

# Sign Language in Speech Therapy

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Speech therapists use sign language in therapy to facilitate communication in children who have not yet developed language. Sign language is a bridge for children who are unable to communicate effectively through spoken language. It facilitates language development in young children, as it enables them the ability to receive exactly what they want, by signing for it. Signing is a meaningful way for children to communicate their needs or express themselves, instead of grunting or pointing for what they want. For example, they can communicate if they are thirsty, have an earache, or ask for more breakfast or lunch. As the ability to sign increases, frustration and negative behaviors will decrease, as they will be able to request what they want, effectively and efficiently. Gradually, children will replace their signs with spoken words to communicate their wants/needs. Using signs encourages pre-linguistic and communication skills, accelerates spoken language, reduces frustration and provides children with a means to communicate and converse with their environment.

**. Sign language is a bridge for children who are unable to communicate effectively through spoken language.**

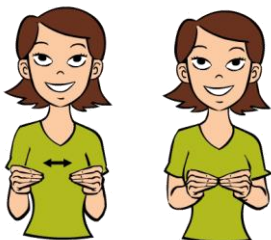


## Important Tips

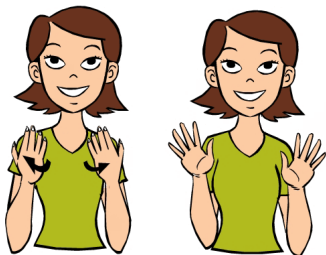
- When teaching simple signs, be sure to teach your child that they will not receive what they want if they point or grunt at it.
- Provide hand-over-hand assistance when the child is unable to imitate successfully.
- Children may need several visual models and may require you to take their hands and make the sign for them, before becoming independent. Be sure to reward them by giving them what they desire, even if you made the sign for them.
- We want communication to be a positive experience, so remember to keep it positive and fun!

# Teaching Basic Signs

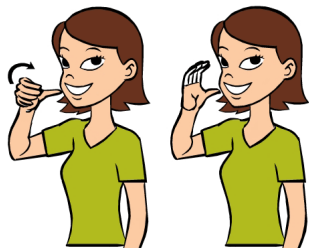
More: Give the child a small amount of a preferred snack and provide hand-over-hand assistance for he/she to sign 'more' for more of their snack. Repeat this process to facilitate



All done: While cleaning up toys, provided hand-over-hand assistance for child to make 'all done' sign, to indicate that they are done with that activity.



Eat or 'Drink': Wait until child reaches for their drink or snack, sign if they are hungry/thirsty, and have them imitate sign before taking drink/snack.



Please: Keep favorite toys out of reach from the child and encourage child to sign 'please' before he/she can get the toy.



Eat: Wait until child reaches for their snack, sign if they are hungry, and have them imitate sign before taking snack.



## References

All images were found on  
[babysignlanguage.com](http://babysignlanguage.com)