

Sign With Your Child

Why Do It?

- ◆ Children can learn to sign long before they have the ability to speak. Using sign language with your child can reduce frustration for both of you. Your child can tell you exactly what he wants!
- ◆ Children exposed to sign language early in life will not only find it easy to learn ASL later, they will find it easier to learn ANY language later.
- ◆ Early exposure to language can increase I.Q., social skills, and create deeper bonds between parent and child.
- ◆ Sign language is not only good for your child, it's fun! And it's not just for babies either – keep up the learning as your child begins to speak, and you and your child can develop a second language together.

Tips for Signing with Your Child

- ◆ Teach the signs for everyday objects and activities first. Use the objects to reinforce the signs often, until your child begins to sign it back. Remember, they can understand you before they sign it back, so keep using it.
- ◆ If the child begins to sign back, reward him or her with lots of smiles and hugs and kisses.
- ◆ Be consistent. Make sure you use the same sign each time for the same object.
- ◆ Use your face. 80% of ASL is on your face and body, NOT your hands. The sign “HAPPY” doesn't *mean* “happy” unless you're smiling!
- ◆ Accept your child's signing style. Children won't always make a sign correctly the first time they sign it, just like they won't speak a word correctly the first time they speak it. Keep signing it the correct way and your child will soon learn.
- ◆ Reinforce signs throughout the day to help you both remember them. You can learn signs from books, though videos and live people are usually a lot easier. See the other side of this sheet for great resources to help you both learn.
- ◆ There are lots of places to sign! You can use sign language at home, in the car, at the park, while reading stories. You can also make the signs in different places to help your baby understand. Sometimes sign it on her, on the book, or on yourself.
- ◆ When using signs with your child, it's a good idea to use American Sign Language. There's a big difference between American Sign Language, which is a whole language, and Signed English, which is just a manual code to represent English words. By using ASL, you're giving your child (and yourself) a chance to become bilingual!

Resources for signing with your child

Books:

Ault, Kelly. *Let's Sign!: Every Baby's Guide to Communicating with Grownups*. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. Each simple story in this book follows a child through a daily activity, with the story appearing on the left hand side of each spread, and an illustration of one or two associated signs on the right.

Briant, Monta Z. *Baby Sign Language Basics*. Hay House, 2009.

An excellent guide to getting started signing with your hearing child, complete with dictionary of basic signs and ideas for how to use them in everyday life.

Garcia, Joseph. *Sign With Your Baby*. Northlight Communications; Revised edition, 2002.

Filled with anecdotes, practical guidelines, and humor, this classic book offers an effective way to teach parents and infants how to communicate through sign.

MacMillan, Kathy. *Little Hands and Big Hands: Children and Adults Signing Together*. Huron Street Press, 2013.

Stories, songs, rhymes, and other activities designed to help parents and children share the joy of signing together while developing early literacy skills.

MacMillan, Kathy. *Nita's First Signs*. Familius Press, 2018.

The first book in the *Little Hands Signing* board book series features a simple story about Nita and how signing improves her communication with her parents. Slide-open pages reveal illustrations and instructions for performing the signs

Thompson, Stacy A. *Teach Your Tot to Sign: The Parents' Guide to American Sign Language*. Gallaudet University Press, 2005.

With descriptions, tips, and clear line drawings of over 500 ASL signs featuring concepts from a young child's world, this book is the perfect resource for families ready to move beyond the very basics.

Votry, Kim. *Baby's First Signs*. 2001; *More Baby's First Signs*. 2001; *Out for a Walk*. 2003; *Baby's First Colors*. 2003. Gallaudet University Press.

These colorful board books feature bold illustrations of everyday objects and activities, accompanied by clear pencil drawings demonstrating the signs for each.

Videos/DVDs:

Signing Time! series. Signing Time Productions.

Available on both DVD and VHS, this is hands-down the best sign language series for young children. Each segment includes both hearing and deaf kids signing simple signs, and review segments featuring fun songs and stories reinforce vocabulary. Excellent segments geared to parents offer information about such topics as ASL grammar and tips for using the program with young children.

Websites:

ASL Nook: www.aslnook.com

Fun, short, child-friendly videos that teach signs for different themes, featuring a Deaf family.

Signing Savvy: www.signingsavvy.com

A family-focused video dictionary of ASL signs.

ASL Pro: www.aslpro.com

An online video dictionary of ASL signs.

For more resources, see www.storiesbyhand.com

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