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**Signing With Your Baby: The Signing Toddler**

**By Monica Beyer**

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My son Corbin is almost 22 months old and has been signing for 11 months. While he is learning to talk, he still signs much of the time and it has really given me insight into his rapidly developing personality.

I can really see Corbin's sense of humor emerging when he sees something he thinks is funny and he will say or sign it and laugh.

He'll purposefully knock over his glass of milk and say, "Uh-oh," while signing "milk." He also loves to put things on his milk or juice glass (like a toy) and sign "milk" or "juice" and laugh. He tries to get my attention so I'll think it's funny too.

My favorite story involves the "milk" sign too. He weaned himself at the age of 20 months and probably still remembers nursing. One day he spotted my bra lying on the floor and grabbed it up. I thought he would maybe pretend to wear it, but what he did was much funnier than that. He put the bra on his head, signed "milk," and laughed uncontrollably. It was so funny!

While he is now learning to put two spoken words together, he's been putting two and three signs together for months. He'll sign "mama" and "rain" if he wants me to look out the window and see it raining. He'll sign "cloud" and "bye-bye" if he sees the cloud on Teletubbies going away.

What is sad is to see some of his signs disappearing as he learns to say the words. For a long time, he would both sign and say "mama" and "dada." Now he rarely uses either sign, but I still use them on occasion to remind him of those signs.

I definitely don't plan on stopping signing with Corbin any time soon. He is still eager to learn more signs and learning words right and left. I'm so glad I sign with Corbin because I feel it has really opened up a world of communication that wouldn't be there if we hadn't signed.

Monica Beyer is the mother of two sons and has been signing with her younger son for over 1 year. Visit her website at <http://www.signingbaby.com> or email her at [monica@signingbaby.com](mailto:monica@signingbaby.com)

## **Signing With Your Baby: Helpful Hints**

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### **Signing With Your Baby: Helpful Hints by Monica Beyer**

While there aren't any solid rules regarding signing with your baby, I've had enough experience signing with my own child that I can pass along some helpful hints.

Be consistent. Use the sign the same way every time for the same action or object. This will help your baby become familiar with the sign and she will be able to sign it back to you sooner.

Be happy. Frowning and bored voices will not make a baby eager to sign.

Be open to interpretation. Babies will not 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 the word the correct way and your baby will soon grow more accurate.

Be open to suggestion. Sometimes a baby will create a sign for herself. Feel free to continue using it, and applaud her creativity.

Be praising. Act excited when the baby uses a sign correctly, and let your baby know how wonderful you think he is.

Be expressive. Use your face and body in addition to your hands. You can also say the word as you sign it.

Be patient. Babies can take weeks or even months before they make their first sign.

Most importantly, don't think of signing as a skill that has to be mastered. Instead, think of it as what it is intended to be – a bridge of communication before your baby can talk!

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