

Signs & Gestures: A Bridge to Words

Early **gestures** help babies connect with their environment and develop important social skills even before they can produce words. When children wave “bye-bye” or hold up their arms to be picked up and an adult responds, children learn they can control their environment through communication.



When your child learns to use signs, their confidence with communication increases. Successful communication interactions will lead to more and more attempts by your child.



Teaching your child to use signs and gestures may help them express themselves before they have the words.



Learning signs will not prevent your child from learning to talk. In fact research is showing the opposite.



If your child learns to use signs to communicate, it may help decrease frustration.

WHEN TO TEACH SIGNS:

By 6-9 months you can start showing your child signs. Some parents may start earlier.

Babies have the motor skills to sign back between 8 and 11 months, typically when the first waves for “bye-bye” and the “pick me up” gestures start.

HOW TO TEACH SIGNS:

- Start with just a few signs that could be helpful to you and your child (e.g. eat, more, milk).
- Sign during routines such as feeding and bathing. Signing should be interactive!
- Show your child the sign often throughout the day.
- Always say the word along with the sign/gesture (e.g. asking “Do you want more?” while signing “more”)



Everyday Gestures & Signs

COMMON GESTURES/SIGNS INCLUDE:

- Nodding and shaking your head = yes/no
- Holding out hands = “give”
- Putting hands in the air = “up”
- Opening your hands = “where?”
- Motioning your hand towards your body = “come”

Basic signs are pictured below. You can choose to use these or adapt them to suit you and your family.



"DRINK"

Hold hand like a cup and move it towards your mouth



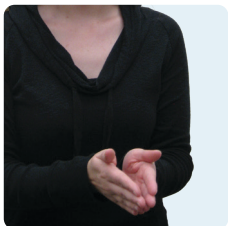
"MORE"

Bring fingers together in front of you



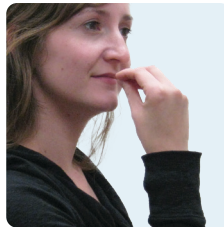
"DONE"

Move hands down and out



"BOOK"

Start with hands together and then open them like a book



"EAT"

Pinch fingers together and move hand towards your mouth



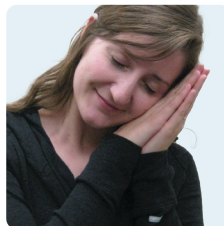
"HELP"

Hold one hand in the other with your thumb up and move both hands up



"PLAY"

Hold pinkie finger and thumb out and turn your hand in and out



"BED"

Lay your hands together beside your head

You can also see video examples of signs at asipro.com

AND - your local library will have some great books to help you get started.

