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Teaching Sign Language to Your Baby

By Amanda Baker

Many people are turning to sign language as a teaching tool for their babies. Teaching sign

language is not just a trendy thing to do, but it has become some of the earliest education many children are receiving as parents are taking the lead in educating children from their earliest days.

Teaching sign language to your baby may seem like a difficult task (especially if you don't know sign language yourself!), but it is easier than you may think. In fact, we teach babies sign language without even thinking about it! When we show them to wave, we're teaching them "bye-bye." When we point at objects, we're teaching them to try to tell us what they want by pointing as well. A baby's mind is like a little sponge – it takes in everything. Learning comes so very easy to them. You will be amazed at just how quickly you and your baby can communicate using signs. It's never too late to start this process, and the whole task can be fun for the entire family!

It's nice to be able to know what it is that your baby needs and to be able to provide it for them quickly. And we all want to be able to communicate with babies as soon as we can beyond the babbling and cooing stages. Start out by using signs that will help you learn what your baby wants, whether it's food or milk or to be changed or some other sign that would be an indicator of his or her needs.

You should start off by using just a sign or two until you all begin to get the hang of it. Use the sign for food at mealtime or when you are feeding the baby. Show them an object and the corresponding sign so that they will begin to make the connection. Consistency is the key in this process. If they see the sign everytime the word is used, they will quickly learn the connection and sign. Just don't forget to say the word as well! Saying the words along with the signs is important, as it encourages speech development. While some people believe that babies will not learn to speak if taught sign language, this is simply not true. When done along with spoken word association, sign language can advance your child's verbal abilities.

There really are so many great benefits to babies who use sign language. Studies have shown that they learn to speak earlier. They have less frustrations about being understood, which means less crying. As they grow, they have an increased vocabulary, a greater interest in books, higher IQ, and many believe that they will have greater self-esteem. Sign language will help in the development of

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your child's vocabulary and can be a huge benefit in the future, as it will allow them to communicate with both hearing and non-hearing individuals.

We all hear about the "terrible twos." But did you know that the stage so many parents dread is mainly caused by the child's frustrations of not being able to communicate their needs and wants? Even if they can't quite communicate their thoughts fully to you, being able to communicate through sign language helps in reducing all those frustrations, which can dramatically decrease the whining, crying, and temper tantrums that come at that age.

If you don't know sign language yourself, there are courses you can take in sign language, not to mention books and videos specially designed to help with teaching sign language to babies and children. Sit down and take some time to learn these as a family. Teaching your baby sign language is an easy, fun and exciting way to begin communicating with your newest member of your family. Make the most of your time with your little one. Sharing, bonding and learning together as a family.

Amanda Baker writes for All Things Pondered:

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Signing With Your Baby: What is Involved?

By Monica Beyer

Signing With Your Baby: What is Involved? by Monica Beyer

Some parents may be hesitant to begin signing with their baby even after hearing all of the wonderful benefits that come from signing with your baby. After all, sign language takes years to learn, doesn't it?

Not at all! Learning to sign with your baby is as easy as reading a recipe.

Teaching sign language isn't a time-consuming chore. Rather, it can be worked into your life as a natural part of communication with your child as well as the rest of your family. Think of it as an extension of speech, and you talk to your baby every day.

You can start as early as six months of age. Remember, though, that babies can take weeks or even months before making their first sign.

No prior knowledge of sign language is required. Many parents learn right along with their children, and it is even possible to make up signs that make sense to you and your baby, rather than worrying about finding and using the "correct" sign.

There are many resources available through the internet as well as your local library. There are also books available that deal specifically with this topic.

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Simply choose a sign to begin with and use it when you have your baby's complete attention. For example, use the sign for "milk" before nursing or giving a bottle. Use it consistently, and soon your baby will begin to imitate you.

Most importantly, have fun! Encourage others to join in. Make it a family affair. Make it a game, rather than a burden.

Remember these helpful hints and soon you will be a pro at signing.

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



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