

# Westminster Abbey

## Learning



### B is for Benedictine Monks

#### Secret sign language

Benedictine monks followed a strict set of rules. In the refectory (the dining hall), the monks were not allowed to speak. The monks created their own sign language to communicate instead. You might have heard of Makaton or British Sign Language, which are sign-based languages people use to communicate today. The monks lived in the Abbey before those signs were being used so they had to get creative to make their own. How creative can you be?



**Can you make up some movements for the following traditional food items?**

Salt            Fish            Bread            Apple            Chicken            Eggs

**Try to communicate different modern foods without speaking**

Start by making a list of your ten favourite and least favourite foods. Don't let anyone else know what they are. Take turns to act them out and see how many your group can guess.

**How might you say:**

My food is too hot.  
I don't like the taste.

Please pass me the water?  
I would like some more

I am not hungry.  
I would like my pudding now.

**What other things might you say?**

**Challenge: Can your group eat a whole meal in silence?**

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Create your own movements and gestures to help communicate as you eat. How can you learn from each other to build a vocabulary of “signs” or movements?



“I would find this activity really hard”, said Livingstone the lion, “because I just love to ROAR! How did you find it? What was your favourite sign?”

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