

Baby Sign Language Guide

Communication Made Easy

Connect with your baby before they can talk



Why Baby Sign Language?

Here's something amazing: your baby understands far more than they can say. Between 6 and 8 months, babies develop a strong desire to communicate—they want to tell you what they need, what they see, and how they feel. But here's the challenge: the complex motor skills needed for speech don't fully develop until around 18 months, and clear verbal communication often doesn't come until age 2 or 3.

This creates a "communication gap"—a period where your baby has so much to say but no way to say it. That's where baby sign language comes in.

Baby sign language bridges this gap. Using simple hand gestures, your little one can tell you they're hungry, tired, want more, or even that they love you—months before they can speak these words.



Reduces Frustration

When babies can express their needs—whether it's pain, hunger, or wanting a specific toy—tantrums and crying decrease dramatically. You'll spend less time guessing and more time connecting.



Boosts Brain Development

When your baby signs, they're activating multiple brain areas simultaneously—visual, auditory, and motor. This creates stronger neural connections and enhances overall cognitive development.



Deepens Your Bond

Two-way communication creates a powerful emotional connection. When your baby asks to play ball and you understand, both of you feel seen, heard, and connected.



Accelerates Speech

Signing babies don't speak later—they often speak earlier and with larger vocabularies. The signs serve as a bridge to verbal language, not a replacement.




Builds Confidence

Being understood gives babies a sense of accomplishment and self-worth. They become active participants in family life rather than passive observers.

Supports Emotional Growth

Signs help babies identify and express emotions like happy, sad, or scared. This early emotional vocabulary is the foundation for healthy self-regulation.

 **Research shows:** Studies found that babies who signed were speaking like children 4 months ahead by age 2, and nearly a full year ahead by age 3. At age 8, these children scored an average of 12 points higher on IQ tests than their non-signing peers.



When to Start & What to Expect

Even in the womb, your baby begins recognizing your voice and the patterns of your language. From birth, they can distinguish your native language from others! Understanding your baby's developmental journey helps you know when and how to introduce signs.

0-6
MONTHS

The Watching Phase

During this stage, crying is your baby's main communication tool. They're absorbing everything—your voice, your expressions, your gestures. You can start signing now; your baby is watching and learning even if they can't respond yet.

6-8
MONTHS

Communicative Intent Emerges

A breakthrough moment! Your baby develops a strong urge to communicate. You'll notice them pointing, reaching, and making sounds with purpose. This is the ideal time to introduce signs consistently. They may naturally develop gestures like raising arms to be picked up.

8-12
MONTHS

First Signs Appear

Most babies produce their first intentional sign during this window. It might look a little different from yours—that's completely normal! The motor skills for precise hand movements are still developing. Celebrate every attempt!

12-18
MONTHS

The Sign Explosion

Once your baby masters a few signs, learning accelerates rapidly. Many babies learn 10-20+ signs during this exciting period. They'll start combining signs and using them spontaneously throughout the day.

18-24
MONTHS

Bridge to Speech


As verbal skills develop, your child will naturally start replacing signs with words. Keep signing! Even when they say a word, they may not pronounce it clearly yet. Signs remain a

helpful backup that prevents frustration.

What's Happening in Your Baby's Brain

When you speak a word AND show a sign, your baby's brain lights up in multiple areas: the **auditory cortex** processes the sound, the **visual cortex** processes what they see, and when they sign back, the **motor cortex** gets involved too.

This multi-sensory experience creates stronger, more interconnected neural pathways. That's why signing babies often remember words more easily—they've stored them in multiple places in their brain!

 **Remember:** It's never too early or too late to start! Whether you begin at 4 months or 14 months, what matters most is consistency, patience, and making it fun.



Tips for Success

Best Positions for Signing



Face to Face

The gold standard! Get down to their eye level when possible.



In Front of Mirror

Baby sees both you signing and themselves—great for learning!



On Their Body

For signs like EAT or BATH, gently sign on baby so they feel it too.

How to Know Baby is Really Signing

Not sure if that hand movement was intentional? Look for these three signs:



Intentional

Used to express a real need in the right context



Independent

Not copying you—they initiate it on their own



Consistent

They use it repeatedly, not just a one-time thing

Keys to Success

1 Sign with the Action

Always sign during, just before, or right after the action. "Time for BATH" as you turn on the water helps baby connect sign, word, and meaning.

2 Be Consistent

Use the same sign every time. The more you sign throughout the day, the faster baby will sign back. Try placing reminder notes in key areas!

3 Repeat Naturally

"We're going to BATH. Daddy is giving you a BATH. All done with BATH!" Repetition during activities reinforces learning—just don't overdo it.

4 Make Eye Contact

Unlike speech, signing requires visual attention. Try to be in baby's line of sight. But if they're not looking, sign anyway—you're building the habit!

5 Keep It Fun

Babies learn through play, not memorization! Use signs during songs, games, and storytime. Their interest grows much faster when it's enjoyable.

6 Celebrate Every Attempt

Baby's sign won't look perfect—and that's okay! Respond enthusiastically to any approximation. They'll refine it over time by watching you model it correctly.

7

Don't Stop When They Talk

Keep signing even after first words appear! Early speech is often unclear. Signs remain a valuable backup that prevents frustration. Let them phase out signs naturally.

8

Get Everyone Involved

Teach signs to partners, grandparents, caregivers, and siblings. The more people who sign with baby, the faster they'll learn and the more connected they'll feel.

Remember: Every baby learns at their own pace. Some sign back in weeks, others take months. What matters is the connection you're building. You've got this! ✨

Sign Categories

6 categories • 19 total signs



Food & Drink

5 signs



Daily Routine

3 signs



Feelings & Emotions

3 signs



Animals

3 signs



Family

2 signs



Actions & Activities

3 signs





Sign illustration for
MILK

How to Sign

Open and close your fist repeatedly, like milking a cow

Teaching Tip

Sign this before every feeding session

Example: Sign "milk" when showing the bottle or before breastfeeding



Sign illustration for
EAT

How to Sign

Bring fingertips to your mouth repeatedly

Teaching Tip

Use at mealtimes and when baby shows hunger cues

Example: Sign "eat" when preparing food or during mealtime



Sign illustration for
MORE

How to Sign

Tap fingertips of both hands together

Teaching Tip

One of the first signs babies learn - very useful!

Example: Sign "more" when offering seconds or continuing an activity



Sign illustration for
WATER

How to Sign

Make a "W" with three fingers and tap it to your chin

Teaching Tip

Sign when offering water or pointing to water

Example: Use during bath time and when drinking



Sign illustration for
ALL DONE

How to Sign

Wave both hands back and forth with palms up

Teaching Tip

Helps baby communicate when they're finished eating

Example: Sign when baby stops eating or shows fullness





Sign illustration for
SLEEP

How to Sign

Place hand on side of face like resting on a pillow

Teaching Tip

Use during bedtime routine

Example: Sign "sleep" when going to bed or naptime



Sign illustration for
BATH

How to Sign

Rub fists up and down on chest like washing

Teaching Tip

Sign before bath time to prepare baby

Example: Use when running the bath or getting towels



Sign illustration for
DIAPER

How to Sign

Tap fingers at hips where diaper fastens

Teaching Tip

Helps with potty training communication

Example: Sign during diaper changes





Sign illustration for
HAPPY

How to Sign

Brush hand up chest repeatedly with a smile

Teaching Tip

Name the emotion when baby smiles

Example: Sign "happy" during playtime or when baby laughs



Sign illustration for
SAD

How to Sign

Draw fingers down face like tears

Teaching Tip

Validate baby's feelings

Example: Use when baby cries or looks upset



Sign illustration for
HELP

How to Sign

Place one fist on open palm and lift both up

Teaching Tip

Empowers baby to ask for assistance

Example: Sign when baby is struggling with something





Sign illustration for
DOG

How to Sign

Pat your thigh and snap fingers like calling a dog

Teaching Tip

Point to dogs when outside

Example: Sign when seeing dogs in books or real life



Sign illustration for
CAT



How to Sign

Pinch fingers on cheek and pull out like whiskers



Teaching Tip

Combine with meow sounds

Example: Use when seeing cats or reading cat books



Sign illustration for
BIRD

How to Sign

Open and close fingers at mouth like a beak

Teaching Tip

Look for birds during walks

Example: Sign when birds are outside or in pictures





Sign illustration for
MAMA

How to Sign

Tap thumb to chin with hand spread

Teaching Tip

One of baby's first important signs

Example: Sign when mama enters the room



Sign illustration for
DADA



How to Sign

Tap thumb to forehead with hand spread



Teaching Tip

Partner should use this sign too

Example: Sign when dada comes home





Sign illustration for
PLAY

How to Sign

Twist both hands with "Y" handshape

Teaching Tip

Use during fun activities

Example: Sign before starting playtime



Sign illustration for
BOOK

How to Sign

Place palms together and open like a book

Teaching Tip

Great for bedtime routine

Example: Sign when reading stories



Sign illustration for
MUSIC

How to Sign

Wave hand over opposite arm like conducting

Teaching Tip

Combine with singing

Example: Sign when playing music or singing songs

Practice Log

Track your baby's signing journey

