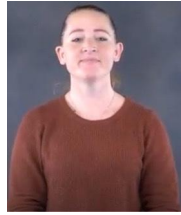


Signing with Deaf Babies by Melinda Vazquez

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[Image Description: Melinda, a young woman, is standing in front of a gray backdrop. She has brown hair that is pulled back. She is wearing a brown sweater. She is using American Sign Language.]

Did you know that it is never too early to sign to your Deaf baby?

It is never too early! You can communicate with your babies that you will feed them, change their diaper, and let them know what is happening in their surroundings.

Deaf babies will acquire language very quickly. They will start to comprehend language before they express their own needs. They may start signing at around 6 months old. Some may start signing earlier and some may start a bit later—it just depends on the baby.

At around 6-12 months of age, they may start using some basic everyday signs such as milk, mom, dad, sleep, more, and finish (or all done).

At around 13-18 months old, they may wave to sign hi, as well as sign baby, eat, drink, funny, cry, ball, light, clothes, bath, car, tree, jump, thank you, please, play, cat, dog, and other commonly used words. Deaf babies will acquire so many words over time. Their brains are like sponges, and they will absorb vocabulary faster than we think.

My son, Odin, is now two years old. He probably knows more than 400 words. He can communicate with me in two to four word sentences—about many different things and to express his needs. He can ask where his shoes are, tell me he is hungry and wants cereal, or tell me when he wants to play, or watch a movie. He loves cars, and he can communicate about many things.

It is important to gently tap your baby's shoulder to get their attention. If they don't look toward you, you can very softly take their face in your hands and turn them toward you. If you face your baby at eye level and there is good lighting, it will be easy to see each other and communication will be better. Start by introducing important common words that they see every day so they can express their basic needs. Don't expect them to sign perfectly. It takes practice until their hands are able to produce signs the correct way. For example, at first your baby may sign "Mommy" and "Daddy" with the tip of an index

finger touching the chin or forehead instead of spreading all five fingers apart and touching the tip of their thumb to the chin or forehead. You can't expect perfect signs until they have had time to practice.

Keep in mind that not all babies will pick up signs at exactly the same pace, each baby's pace will vary.

Remember to be patient and consistent. Repeat signs often and let them practice.

Note to YouTube viewers: Some videos (including this one) provide on-screen access to the transcript. Click the three dots below the YouTube video, then Show transcript.

For more information, watch "[Common Errors by Young Children Acquiring a Sign Language](#)," by Adam Stone.