



# Communicating With Your Baby Through Sign

*Using sign language with your baby builds a foundation for language development. It improves their confidence, strengthens their bond with family members, supports brain development, and develops their fine motor skills. Sign language is not only for people who have hearing loss. Babies can learn sign language before speech because it is like using gestures such as clapping and peek-a-boo. These gestures come more naturally and easily to your baby. Languages have their own sign language. This tip sheet talks about American Sign Language.*

## Start With One Sign

Here is a simple strategy for adding sign language to your home.

- Pick one sign and sign it every time you say the word. A great first sign is “more”. Sign “more” by making two O shapes with your hands and tapping them together. (Note- the letter O is made by curving all your fingers into a circle shape with all your fingers touching your thumb)
- Every time you say “more”, sign it too.
- Soon your baby might start copying you.
- Help them sign it at mealtime by tapping their hands together and then giving them some more food. Do this over and over to help them learn that when they use the “more” sign they get more of something they want.
- After a while they may start to sign “more” without you saying it. They are using sign to tell you that they want something.

It’s ok if your baby doesn’t make the exact sign. The important part is their intent. For example, the sign for “more” is made with two O hands that tap together. Your baby might clap or make fists instead and that’s ok!

## Add More Signs

Here are some other helpful signs to do with baby.

- “Eat” is an O hand tapping your mouth. With this sign your baby can tell you they are hungry.
- “All done” is two open 5 hands by your shoulders twisting at your wrist. This sign helps your baby transition to new activities or say when they are full.
- “Please” is a flat 5 hand rubbing your chest. This sign teaches your baby to ask for something they want.
- “Book” is two flat hands pressed together and then opened with your pinkie fingers still touching to look like a book. This sign helps your baby tell you that they want to read with you.
- “Mom” is an open 5 hand with your thumb tapping your chin. “Dad” is an open 5 hand with your thumb tapping your forehead. These signs help baby greet their parents.

There are many other signs that can be helpful and fun for your baby to learn. Examples include: “milk,” “dog,” “ball,” or “play.” Rely on online resources to look up signs for other words that you often in your home.

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