

No Signing Skills Needed to Use ASL with Children

No signing skills are needed for parents, teachers and caregivers to bring the benefits of American Sign Language, ASL, into the lives of all hearing children.

Studies have shown that children benefit equally from instructors who are fluent in signing or have had no previous experience but have the desire to incorporate its movement into a child's life.

Here's how to sign successfully:

- Have the desire to include signing into your daily life
- Sign for communication and with fun, playful activities
- Prepare yourself in advance by learning the signs you wish to introduce
- Instruct and lead with joy and enthusiasm
- Positively and enthusiastically support all the efforts of your children
- Consistently use the sign whenever you say the word

Signing DVDs help you to learn how to sign words correctly and how to use them in song and sing-along activities. Signing takes only minutes to learn and provides years of fun. Keep in mind that We Sign programs are not teaching ASL as a language but rather using its vocabulary, concepts, movement and visual nature to enhance learning for hearing babies, toddlers, preschoolers and elementary children.

Be Playful and Encouraging

When using American Sign Language, keep in mind that this activity should always remain fun and playful. You want to ensure that children will not only learn but will enjoy their experience. Always be positive and supportive of the activity. Encourage them to sign correctly but never force or coerce. Praise and reward them whether or not their signing was correct. With repeated participation of this fun activity, signing accuracy will come.

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Be Creative

We want to encourage everyone, children and adults alike, to be creative in the use of the signs that they learn. Try to incorporate words learned into daily life, use the signs whenever you say the word or an opportunity to use a sign presents itself. For example, you can sign the word cat or dog when you see one at home or outside or you can sign them when your are reading about them in a book. If the song lends itself to actions, even if you don't know the sign, let the children move and act as they wish. You can find other words on our We Sign DVDs, in ASL dictionaries or other books and at online resources.

Importance of parental / teacher involvement

Parent, teacher, and caregiver involvement is an important. It provides the basis for continued use and reinforcement of signs in playful activities at home and at school. Adult interaction ensures that a positive message will be given to children and that learning can be fun. Parents around the country have come to understand the benefits of signing with children and that parental involvement will support early learning, foster parent-child bonding and help to establish a child's readiness to enter school.