

— BEGINNER'S — BABY SIGN LANGUAGE

• SIGN & SING AT HOME •



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Introduction

Welcome to the world of signing with your baby! This book will show you how, what and when to sign throughout your child's day. You can sign during mealtime, playtime, diaper-changing time and a host of other times in the day. In this introduction, we'll review what baby sign language is and the benefits of signing with your baby as well as why and how to sign the alphabet and beginning numbers in American Sign Language.

WHAT IS BABY SIGN LANGUAGE?

Baby sign language is the use of American Sign Language (ASL) signs with your baby or your beginning communicator. Another way to think of baby sign language is "keyword signing." Keyword signing uses signs to represent the main or key words in a sentence at the same time as the words are spoken.

I'm trained as a communicative disorders assistant. During my speech therapist days, I worked with adults and preschool children with developmental disabilities. It's with them that I learned about total communication and the concept of keyword signing. Using sign language with babies and toddlers lets them learn, play with and produce words using signs faster than they can produce spoken words alone.

When you speak as you typically would and add a visual representation of words, for example, by signing the key words in a sentence, your child has the opportunity to learn those words in a way they can easily produce at their stage of development. For example, if I say "Do you want some milk?" I show the sign for **MILK** because milk is the key word. Whatever number of signs you are comfortable signing with your baby works. Use the signs you know and are comfortable with.

THE BENEFITS OF SIGNING *with* YOUR BABY

- Signing allows your child to clearly communicate their thoughts.
- Signing allows your baby to direct the topic of conversation toward their interests.
- Signing reduces frustrations for your child, significantly lessening the terrible twos!
- Signing will not delay verbal language development; in fact, it will most likely increase it. Signing allows children to make mistakes, practice and learn more words earlier than their non-signing peers.
- Signing allows babies to make use of both their visual and kinesthetic skills. These are skills that develop earlier than auditory skills.
- Signing allows your baby to communicate with you about the books you share even when they don't have the ability to speak the words aloud. If you read a familiar book out loud to your baby and show the signs that you know while you are reading, your baby may actually take the book from you and sign the book back to you.

more



HANDSHAPE

Flat **O** shape with both hands, fingertips and thumb touching

BODY SPACE

At chest level

MOVEMENT

Tap your fingertips together.

MEMORY AID

It looks as if you are adding two things together to make more.

WHEN TO USE THE SIGN

MORE is usually used as a question, as in “Do you want more?” Say the word and show the sign for **MORE** when your baby has finished eating something but you know they’ll still be hungry. You might also gently take something away from your baby and, if your baby reaches for the item, pause and show the sign for **MORE**. Don’t do this if it frustrates your baby.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

When your baby first attempts to sign **MORE**, it might look like they’re clapping.

Date introduced:

Date produced:

.....





eat (food)



HANDSHAPE

○ shape with dominant hand, palm facing you

BODY SPACE

At your mouth

MOVEMENT

Tap your mouth once with your fingertips; tap twice for the noun **FOOD**.

MEMORY AID

It looks as if you are bringing food to your mouth.

WHEN TO USE THE SIGN

Say the word and show this sign before and while your baby is eating. Use the sign **EAT** when you're eating, any pets are eating and even when pretending to feed a doll.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

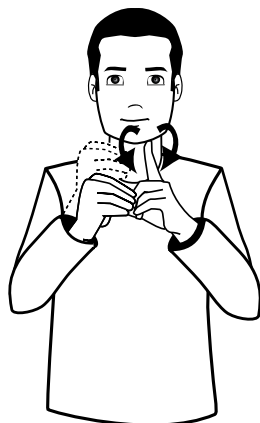
Your baby may tap his open hand against his mouth.

Date introduced:

Date produced:

.....

banana



HANDSHAPE

O shape with dominant hand; **1** shape with other hand

BODY SPACE

At chest level

MOVEMENT

Move the fingertips of your dominant hand up and down the pointer finger of your other hand.

MEMORY AID

It looks a little like you are peeling a banana.

WHEN TO USE THE SIGN

Say the word and show your baby the sign for **BANANA** before and after you peel, cut up or mash banana. Show as well when you or baby is eating a banana.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Your baby may use a similar body space and movement when attempting this sign but their handshape may be different; for example, they may use their whole hands for both movements.

Date introduced:

Date produced:

.....





apple



HANDSHAPE

X shape with dominant hand

BODY SPACE

At your cheek

MOVEMENT

Twist the knuckle of your pointer finger back and forth at your cheek twice.

MEMORY AID

It looks as if you are twisting an apple stem at the “apple” of your cheek.

WHEN TO USE THE SIGN

Sign and say **APPLE** to your baby when he is eating applesauce or an apple and when you see an apple at the store, on a tree, at home or in a book.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

When first making this sign, your baby may tap his cheek with his full hand or twist his pointer finger near his cheek.

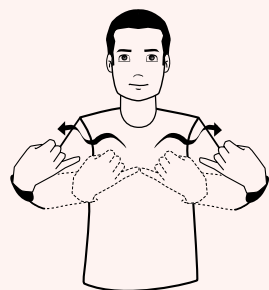
Date introduced:

Date produced:

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On Top of Spaghetti

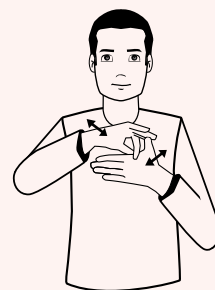
On top of **SPAGHETTI**,
All covered with **CHEESE**,
I lost my poor **MEAT**ball,
When my **DADDY** sneezed.
It rolled off the **TABLE**,
And on to the **FLOOR**,
And then my poor **MEAT**ball,
Rolled out of the **DOOR**.
It rolled in the **GARDEN**,
And under a bush,
And then my poor **MEAT**ball,
Was nothing but mush (**WET**).



SPAGHETTI



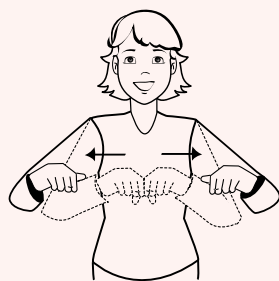
CHEESE



MEAT



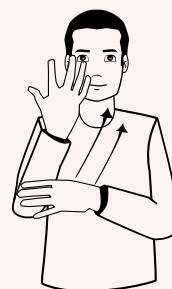
TABLE



FLOOR



DOOR

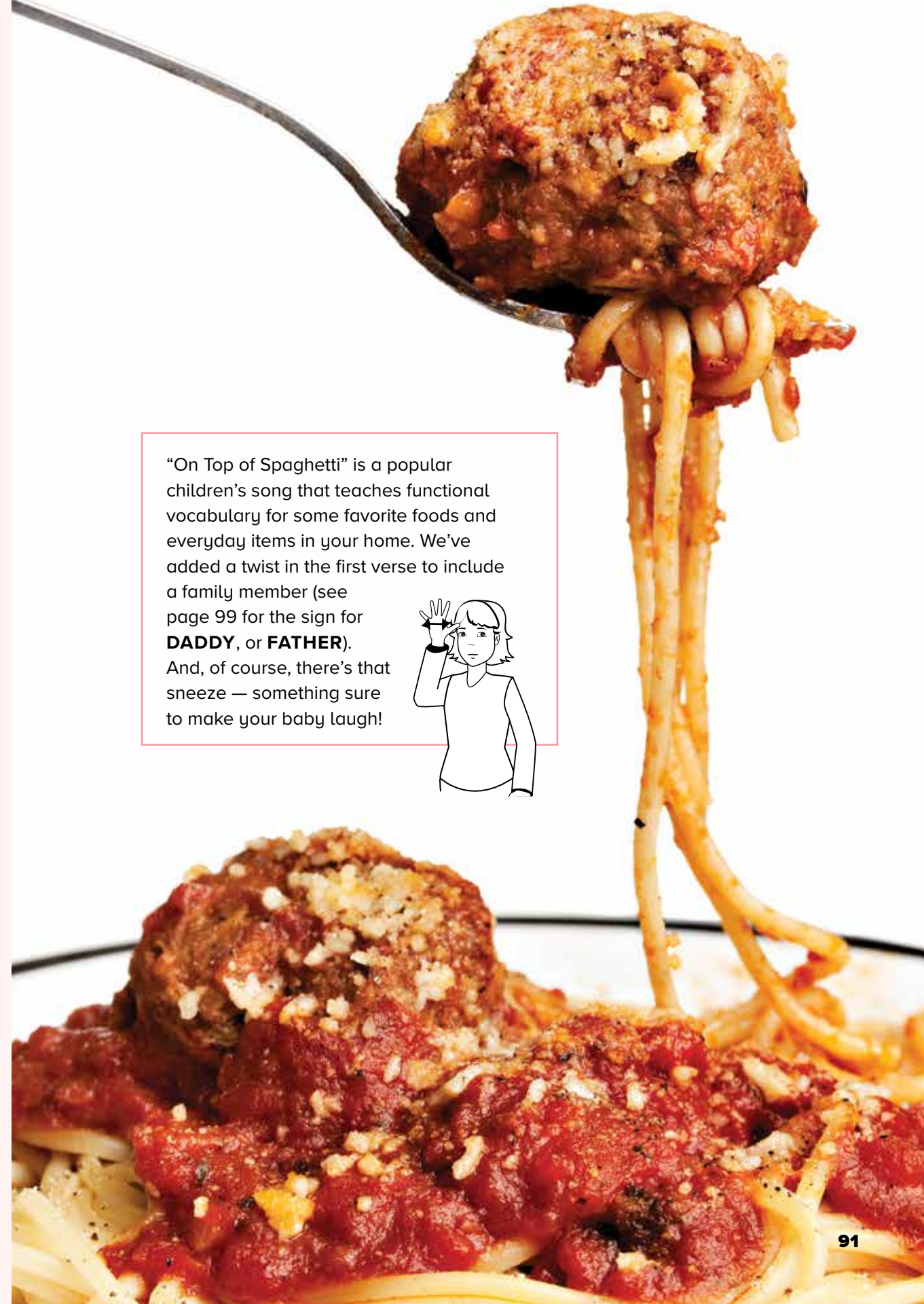


GARDEN



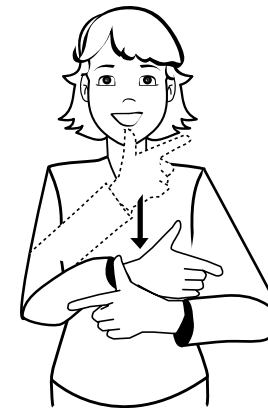
WET

“On Top of Spaghetti” is a popular children’s song that teaches functional vocabulary for some favorite foods and everyday items in your home. We’ve added a twist in the first verse to include a family member (see page 99 for the sign for **DADDY**, or **FATHER**). And, of course, there’s that sneeze — something sure to make your baby laugh!





sister



HANDSHAPE

L shape with both hands; dominant hand facing out and other facing in

BODY SPACE

Dominant hand at the chin; other hand at chest level

MOVEMENT

Move your dominant hand from your chin to the top of your other hand.

MEMORY AID

The last movement in this sign, which starts in the female area of your face, is a modified sign for “care.” A sister is typically a girl you care about.

WHEN TO USE THE SIGN

Show the sign for this word whenever you say the word “sister.”

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Your child may start this sign using only her pointer finger and moving it down.

Date introduced:

Date produced:

.....

brother



HANDSHAPE

L shape with both hands; dominant hand facing out and other facing in

BODY SPACE

Dominant hand at the forehead; other hand at chest level

MOVEMENT

Move your dominant hand from your forehead to on top of your other hand.

MEMORY AID

The last movement in this sign, which starts in the male area of your face, is a modified sign for “care.” A brother is typically a boy you care about.

WHEN TO USE THE SIGN

Show this sign whenever you say the word “brother.”

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Your child may start this sign using only his pointer finger and moving it down.

Date introduced:

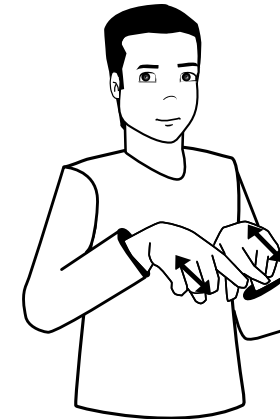
Date produced:

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socks



HANDSHAPE

1 shape with both hands, palms down, fingertips angled down

BODY SPACE

At chest level

MOVEMENT

With the pointer finger of both hands pointing down, brush hands against each other in an up and down motion.

MEMORY AID

Imagine two knitting needles knitting a pair of socks.

WHEN TO USE THE SIGN

Show the sign whenever you say the word and when putting on your own or your baby's socks. You will most likely have many opportunities to sign and say "**SOCKS** on!"

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Your baby may use a different handshape when she first signs **SOCKS**. It may even look like the sign for **MORE**.

Date introduced:

Date produced:

.....

sign



HANDSHAPE

1 shape with both hands

BODY SPACE

At chest level

MOVEMENT

Move your hands alternately toward your body in a circular motion.

MEMORY AID

It looks as if you are sending a message with your hands. This is for the verb “sign,” as in signing, not the noun, as in a traffic sign.

WHEN TO USE THE SIGN

Use this sign whenever you say or sign the word “sign.”

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Your baby’s first attempts at this sign may be moving their whole hand in a circular motion, not specifically with 1 shapes.

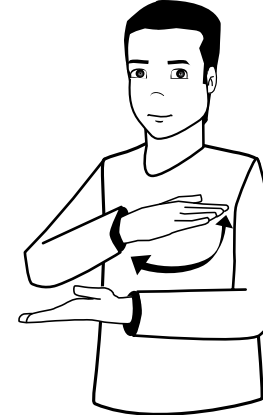
Date introduced:

Date produced:

.....



sing (song, music)



HANDSHAPE

Open B shape with dominant hand, palm down, above other forearm; other palm facing up

BODY SPACE

At chest level

MOVEMENT

Move dominant hand back and forth over other forearm.

MEMORY AID

It looks as if you are strumming some sort of instrument; also used as the sign for **SONG** or **MUSIC**.

WHEN TO USE THE SIGN

Use this sign whenever you say or sing the word “sing.”

Date introduced:

Date produced:

.....

Your baby is ready to sign when they can wave bye-bye.

What are the benefits of teaching your baby basic sign language?

Beginner's Baby Sign Language: Sign & Sing at Home includes 100+ American Sign Language (ASL) signs to introduce to your baby. This book is designed to show you what and when to sign to your child. Not only is it surprisingly easy, signing with your baby can increase connection and bonding as you better understand baby's behavior and can relieve frustration by helping them to communicate their wants. You'll find easy-to-follow illustrations and instructions for signs like milk and diaper. You'll also learn familiar and practical songs to sign and sing with your child. Also included are the alphabet and numbers (1-10) in ASL conveniently located at the front and back of the book for quick reference.

Unlike other books in the genre, this beautifully designed educational book stands out with loads of full-color photographs to make it easy to look up the signs you want to share. ASL is the predominant sign language in the US and Canada and the vocabulary here has been chosen especially for new parents, expecting parents, grandparents, caregivers, educators, therapists and child-care workers to use. With this book you and your baby will be communicating clearly and confidently!

FUN FACTS

- Signing allows your child to clearly communicate their thoughts
- Signing will not delay verbal language development; in fact, it will most likely increase it
- Signing reduces frustrations for your child, significantly lessening the terrible twos!

Sara Bingham is the founder of WeeHands, the world's leading children's sign language and language development program for babies, toddlers and preschool children. She is a trained therapist, the mother of two and a frequent contributor to parenting magazines and baby-related professional websites.



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