

The Six Stages of Signing

1. Amusement

- ★ When you begin to sign with your baby, he or she may look at you kind of funny! He's not really sure what you are doing or why you are suddenly using your hands so much while talking to him. He might even laugh out loud at you!
- ★ These are good things to happen. This shows that your baby is paying attention and thinking about what you are doing.

2. Recognition/Understanding

- ★ Next baby is starting to understand the meaning of the signs that you are showing her. For example, she's fussing for milk. You show her the MILK sign and she calms down because she knows that milk is coming.
- ★ Another example could be, the two of you are down on the floor playing and you say, "Where's the BALL? Do you want to play with your BALL?" (All the while signing BALL) Baby then looks at her ball or even attempts to grab the ball.

Your baby's receptive communication has begun!

3. Attempts & Imitation

- ★ Suddenly baby starts playing with his hands more. He may try to copy your signs but not really know what he is doing. He may make these attempts totally out of context. He's practicing using his hands!

4. First Sign!

Your baby has started to use their first sign! Sometimes they may even start with more than one.

- ★ At first the signs may be sporadic; your baby may sign one day and not the next.
- ★ Next, the frequency of using the first sign/s (sometimes slowly) increases. You are starting to see the sign/s pretty consistently now.
- ★ Initially, your baby may use that first sign for everything she wants to say to you. MORE may be used for; MORE, MILK, CHEERIOS, MOMMY or anything she may be looking for.

Watch for sign approximation in this stage. Your baby's signs may be awkward at this stage and you may miss them if you are not watching carefully.

Your baby's expressive communication has begun! Congratulations!

5. *Signing Vocabulary Increases*

- ★ Now your baby is starting to use more of the signs that you have been showing him, he will also start to look to you to show him a sign for something. Pointed gazes will be happening more often.
- ★ This stage may last a while. While baby is starting to sign, he may stick with only a few signs for some time. This is an important time to show your baby lots of new signs. They are like “little sponges” at this stage and you need to give them lots to “soak up”!

6. *“The Signing Eureka!”*

- ★ Your baby suddenly really appears to “get” this whole signing thing. She has an impressive size vocabulary and wants to learn new signs all the time. By this time she is also picking up these new signs after seeing them only once.
- ★ Baby is now using signs that you may have shown her weeks ago and didn’t know she remembered! Also, she will start to use her signs to initiate conversation!

You Did It! You Now Have A Signing Baby!

It is important to still be consistent with your signing. Your baby will be taking a lot of the initiative but they will still need signing stimulation from you. It will be a lot easier from here on in so don’t let all your hard work go to waste! This will be an amazing time for everyone in baby’s life!

Keep in mind that these stages are a guide. Children will naturally bounce back and forth between the stages and may have an order all of their own!

Enjoy!



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