



# Eastern Shore Child Care Resource Center Infant and Toddler Newsletter

Eastern Shore Child Care Resource Center helps early childhood professionals caring for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school age children by providing high quality training, program resources, technical assistance, and coaching. The Eastern Shore Child Care Resource Center works with all families and providers on the shore regardless of income.

## Benefits of Sign Language for All Infants

The use of sign language has proven to be beneficial for children in a wide variety of settings. Teaching sign language to preverbal babies has proven to benefit children in their later years. Research shows that sign language speeds up speech development, reduces frustration in young children by giving them a means to express themselves before they know how to talk, increases parent-child bonding, and lets babies communicate vital information, such as if they are hurt or hungry.

Infants who learn sign language also are thought to gain psychological benefits, such as improved confidence and self-esteem. Feelings of anger due to an inability to communicate may not occur as often. Having the ability to sign could be a lifesaver when a

child is too flustered to speak clearly.

Early exposure to signing helps infants develop their language and reasoning skills. While others are still crying to get what they want, signing babies are learning how to communicate with words and simple phrases.

Bilingualism of any language (whether signed or spoken) is a great booster for brains. It enriches and enhances children's cognitive flexibility, better listening skills, greater academic achievement, and much more. It also promotes cultural awareness, literacy, and other intellectual benefits.

Another benefit of teaching a child to sign may be the facilitation of their attentiveness to social gestures of others as well as

of themselves. In fact, teaching sign language along with speech has proven to speed up the development of spoken communication abilities.

Studies show long-term cognitive benefits, including:

- Accelerated speech
- Emotional development
- Earlier reading and larger reading vocabulary
- Larger speaking vocabulary and ability to form longer sentences
- Reinforces the learning of educational concepts
- Enables children to communicate effectively
- Lowers frustration levels

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Educational Playcare. (2016, June 16). *Benefits of Sign Language for Young Children*. Educational Playcare: Childcare and Schools for Young Children. Retrieved March 18, 2022, from <https://www.educationalplaycare.com/blog/sign-language-benefits-for-young-children>

## Tips on Teaching Baby Sign Language

- Begin demonstrating when the infant is between 6 & 8 months old, when they can hold your gaze for a couple of seconds.
- Start with 3 to 5 signs, using eye contact and saying the word out loud. Try signs which are easily linked to objects, such as "ball".
- Repeat the signs consistently on a regular basis. Suggest that other caregivers join in.
- Notice when the infants begins to mimic the signs, usually after about two months, and add additional words when you begin to make progress.

It's possible that infants will take the initiative and invent their own signs. If so, use these rather than the "official" sign. It doesn't really matter what the sign is, as long as you agree on its meaning.

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## Resources Available at the Child Care Resource Center

- 1) Sign to Learn: American Sign Language in the Early Childhood Classroom by Kirsten Dennis & Tressa Azpiri
- 2) Mother Goose in Sign: Beginning Sign Language Series by S. Harold Collins
- 3) Baby Signs Book Series by Linda Acredolo, Ph.D. and Susan Goodwyn, Ph.D.
- 4) Signing Time: My First Signs Book Series by Rachel de Azevedo Coleman
- 5) Sign with your Baby: How to Communicate with Infants Before They Can Speak Complete Learning Kit by Joseph Garcia
- 6) Sign Language Made Simple by Karen B. Lewis and Roxanne Henderson
- 7) A Sign Language Alphabet Handsigns by Kathleen Fain

**\*\*Please contact us by phone or email if you are interested in obtaining one or more of the resources.**

The Eastern Shore Child Care Resource Center is a member of the Maryland Child Care Resource Network with funding from the Maryland State Department of Education, through Maryland Family Network, and Salisbury University.



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FAMILY  
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## Baby Sign Language

Imagine a 8 month old baby telling you that he/she is thirsty, cries because he/she has stomach pain, wants his favorite teddy bear. The ability to speak is not developed until 1 year of age and even then the baby will be able to say only a few words. There is, however, a way to communicate with the baby before he or she learns to talk—sign language.

It may be hard to imagine a baby using sign language to express their needs, feelings, and even pain and exactly where they felt the pain. But an 8 month old can master the basic signs such as hungry, thirsty, more, play, sleepy, teddy bear, pacifier, etc. Baby sign language teaches babies a collection of easy to remember and simple gestures to use as a way to communication.

Signing does not interfere with baby's speech or language; it actually encourages babies to speak sooner and as-

sists to develop a large vocabulary. Once baby starts verbalizing words he/she will find signing useful for those words that are more difficult. You can start teaching babies sign language at any age, even if the child has started saying some words already.

To start baby sign language you do not need to attend a course or have any prior knowledge of signing. Baby sign language is designed to be simple and fun and easily learned to build into everyday life as a way of communication with baby. Pick a couple of words that you use daily and start to sign that word every time you say it. Make sure the baby can see your hands when you are signing and ensure that you are consistent. Depending on the baby's age it may take several weeks before baby signs back to you but when they do it will be worth it!!

<https://asl-kids.com/baby-sign-language/>

