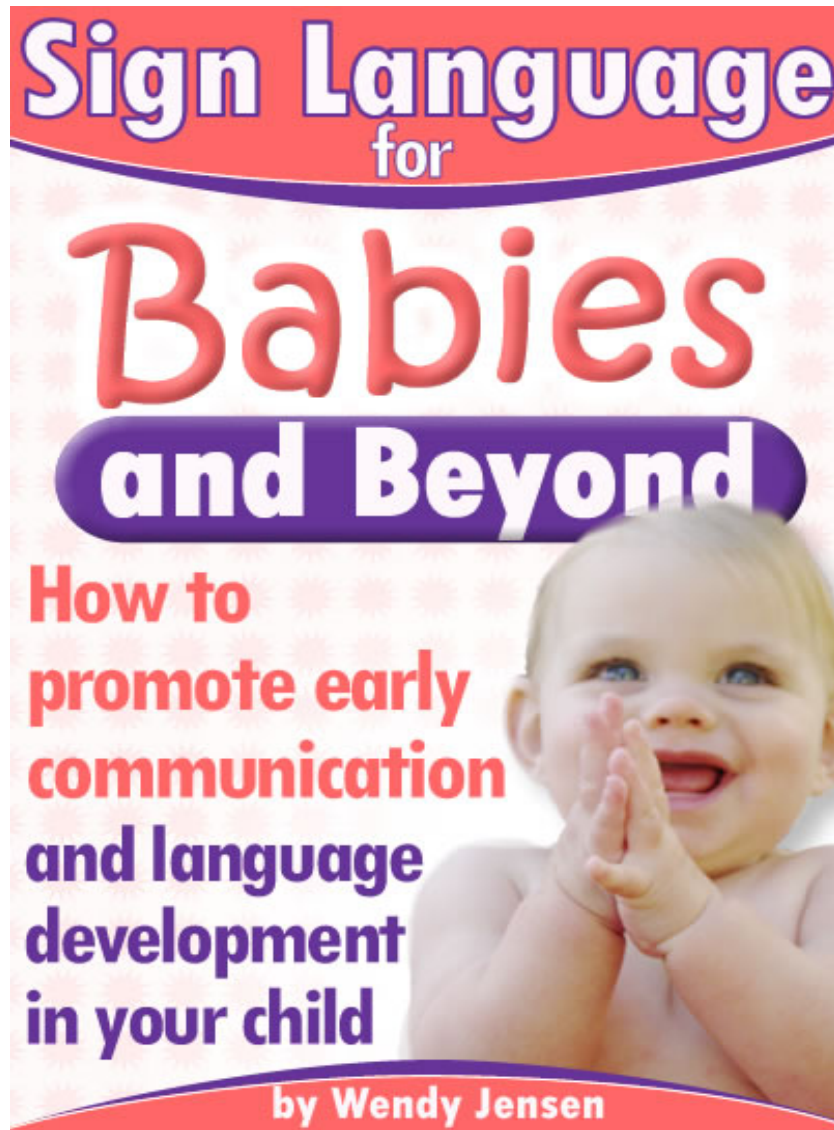


Sign Language for Babies and Beyond

Congratulations! You have just received a sample of the book: “Sign Language for Babies and Beyond” given to you compliments of Wendy Jensen.

Feel free to share this sample with others!



**For more information, or to access the entire book and 250 signs for babies, please go to:
<http://www.signing4babies.com>**

Sign Language for Babies and Beyond

Listed below are some of the items that are in this book:

Learn how you can communicate with your baby much earlier than you would if you simply wait for him to learn how to talk (Chapter One)

Find out how you can greatly reduce your child's frustrations and tantrums! (Chapter Two)

Learn how sign language develops the brain and has actually been linked to a higher IQ in children! (Chapter Three)

Dispel any fears that sign language may delay speech development and find out why the opposite is actually true! (Chapter Four)

Discover the best time to start signing to your baby (Chapter Five)

Learn the advantages of learning American Sign Language rather than inventing your own signs (Chapter Six)

Learn how children make the transitions from gestures to signs to speech (Chapter Seven)

Learn the benefits of learning sign language to music (Chapter Eight)

Learn how sign language can promote self-esteem in your child! (Chapter Nine)

Learn how to teach your child sign language in a natural environment! (Chapter Ten)

Learn the benefits of utilizing sign language in children who have speech-delays or special needs. (Chapter Eleven and Twelve)

Learn how to use sign language to develop reading skills (Chapter Thirteen)

Learn how to reduce the noise level in your home or classroom! (Chapter Fourteen)

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Learn how sign language really comes in handy and why it is so much fun!
(Chapter Fifteen)

Learn how to get started signing with your baby – even if you don't know
any sign language! (Chapter Sixteen)

Learn what signs are best to start with! (Chapter Seventeen) Includes a
list of vocabulary and video of 250 great starter signs for babies, toddlers,
children, and even adults!

About Wendy Westra Jensen

Wendy Jensen received her Bachelor's degree from the University of Utah.
She first learned sign language by serving a mission for her church to the
Deaf Community.

She is a certified interpreter in the State of Utah and has been working in
the field of sign language for over 16 years.

Wendy has taught American Sign Language at the College level for over 10
years and is currently teaching ASL at Dixie State College in St. George,
Utah.

Wendy has worked as an interpreter both in the community and in the
classroom for 14 years and has worked for the State of Utah as an
interpreter mentor for several years.

She and her husband, Rick, are the directors of the Hands in Harmony
Carolers – an A cappella jazz group for youth that incorporates sign
language and hand bells with music. www.HandsinHarmonyCarolers.com

Wendy LOVES being involved with sign language! She also loves to
write, read, work-out, sing, play the piano and spend time with her
husband and five beautiful children!

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Why we signed with our children Why not – it will be fun!

My husband and I thought it would be fun to teach signs to our first daughter, Janika, when she was a baby. We soon noticed that she could communicate with many signs long before she was able speak those same words vocally. Therefore she was able to learn twice as many words twice as fast.

When she entered pre-school she was so far ahead of the other children that her teacher suggested she move up with the students who were a year older. She is now in the third grade and is a prolific reader (reading four years ahead of her year in school) and a math whiz! We wondered if sign language had anything to do with her academic success.

Hmmm, he doesn't talk – maybe we should teach him sign!

By the time Janika was two years old, she was talking very well and had already dropped all of her signs. So when her baby brother Jase was born, we weren't using much sign language in the home. Later on, however, we noticed that Jase wasn't using any sounds or words, at an age when most children his age were talking quite extensively.

We weren't sure what had caused his temporary speech delay, but we started signing with him and he was able to communicate with us for an entire year through sign language before his dam of speech suddenly burst open with a rush of words, sentences, and phrases! (His story is in Chapter Eleven.)

Three children – but only two hands!

Our third child Jared wanted constant attention! With a newborn, toddler, and pre-schooler on the loose, I considered myself lucky if I got to so much as take a shower in peace! My hands were often busy holding children, preparing food, and later cleaning up that same food from off the kitchen floor. Soon Jared was talking, and signing still hadn't made its way to the

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top of my priority list. That is until I had another “late-bloomer” with child number four!

I’ll walk and talk when I’m good and ready!

When our fourth child, Janelle, came along, we weren’t using much sign in the home. However, it soon became apparent that she was taking her own sweet time to do everything – including crawling, walking and talking! She finally started walking at 18 months of age but still didn’t show any signs of talking.

My husband and I started signing with her, and it wasn’t long before she started signing back! She is now 2 ½ years old and can sign hundreds of words including complete sentences! She can also fingerspell the ABC’s as she sings or recites them!

Learning sign language opened the doors of communication, virtually eliminating tantrums and other similar situations that would have been extremely frustrating for all of us!

A chance to start anew!

Our fifth child is now thirteen months old and can sign: “milk,” “more,” “bye bye/hi,” “finish,” “mommy,” and more!

Sign Language provided so many benefits to our children that I started researching to see if others had seen similar results. I was amazed at what I found! This book contains research that others have done on this subject as well as the experiences I had signing with my own children.

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Introduction

My child can hear – why should I teach him sign language?

Teaching your child has many benefits for both you and your child. These include:

*Earlier communication with your child.

Some children learn to sign as early as 7 or 8 months – much earlier than a typical baby learns to talk!

*Babies who can communicate through sign are often much happier babies and toddlers which translates into a happier YOU!

*Babies who can sign have shown less frustration and tantrums overall since they can usually communicate their needs better.

*Studies have shown that babies who learned sign as infants had a higher IQ overall than babies who didn't learn sign.

*Children who have learned sign have been shown to have more advanced language skills than children who have not learned sign.

*Signing in the classroom has led to improved math scores among students.

*Learning sign language at an early age helps develop the brain in the critical early years of language development.

*Signing with your child provides a unique bonding experience between you and your child.

*Signing opens the doors to wonderful friendships with those who use ASL as their primary language.

*Signing helps promote self-esteem in children.

*You would be surprised at how often knowing sign language really comes in handy for both you and your child!

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Chapter One

Will I be able to communicate earlier with my baby by teaching her Sign Language?

All parents have encountered the frustrating experience of trying to sooth a crying baby. Is she hungry? Is her diaper wet? Does she feel sick?

You think, “If only she could talk to me and tell me what is wrong!”

You find yourself anticipating that wonderful day when your baby will finally be able to talk. But this day may still be a long way off.

Many babies don’t start talking until well after their first birthday, and boys are often later than girls, with many boys not speaking until around two years of age. That is a long time to wonder what is going on in your baby’s mind!

What if your baby could communicate with you much earlier than that? Who wouldn’t welcome such a unique opportunity?

This is where sign language for babies comes in. Even though it will still be months until your child has developed the muscles that allow speech, she already has the ability to use simple hand gestures.

“Hey, I squeeze my hand and I get milk!”

Suppose every time I nurse my baby I place my hand where my baby can see it and squeeze my fist open and shut making the sign for “milk.”

Eventually my baby will make the connection between the sign and nursing. One day she will even imitate the sign and when she does she will be rewarded with praise and with milk!

“Hey!” She realizes. “I squeeze my hand and I get milk!”

We as parents are even more thrilled because our baby just made her first real “word!” True it wasn’t a spoken word, but it was a word nonetheless – and more important than the method of delivery is that successful communication has just taken place. Hooray!!

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Now that she realizes squeezing her hand will get her more milk, she may pay more attention when you introduce a few more simple signs.

The more she signs, the more she is rewarded. This will encourage you to use more signs with her. Soon she will even start asking you in her own way for more signs.

Success! You have opened up the door for your baby to be able to communicate with you! You have also laid the foundation on which to develop even more language.

“Sure beats throwing the plate!”

My friend Kelly shared her experience of using signs with her children:

“My little boy now at 20 months has about a 10 word sign vocabulary and a 3 word spoken vocabulary. When he sees anyone getting their shoes on or picking up the keys, he signs “shoes,” and we know he wants to go! When he signs “stinky” we know he wants to be changed. He will take our hand and lead us to the pantry or fridge and sign “eat”. When he is finished with his food he signs “finish”-- (sure beats throwing the plate!). Both of my boys did not even develop a vocabulary of more than 5 words until they were nearing 2 years old, but they have both signed their first word around 12-14 months old.”

Like Kelly, I had similar experiences with my children. Long before my daughter Janelle could speak any words, she could communicate quite well using signs.

“Mom, the baby is crying!”

Janelle ran up to me with a concerned look on her face and signed, “baby cry!” I responded, “Oh, is the baby crying? Thank you for telling me – let’s go get her!” Janelle beamed at her accomplishment. “Why do you think the baby is crying?” I asked. “Do you think she is hungry?” Janelle giggled, “Baby eat!”

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This communication served several purposes. First of all I was made aware that the baby was crying, and secondly I learned what was going through Janelle's mind.

Had she just come up to me and tugged on my sleeve I could have followed her to see what was wrong, but I might not have figured out exactly what she wanted or what she was thinking.

I learned that Janelle knew the words for "baby" and "cry," and I could now build on that knowledge by talking more to her about that subject.

This is the beauty of sign language. When we realize how much our children comprehend, we tend to communicate with them on a higher level and introduce a greater number of words. It is also an incredible bonding experience when you and your child understand each other!

Chapter Two

I've heard that Sign Language could help reduce my child's frustrations and tantrums. Is that true?

One of the reason babies and toddlers get frustrated is because they understand what is going on and know what they want, but they often have difficulty expressing their desires in a way we can understand.

This lack of communication can occur anywhere from infancy on up. One of the reasons our toddlers experience "terrible twos" is not only due to the power struggle of our stubborn youngsters, but also because of the continued communication barrier that occurs as our children are still grasping how to articulate spoken words.

Kelly explained: I taught sign to all my kids when they were infants/toddlers. It really cut down on their frustration to be able to communicate before they were able to articulate. Their gross motor skills (ability to grasp objects at 3-4 months old) develop faster than their fine motor skills (articulation). So it makes sense that they can form the signs before they can form the words. When my niece was about 10 months old she would get very frustrated and yell and cry a lot. I taught her how to sign 3 signs, "please" "more" and "eat". She stopped yelling and throwing tantrums in a matter of 20 minutes!

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Like Kelly, I was already convinced of the many benefits of teaching children sign language since I had seen it work wonders on my own children, but how had sign language helped other children?

Research

To answer this question I started reading some books that others had written on the subject. I found the book *Baby Signs: How to Talk with Your Baby Before Your Baby Can Talk*¹ by Linda Acredolo and Susan Goodwyn to be a delightful book with dozens of examples of children and families who benefited from using signs with their babies.

I loved the “in-the-moment” pictures of babies and toddlers using signs, and the charming stories of how these children communicated weeks or months before they could speak. Dr. Acredolo and Dr. Goodwyn did extensive research on babies and toddlers who learned signs from their parents. They list some of the benefits they learned during their research:

“With these signs literally at your baby’s fingertips, communication between you can flourish during that difficult time from about nine to thirty months, when your baby’s desire to communicate outstrips her capacity to say words....Our ten years of scholarly research on Baby Signs have proved conclusively that adding these gestures to a baby’s repertoire not only leads to better communication; it also speeds up the process of learning to talk, stimulates intellectual development, enhances self-esteem, and strengthens the bond between parent and infant.”²

We have seen this happen with our children. Our daughter Janelle has trouble articulating words, and so sign language has been extra beneficial with her. She is able to express herself clearly, and she gets so excited when we understand her. She can express her playful personality through sign language in a way she wouldn’t be able to otherwise.

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Ice Cream for lunch?

Several months ago when Janelle was first learning signs, I sometimes asked her what she wanted to eat. She often made the sign for “ice-cream” by sticking out her tongue and moving her fist as if she was licking an ice-cream cone.

I acted shocked and exclaimed: “ICE-CREAM?? You want Ice-Cream for lunch? You silly girl!!” She laughed and laughed as if she had just made a great joke!

The more we get together!

Sometimes Janelle even comes up with some of her own signs to communicate. For example one day she came up with a sign to represent her playgroup:

When I pulled into the parking lot of Janelle’s playgroup she started giggling and put her fist hands together with her knuckles touching and thumbs facing up. She moved her hands around in a circle. (This is the ASL sign for “together.”) She associated the sign with her playgroup because each week at playgroup we sang, “The more we get together, together, together, the more we get together – the happier we’ll be!” As we sang the song we also did the sign language for “more” and “together” and “happy.” Janelle didn’t know the sign for “play-group” or “class” but she did know the sign for “together!” Later on if I told her we were going to her “school” she would get excited and sign “together, together!”

Janelle also made up her own sign for “spider-man.” She makes a sort of punching motion with her hands and then brings both hands out from fists into open hands like spider-man shooting his web. We have no idea where she came up with it since she has never seen the movie but we all had a good laugh at her clever creation!

Marilyn Daniels, author of *Dancing With Words, Signing for Hearing Children’s Literacy* states:

“Including sign language in the communication mix can eliminate the frustration both parent and child often experience as they attempt to

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comprehend each other. It fosters pleasant discourse, clarifies meaning, and creates better understanding between them. With the keener understanding, there also comes an authentic grasp of content.”³

Now, back to our original question: Will signing with your child reduce tantrums? Absolutely! Will signing with your child stop all tantrums? Sorry – but no. We may know what our child wants but that doesn’t mean they will always get their way.

My daughter may want candy for breakfast and may be signing “candy!” but that doesn’t mean she will get it. Will she throw a tantrum? Probably!! But at least I can explain to her my reasoning instead of simply wondering why she is crying!

Chapter Seventeen What signs should I start with?

On the video-clips I will model over 250 signs that are commonly used with children. This should be plenty for you and your child! For a few of the signs I will demonstrate two different variations of the sign and you can decide which one you would like to use. Your child may come up with her own version of some of the signs. This is normal. Praise her for all of her attempts (even if she “accidentally” signs something even close to the word!) and continue to sign the word correctly. Good luck and have fun as you enter this journey of enhanced communication with your child!

References for Sample Book:

¹ L. Acredolo, and S. Goodwyn, *Baby Signs: How to Talk with Your Baby Before Your Baby Can Talk* (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1996).

² *Ibid.*, 5-7.

³ Daniels, M., *Dancing With Words: Signing for Hearing Children’s Literacy* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 2001) 170.

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We hope you have enjoyed reading a sample of “Sign Language for Babies and Beyond.” In order to access the entire copy, please to go to <http://www.signing4babies.com> If you decide to purchase this book, you will also receive FIVE awesome bonuses absolutely free! These bonuses include a video of 250 signs downloadable to your computer, a quick reference guide filled with pictures of all 250 signs, a free e-mail consultation to answer any questions that you may have, a free e-book “How To Potty Train Your Child in Five Hours,” AND another free e-book “Baby’s First Year: What Every Parent Should Know.” E-mail me if you have any questions wendy@signing4babies.com. I look forward to hearing from you!