



Baby Signs: First Words

Use simple signs to build new words.

Helps Your Child Grow



Vocabulary

Pairing a word with the same sign again and again helps your baby connect the movement with its meaning, use it during interaction, and gradually build an early vocabulary.

Steps

- Before babies can talk, they often use movements and gestures to communicate. Here's how to introduce one new sign.
- Start with a simple word your baby often needs or enjoys, such as "book." Hold both palms upright facing you, then open them like a book.
- Each time you say "book" or read together, say the word and make the sign where your baby can see it. Show the actual book too, helping them connect the movement, the word, and the object.
- When your baby tries to copy the movement, respond right away: "Yes - book." Then look at the book together.
- With the same response each time, your baby can learn what the sign means. Being understood before they can say the word can make them more eager to communicate.

Tips

- Use the same approach to introduce new words gradually, such as "more," and build your baby's sign vocabulary one word at a time.
- For informal baby signs, families may use slightly different gestures. What matters most is using the same gesture consistently and saying the word at the same time.
- Keep using the sign alongside the spoken word as speech develops.

Observations

- Copies a new sign to communicate meaning
- Initiates interaction with you using a baby sign