



Signing With Babies

Why use signing with my baby?

Signs are more specific gestures that you can use to communicate with your baby. They can be fun and can help reduce frustration until your baby starts using words.

Children naturally use gestures starting around 9 months. We know that all toddlers should have 16 gestures by 16 months. Some examples are: shakes head “no”, gives, reaches/raises arms, waves, points, claps, blows kisses, nods head “yes”, other symbolic gestures like “high five” or a shoulder shrug.

If you want to begin using signs with your baby, start with just a few. Introduce signs that fit with your daily routine, such as:

- Mealtime: “milk”, “eat”
- Bath Time: “bath”, “bubbles”
- Functional words: “all done”, “stop”
- Favourite things: “ball”, “cat”, “book”
- Bedtime: “bed”, “blanket”

IMPORTANT: Always say the word as you make the sign.



Benefits of Signs

- Babies can use gestures/signs before they can talk
- Signs can help to reduce their frustration and yours!
- Gives baby a “visual cue” to help them understand what you are saying
- It slows down your speech so baby can learn language better
- Helps to build vocabulary (both signs and words)
- It’s FUN!
- Signing can also be used to help children who have language delays (at the advice of a speech-language pathologist)



When should I start?

You can begin using signs with your baby at any point. Babies will start to recognize signs before they can use them.

All babies are different, some will start using signs shortly after being shown while others may take longer before they begin to use the signs you've shown them. Your baby's age when exposing them to signs can also change when you would expect them to sign back. Check out the chart below for an approximate timeline:

Age	When to expect Signs
4-6 months	may be months before baby begins to use signs. Encourage gestures with fun games!
7-8 months	can expect beginning signs in about 8-10 weeks
9-10 months	if baby is interested, can be around 4-6 weeks
11+ months	some signs may be adopted immediately; others may take 2-4 weeks

Want more info?



Contact us and we can send you more info about gestures, baby's communication and signing resources.

Call 1-866-423-8800 or email talkwithmewoodstock@nbed.nb.ca

Myth: Babies will talk later if they learn signs

Typically once babies learn how to use spoken words they no longer use the signs. Your baby should start using words by 15 months.



Ways to encourage gestures/signs

Sing songs that have gestures:

- Itsy, Bitsy, Spider
- If You're Happy and You Know It
- 5 Little Monkeys
- Head and Shoulders
- Pat-a-Cake

You can also add signs to your favourite songs like "monkey" to introduce "5 Little Monkeys"

Have Fun With Your Hands:

- Play peek-a-boo
- Wave "hi" or "bye" to things around your house, and to people
- Point to pictures in books
- Have fun clapping