Place dominant hand bent at third knuckles, palm down, onto non-dominant palm. Or may place dominant hand onto non-dominant hand, palms together. Move formation forward.



drink

Shape dominant hand as for holding a glass then tilt to mouth as for drinking.



eat

Close dominant fingertips onto ball of thumb. Tap formation on chin, twice.



toilet

Fingerspell 'T' quickly, twice, dominant index finger on edge or middle of non dominant hand.



finished

Extend dominant thumb, fingers closed. Rock hand formation from side to side several times.



yes

Hold dominant fist palm down and move up and down from the wrist.



no

Shake dominant fist, palm down, sideways in front of body.



more

Cup dominant hand, fingers spread and place fingertips on centre chest. Move hand forward.

Key Word Signs for Employers



thanks

Move fingertips of open dominant hand, palm towards body, forward from chin, once.



work

Hold both hands open and flat. Bounce edge of dominant hand on base of non dominant thumb twice.



please

Move open dominant hand straight forward from chin, while closing into a fist with thumb extended.



sick

Extend dominant little finger. Slide little finger edge down same side of upper chest.



what

Point dominant index finger, palm away from body, at shoulder height. Move formation at wrist from side to side twice .



home

Hold cupped dominant hand palm facing forward. Move hand up and over in a forward arc.



sad

Place edge of index finger of open dominant hand, on chin and move up and forward slightly, with sad facial expression.



happy

Clap heels of open cupped hands together twice, hands moving in small outward circles, with happy facial expressions.

Key Word Signs for Employers



angry

Hold tips of cupped dominant hand, fingers spread, on side of waist.



begin

Extend index fingers of one or both hands. Hold with fingers pointing up, then drop formation down.



why

Extend dominant index finger and thumb. Place thumb on upper chest of same side. Sweep formation down body in a shallow arc



how are you

Place palm of open dominant hand on chest. Brush fingertips off chest and close hand with thumb extended



how

Place dominant flat hand on top of non-dominant flat hand, both palms facing up. Move hands apart and to the side.



feel

Bend middle finger of dominant hand in, other fingers spread. Place tip of middle finger on dominant side of the body at waist height. Trace upwards in a single movement to chest height.



show

Extend dominant index finger and place on cheek under eye on same side. Move hand forward while spreading fingers.



understand

Extend dominant index finger and place on forehead, palm away from body. Move formation in small outwards arc while turning palm to face body.