

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How will sign language affect our baby's language development?

Through signs, babies learn that their thoughts can be conveyed symbolically. A baby may think "I touch my fingers to my lips and my parents know I want to eat." Signing lets babies begin to explore and understand the basic functions of language at a very early age. In addition, signs help reinforce the meaning of spoken words, especially when both words and signs are used simultaneously.

2. Will it be difficult for my baby to learn and understand the signs? Will it be difficult for me to learn to sign with our baby?

No. Most babies learn to identify and then form signs quickly. The structure of ASL is compatible with the nature of language development in infants. One sign can relate an entire concept. ASL signs are also very iconic; in many cases, the signs resemble the objects or concepts they represent. This will help both you and your child remember signs. Successfully communicating with your baby does not require fluency in ASL. Rather, we recommend introducing signs that are relevant to your child's interaction with the world.

3. Does signing with babies delay their speech development?

Research conclusively indicates that babies who sign tend to have a stronger command of verbal language and often begin speaking at an earlier age than babies who do not sign. Countless parents and caregivers have confirmed these findings with their personal experiences and observations. In addition, many Speech-Language professionals, pediatricians, and educators are supporting the use of signs to encourage early language development.

4. What is the best age to introduce signs to our baby?

No age is too early to begin learning and modeling signs with your baby. At the same time, it's never too late to start; even toddlers who have a few spoken words can significantly benefit from signing. Learning specific signs for "ball", "bath", and "bottle" can help distinguish the specific word when "ba" is used for all three items. Using the sign paired with the baby's spoken sound can help reduce frustration for both you and your baby.

5. What scientific research supports the idea of signing with babies?

Joseph Garcia first researched the concept of learning and teaching signs to babies in 1987 as part of his Master's Program at Alaska Pacific University. A longitudinal study was conducted at the University of California at Davis by Drs. Linda Acredolo and Susan Goodwyn. This study, which followed babies through their eighth year, indicated that signing with babies offers many benefits, including a strengthened parent-child bond, increased interest in books, enhanced verbal language development, and higher IQs.

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