

“Swiss-German Sign Language [sgg] (A language of [Switzerland](#))

- **Alternate Names:** Deutschschweizer Gebärdensprache, Deutschschweizerische Gebärdensprache, DGS, DSGS, Natürliche Gebärde
- **Population:** 5,500 in Switzerland (Boyes Braem 2010). 10,000 deaf signers in all of Switzerland (2014 EUD).
- **Location:** Scattered.
- **Language Status:** 5 (Developing). Recognized language (2002, Federal Parliament, Law on Equality for Disabled People).
- **Dialects:** Regional variation tied to specific schools: Basel, Bern, Lucerne, St. Gallen, Zurich (Boyes Baem and Rathmann 2010). Similar to sign language used in the southern parts of Germany. Borrowing from Swiss-French Sign Language [ssr]. (Boyes Baem and Rathmann 2010). Fingerspelling system similar to French Sign Language [fsl].
- **Typology:** One-handed fingerspelling.
- **Language Use:** First deaf school 1777 in Zurich. Strong oralist tradition in schools in German area; some classes taught in sign language. Deaf associations. Status of signing is improving. Other signed and written languages in Switzerland and surrounding countries, including ASL [ase]. Deaf children from the German cantons and the Rhaeto-Romansh areas are taught to read standard German[deu]; not the unwritten Swiss-German [gsw] or Rhaeto-Romansh [roh] that their parents speak. (Boyes Braem and Rathmann 2010). Also use International Sign[ils].
- **Language Development:** Poetry. Theater. TV. Videos. Dictionary.
- **Other Comments:** Some regional lexical variations in German areas tied to specific schools. Status of signing is improving. Strong oralist tradition in schools in German area. Taught as L2. 13,000 hearing signers (all three sign languages) in Switzerland, estimate based on participants in sign language classes. (Boyes Braem and Rathmann 2010). Christian (Roman Catholic), Christian (Protestant).”

Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.)
2015. Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Eighteenth edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

Related Readings

Braem, Penny Boyes

1999 Rhythmic Temporal Patterns in the Signing of Deaf Early and Late Learners of Swiss German Sign Language. *Language and Speech* 42(2-3): 177-208.

Shores, Patty, Christiane Hohenstein, and Joerg Keller

2014 Deaf and Non-deaf Research Collaboration on Swiss German Sign Language. *Translation & Interpreting* 6(1): 47-59.

Ebling, Sarah, and John Glauert

2015 Building a Swiss German Sign Language Avatar with JASigning and Evaluating It Among the Deaf Community. *Universal Access in the Information Society*.

Last Updated: May 11, 2015