

ベビーサインは  
赤ちゃんの発達を助けます  
Signing Early With Your Baby  
Can Help Early Development.



## Sign With Your Baby Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Why might I want to sign with my baby?

Signing is a tool for babies to communicate with their caregivers before they can speak. Developmentally, babies can use their hands to communicate much earlier than they can make meaningful words.

Studies show that families who teach signs feel less stressed because their baby cries less than babies from families that do not teach signs. This is because babies feel less frustrated when they can express their needs in a way that their caregivers understand. Also, families that teach baby signs feel that they bond with to their baby more quickly than families who do not teach signs.

### My baby can hear. Will my baby benefit from learning signs?

Yes! Hearing and deaf babies can benefit from learning how to sign. In fact, most people who are teaching signs have hearing babies.

### Do I have to learn a whole new language when learning baby signs?

No. Baby signs use just a few words from American Sign Language. Most caregivers who use sign language do not learn more than 30 signs. Many people are surprised by how quickly they can learn these basic signs.

### Which signs are easiest to learn?

The easiest signs to learn are the signs you are most motivated to use again and again. When first learning baby signs, some people choose to start with words like “eat” because the movement resembles how you move your hand when you actually eat. Other people prefer to start with signs for family members, such as “mom” and “dad.”

### When should I start signing with my baby?

You can teach signs anytime! Some parents start the day the baby comes home, while others start when the baby is several months older. Remember that different parts of the baby’s body are developing at different speeds. Even when babies have seen a sign many times, they cannot make the sign until they are at least six months old. This compares with first spoken words that do not occur until 9-12 months.

### How long would it take for my baby to learn signs?

From as young as six months of age, babies can begin to use signs that they have seeing repeatedly. This compares with first spoken words that do not occur until 9-12 months. Even when babies have seen a sign many times, they cannot make the sign until they are

at least six months old. The sooner you consistently use signs with the baby, the sooner the baby can recognize and make their own signs. Once this happens, babies can learn additional signs quickly. Experts think babies can make around 10 signs before their first birthday. The trick to success is to be consistent, so do not give up!

**Will signing slow the baby’s ability to start talking?**

No. Studies show that babies who sign begin to communicate and make meaningful words earlier than babies who do not sign. Babies who sign have a jumpstart on using language, so experts believe it may help with speaking.

**Is it okay if my baby’s signs don’t look like the signs I make?**

Yes! Don’t worry about how well your baby can sign each word. It is more important that you and your baby are able to communicate using signs. Remember, the way a baby learns to sign is similar to learning a spoken language—the first attempts to make words become clearer with practice. Encourage all of your baby’s attempts to sign.

**Does everybody who takes care of the baby have to learn signs?**

It is helpful, but not necessary. Babies are more likely to learn signs when they frequently see them. For this reason, babies tend to learn signs quicker when all of the people caring for them consistently use signs at every opportunity. Many caregivers find it helpful to think of using signs as a fun and interactive way to play with the baby.

**How do I get started?**

People have used many tools to learn baby signs. We suggest starting with the *Sign With Your Baby* kit available on the Japanese Family Health Clinic website. Print and hang the poster in a visible location. Study how to make the signs that you want to use every day. Once you start, sign the word each time you say it to your baby. Do not worry if your baby does not seem to recognize the signs at first. That is normal. Young babies may need to see signs again and again for several months before they can recognize and copy the signs. The secret to success is consistency, so don’t give up!

**Who are the project investigators?**

Linda Schultz grew up using American Sign Language with her deaf parents. She is trained to make multicultural and multilingual health education materials. She enjoys watching her niece and nephew learn how to sign and is excited to teach others about the benefits of using baby signs.

Dr. Fetters is a bilingual family physician who takes care of English and Japanese patients at the University of Michigan. He found that many parents with newborns were interested in communicating with their baby at a young age, but that it was hard to find free resources.

**Why are the materials in English and Japanese?**

The project investigators are multilingual and wanted the materials to be available to caregivers who speak both of these common languages.

**Are there other resources?**

Other approaches to learning more about signing with your baby can be found on the Internet, baby sign books, and baby sign classes. These materials have appeal to different people for different reasons. We hope our *Sign With Your Baby* kit will help you get started.