



Little Hands Pediatric Therapy, LLC
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Serving Fairfax & Loudoun County, Virginia

Baby Sign FAQ for Parents

Why Should My Child Learn Sign Language?

- Signing decreases frustration in babies and toddlers
- Signing improves communication and increases vocabulary
- When signs are used at school, teachers can use classroom time more efficiently because children can ask to
- Signing may help English Language Learners acquire spoken English faster
- Preschoolers and school age children can also benefit from learning sign language too by fingerspelling spelling words and decoding written words.

Will Signing Delay My Child's Speech/ Language?

We have plenty of research to support that learning a second (or third, or fourth!) language, including a manual language like American Sign Language, does not hinder language development. Period. In fact, once your child learns to say the spoken word, they will drop the sign in favor of speech, because speaking is faster.

Are these baby signs or American Sign Language?

You will be learning American Sign Language (ASL) Signs to facilitate spoken language development. They are not modified, watered-down baby signs. They are the same signs your child may see at daycare, elementary school, high school and college. While these are ASL signs, what you will learn is only the vocabulary used in ASL, not the syntax, morphology, and phonology of ASL. You would learn those in an ASL class.

Is my child too young? Too old?

- Deaf babies in Deaf households are signed with from birth and learn to recognize signs from a young age just as hearing children learn to recognize spoken words. It is never too early to sign to your child.
- Older toddlers have a lot to say, but can't always express themselves. Signing provides concrete visual representations of emotions, physical states, and can help with those hard to pronounce words like ambulance and spaghetti!

- Preschool and school age children love learning signs as well. Signing is a great tool for spelling and reading and is taught in many elementary schools. In fact, American Sign Language is a recognized foreign language in Virginia High Schools and in many colleges across the US.

When will my child sign back?

On average, most babies will sign back around their first birthday when they learn the give and take of communication. That is, they need to give you something (a sign, a word, a gesture) in order to get something. Most babies will use at least two gestures (clapping, waving, pointing, etc) before signing, so don't forget to use lots of gestures with your pre-verbal child.

We are bilingual (or trilingual!) Will we confuse our child if we teach them sign?

Absolutely not! Our brains are wired to learn languages from birth. Continue speaking in whichever language you prefer, and use the sign with the word. Signs help bridge two spoken languages together.

For more information, please visit our website: www.littlehandspediatrictherapy.com