

DUNE SIGN LANGUAGES

SECRET SIGN LANGUAGE WITH PAUL AND JESSICA

Everything done with this sign language is to be done on one hand, with the signs very subtle. This is less a language system than a code. It will be done to make it look like the system is extensive, but the system actually won't be very extensive. In the latest version of the draft there's only one line. The line:

PAUL

The scarred one is deaf.

The way this will work, since Paul is strapped down, is he will do some sort of action to indicate he's going to start signing on one side of his body vs. the other (the side near Jessica). After he's done that, he will do the following:

- (1) Straighten his hand so that it is flat, in the B handshape, parallel to the side of his body, as if he were about to rub the side of his leg.
- (2) Retract his three lower fingers, leaving his index finger pointing forward. This suggests "person" or "individual".
- (3) Bend his index finger towards his body enough to allow for the next step.
- (4) Swipe his thumb across his index finger at the first joint. This suggests "scar" or "scarred".
- (5) Move his hand into a shape as if he were trying to stretch out the joints of his index and middle fingers. The pinky and ring finger will be retracted, pulled into the palm. Both index and middle fingers will be bent at each joint. The middle finger will be raised above the index finger, if viewed from above. the tip of the middle finger may actually touch the second joint of the index finger (the last joint before the tip). The thumb will be left free. This shape will suggest "ear".
- (6) Using the tip of the thumb, he will tap the tip of his index finger once, then cross it from the back of the hand to the front of the hand, as indicating that there is something different about the ear. This will suggest "deaf".

FREMEN SIGN LANGUAGE

Fremen Sign Language is, properly, a full language, though we will only see it in a couple of phrases. Fremen Sign Language is the main sign language of Arrakis, used also by the Deaf Harkonnen guards. The first phrase is:

DEAF TROOPER

Let's feed the cub to the worms and give her a long goodbye.

The second is:

DEAF TROOPER

Don't talk.

As a natural sign language, I'm going to leave the number of handshapes open, but still operate under the principle that signs will tend to move towards one-handedness if they can; will move from disparate to parallel; and will move to central areas of the body from peripheral ones.

In general, the pointing finger for Fremens is the middle finger. That means that the middle finger will be the dominant finger for Fremen Sign Language, not the index finger. (The actor should note this when pointing at anything.)

Eyebrows will be raised for emphasis. Lip tautness will also be used for emphasis, but it's more a property of words, whereas raised eyebrows is a property of phrases.

With that in mind, here are some words/phrases:

- CUB: “Wolf” cub head is made. Index and pinky fingers are raised straight up, while middle and ring fingers are pressed together and extended as if they were a “snout”. The thumb is extended as if it were a “lower jaw”. Then the “snout” and “lower jaw” are tapped together once. After the tap is completed, the “ears” (the index finger and pinky) are bent forward, indicating submission.
- FEED: “Food” is taken out of signer’s mouth and “given” to the one being “fed”. Handshape is inverted loose O handshape. It comes away from the mouth, then dips down in an exaggerated half loop, allowing the hand time to turn around and face towards the recipient (the one being fed).
- GOODBYE: Dominant hand is made into a fist and does a “knocking” motion, as of a head nodding (one nod for a usual goodbye, or several for an effusive goodbye).

- LET’S/EXHORTATIVE: Inverse of NO/DON’T: “Picking up”, usually accompanied by raised eyebrows for the rest of the phrase.
- NO/DON’T: Signing hand(s) “grab” the imaginary thought/idea and “dump” it: grabbing motion with hand, hand overturned and opened, with downward motion.
- SHOW: Non-dominant hand is made into a fist and raised to as a “human head”. Dominant hand is made into an open C handshape and pushed towards the “human head”, as if it were “holding” something.
- TALK: Middle finger taps tip of thumb twice, other fingers raised and spread.
- TAKE/MOVE/COERCE: Signer “grabs” object by “shoulders” and “moves” them from periphery of body (wherever they’re imagined to be) to center.
- WORM: Dominant middle finger “bursts” through the “sand”, represented by the left hand (5 hand shape, fingers spread), and rests.

For the phrases, we’ll do short then long.

For “Don’t talk”, the signer forms TALK, then takes the final handshape of TALK and dumps it violently, ending in DON’T. Eyebrows are raised and lips are pursed. Step-by-step:

- (1) Raise eyebrows and purse lips.
- (2) Raise dominant hand to eye level of Paul and sign TALK.
- (3) At finish of TALK, go directly into DON’T, throwing hand down violently and dumping it.

Now for the long one: Let’s feed the cub to the worms and give her a long goodbye. Here goes:

- (1) Raise eyebrows (perhaps wave to get attention).
- (2) Sign LET’S. Don’t close hands into fists, though. Raise the hands for LET’S up and to the *left* to get them ready to sign TAKE.
- (3) Sign TAKE *in Paul’s direction*. As both hands move towards the center, get ready to drop the non-dominant hand and sign CUB with the dominant hand.
- (4) Sign CUB with head tilt and/or eye/eyebrow movement towards Paul. At close of CUB get ready to sign FEED, so draw the hand towards mouth.

- (5) Sign FEED, and move hand in direction of no specific person (just ahead). As dominant hand for FEED prepares to reach its terminus, turn it into a middle finger hand shape—the first part of WORM. Prepare non-dominant hand for “sand” portion of WORM sign.
- (6) Sign WORM (this will be the conclusion of FEED).
- (7) Pause slightly. Slight head tilt towards Jessica.
- (8) Sign SHOW with the fist “head” of the non-dominant hand oriented towards Jessica.
- (9) Sign GOODBYE, but in this specific way. First, make the fist of GOODBYE, but raise the middle finger. During the downward knocking motion of GOODBYE, push the fist *aaaaaaaall* the way down, at the end accompanied by pounding/wiggling, at actor’s discretion.

That’s the idea. The best way to practice, though, will be to watch the videos. Watch and imitate, and then work on it so it becomes fluid and natural. Signs in any sign language flow from one to the other. They’re not like Chinese glyphs where one sign happens, then it stops, then another happens, then it stops, etc. It’s all quite fluid.

Also, please note the videos, as they will demonstrate all of this clearly:

- PAUL_DUNE_4.mp4 (“The scarred one is deaf.”)
- DTROOPER_DUNE_5.mp4 (“Let’s feed the cub to the worms and giver her a long goodbye.”)
- DTROOPER_DUNE_6.mp4 (“Don’t talk!”)

Finally, for the Deaf Trooper, please note the video DTROOPER_DUNE_EXP.mp4. This video will demonstrate how to sign the lines while holding a weapon.

Best of luck, and have fun with it!