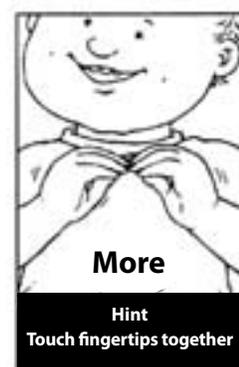
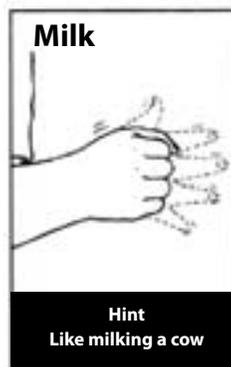


Using Sign Language With Your Baby

Ever wonder what your baby is thinking or what she wants to eat? Want to know if that cry is because he is hungry, needs a diaper change, or is tired? Teach your baby a few simple signs and take advantage of your baby's natural ability to communicate!

You can start teaching your child sign language as early as 6 months. Based on your child's age, you will see your child sign within a few weeks to a few months. Even before your child signs back, she can understand you and may acknowledge your words and signs through grunts.



Choose a few signs to start. The best signs to start with are **MILK**, **MORE** and **EAT** since the signs are very different from each other and are easy for babies to make.

Say the word as you sign and emphasize it. Don't think signing means a lifetime of silence. Actually, it is the opposite. Parents who sign find that they talk more with their child.

Make eye contact. Make the sign directly in your child's line of sight so your child can see your eyes, the sign, and your mouth.

Look for signs. Babies adapt signs to their physical abilities, so they don't always look exactly right. Encourage any attempts your child makes. If you think you see a sign, say: "Oh, you're signing MILK. Do you want some MILK?" Continue to make the signs correctly and your child will learn to make the sign correctly.

Be consistent and sign often. The real key to success is using the signs you choose every time you engage in the activity or say the word. Every time you eat, use the EAT sign and use it frequently during the eating process. Once is not enough since babies need to see things hundreds of times to learn.

Source: Nancy Cadjan, founder of Sign Babies (www.signbabies.com) and author of Baby Signing 1, 2, 3.



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Call 800-CHILDREN (800-244-5373) for more information.