

Signing Information for parents and carers

We all hope that our children will be able to talk, but for some children this can be difficult. We know that signing can help. Some children will use signing for a short time; others will need to use it for longer. Signing is widely used with a variety of children who have communication difficulties.

Things you should know about signing

When you watch someone talking, they will not just be saying the words, but they will also be using:

- ❖ hand movements or gesture
- ❖ facial expression
- ❖ eye contact
- ❖ body language (posture and movement)

This is all communication.

When we use signing we use signs, speech, gesture, facial expression, eye contact and body language. Parents/carers and families often ask about signing. Here some of the most frequently asked questions are answered.

Why use signing?

Signs give extra information, which can be seen. Research has shown that signs / gestures are easier to learn than spoken words. Babies use gestures before they can speak, to tell us what they want, for example:

- ❖ holding out their arms to be lifted
- ❖ reaching for something they want
- ❖ pushing something away that they don't want

Signing can help if a child has difficulties with **UNDERSTANDING** as the sign illustrates what the spoken word means. Children who have difficulty understanding and speaking often become frustrated or withdrawn. They may communicate this through behaviours such as screaming and kicking which are unpleasant to the child and for us. By using signing we are helping the child to communicate in a more acceptable way.

Will signing stop my child from speaking?

The good news is that no, it won't. Experience and research indicate that using gestures / signs promotes and stimulates speech development. It is very important that you use **SPEECH** together with **SIGNS**.

Who needs to use signing?

Children learn to speak by listening to other people speaking. If your child is going to use signs to communicate, they need to see you and other people using them as well. **EVERYONE** needs to be involved – this means family members including siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles etc. and teaching staff at your child's school or preschool.

What will other people think?

You may feel strange using signing at first and you may feel that people are looking at you, but with practice it soon becomes more natural and you know you are helping your child.

How many signs do you start with?

It is important that only a few signs are used at the beginning. These will usually be the most important ones for your child. They will be chosen by the people who know the child best. As your child learns, more signs will need to be introduced.

What are the important things to remember when using signs?

- ❖ Signing should be used in **EVERY** aspect of your child's day.
- ❖ Always remember to **SPEAK** as you sign.
- ❖ Encourage any attempt at signs or spoken words.
- ❖ At first it may be necessary to help move your child's arms and hands to make the first signs.
- ❖ Don't give up too soon. It may take a while for you and your child to learn to use signs.
- ❖ Have fun!

How do I teach signs to my child?

1. Choose the signs you want to teach your child.
 - ❖ Choose a few signs for things that your child is motivated by.
 - ❖ If your child already has a word or their own gesture for a word, then you don't need to teach them the sign for this.

2. Model/demonstrate the sign.

- ❖ In real life situations, at every opportunity demonstrate the sign for your child. At this point you are not necessarily expecting them to sign it back to you, but if they do, great!
- ❖ By modelling the sign, the child learns what the concept and the sign mean.

Example – “drink” - when it is time to have a drink, say and sign for example “It’s time for a drink. Let’s go and get you a drink. Here’s your drink. Is that a nice drink?”

3. Ask them to sign it for you

- ❖ When you have demonstrated the sign on several occasions, begin to ask the child to sign it for you, still modelling the sign as you do so.
- ❖ If your child consistently signs the word when asked, move on to encouraging spontaneous use of signs.
- ❖ If your child does not sign when asked, move on to the next stage - helping them to make the signs.

Example – “drink” - before giving your child their drink **ask** them to sign it for you – “can you sign drink?” Make sure you sign “drink” as you ask them to sign, providing a good model. If they sign “drink,” give them lots of praise and of course, their drink!

4. Help them to make the sign

- ❖ Put your hand over your child’s hand and physically help them to make the sign.
- ❖ You may need to help them for several goes before they will be able to sign when you ask them to.

5. Encourage spontaneous use of signs

- ❖ Simply ask – “what do you want?”
- ❖ Say “you want a..?” and see if your child will fill in with a sign.
- ❖ Don’t anticipate their every wish!
- ❖ Offer them choices – “do you want a banana or a drink?”

Where can I learn signs?

Your speech and language Therapist will show you how to make the signs that will be most useful for your child and will also point you in the direction of local training. The CBeebies programme Something Special featuring Mr Tumble uses Makaton signs and is a fun way to learn signing. Further information about training and resources etc. can be found at: www.makaton.org or www.signalong.org.uk

Early Signs

People

Mummy
Daddy
Brother
Sister
Baby

Transport

Car
Aeroplane
Train
Boat
Bike
Bus
Tractor

Actions

To listen
To look
To go
To come
To give
To sing
To help
To finish

Toys

To play
Bubbles
Book
Ball
Teddy
Doll
Bricks

Baby

Nappy
Potty
Buggy/pram

Food and drink

To eat
To drink
A drink
A baby's bottle
A baby's cup
Spoon
Dinner
Biscuit
Apple
Banana
Cake
Sweets
Milk
Water
Juice

Household

House/Home
Telephone
Television
Bed
Toilet
To sleep
To sit
To stand
To wash
To bath
To shower

Animals

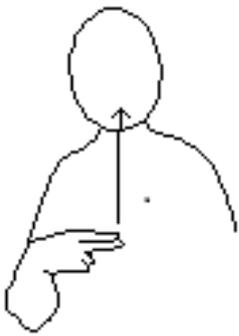
Cow
Horse
Sheep
Pig
Duck
Fish
Chicken
Rabbit
Butterfly
Dog
Cat
Bird

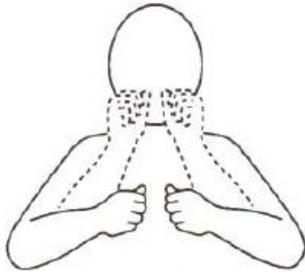
Personal/Social

Hello
Goodbye
Yes
No
I/me
Mine
You
Please
Thank you

Other

More
All gone
Good
Hot
Cold
Clean
Dirty
What?
Where?

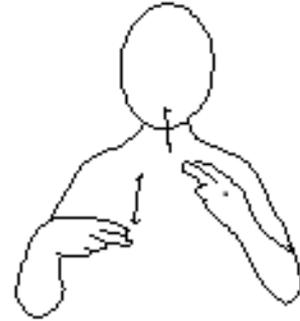
 <p>Tap twice</p> <p>Mummy</p>	 <p>Tap twice</p> <p>Daddy</p>	 <p>Brother</p>
 <p>2 taps</p> <p>Sister</p>	 <p>Baby</p>	 <p>Tap twice</p> <p>To eat (1)</p>
 <p>To eat (2)</p>	 <p>+</p> <p>Drink</p>	 <p>A baby's bottle</p>



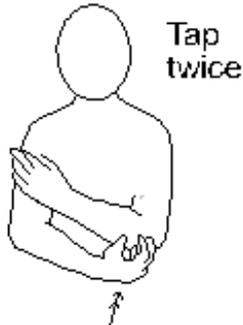
A baby's cup



Spoon



Dinner



Biscuit



Apple



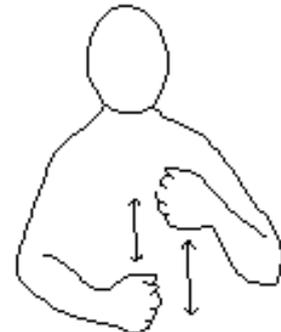
Banana



Cake



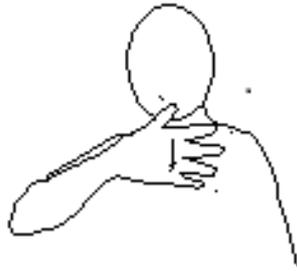
Sweets



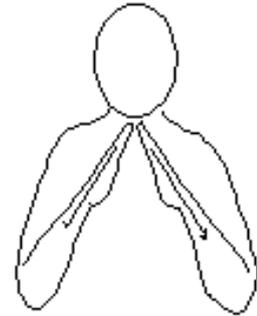
Milk



Water



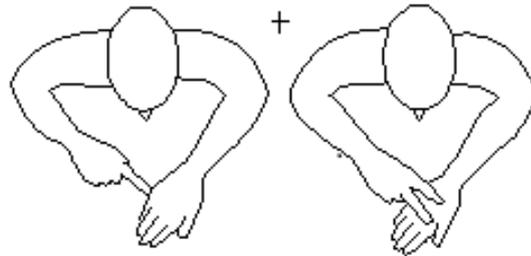
Juice



House / home



Telephone



Television



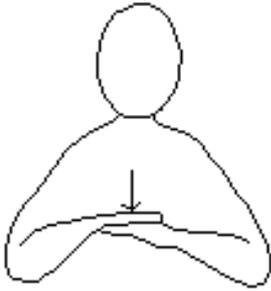
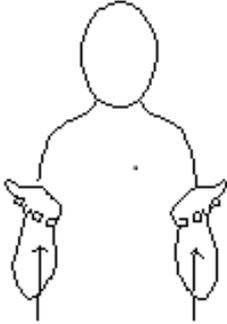
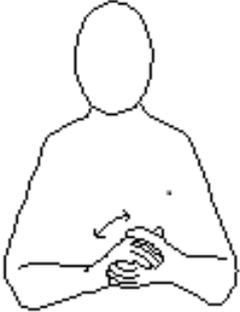
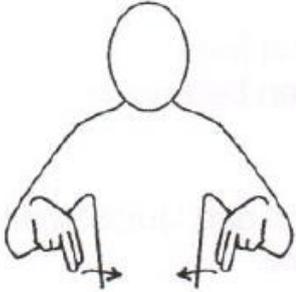
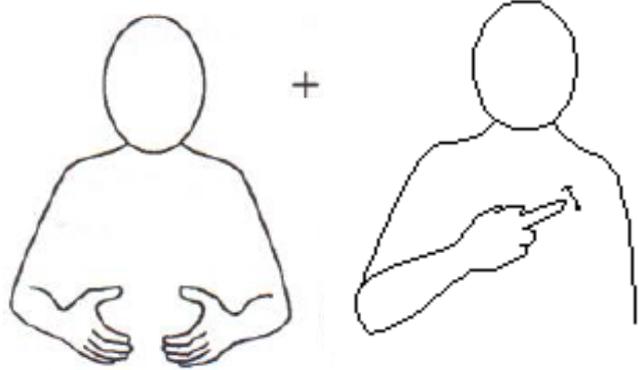
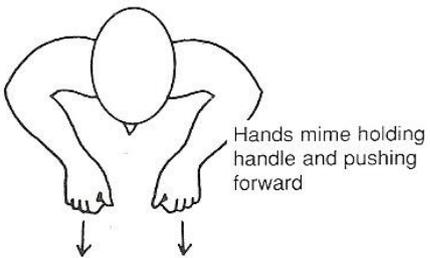
Bed

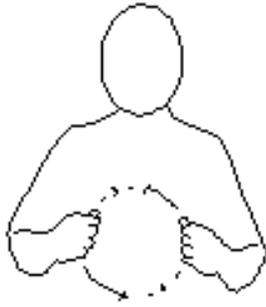


Toilet



To sleep

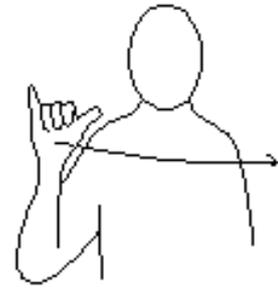
 <p>To sit</p>	 <p>To stand</p>	 <p>To wash</p>
 <p>To bath</p>	 <p>To shower</p>	 <p>Nappy</p>
 <p>Potty</p>		 <p>Buggy / pram</p>



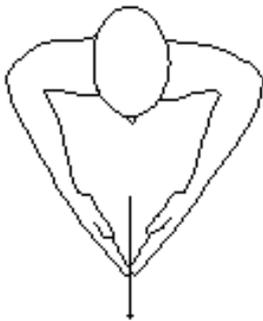
Car



Train



Aeroplane



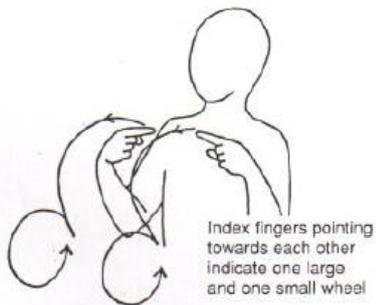
Boat



Bike



Bus



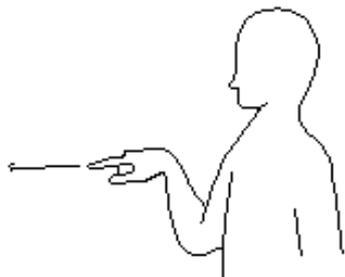
Tractor



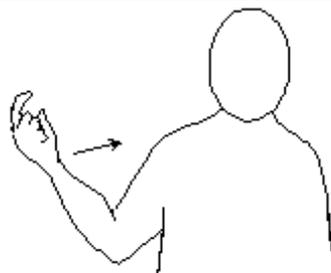
To listen



To look



To go



To come



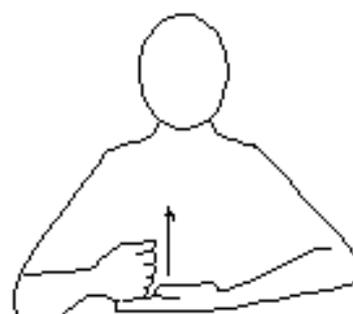
To give something big



To give something small



To sing



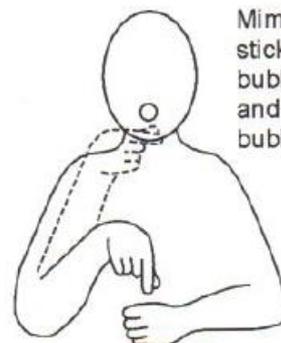
To help



To finish



To play



Mime dipping stick in pot of bubble mixture and blowing bubbles

Bubbles



Book



Ball



Teddy



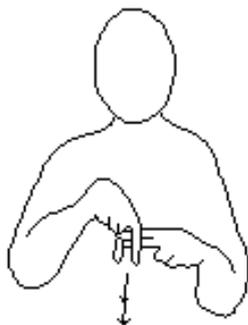
Doll



Bricks



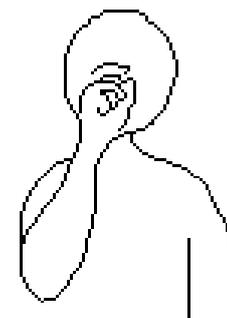
Cow



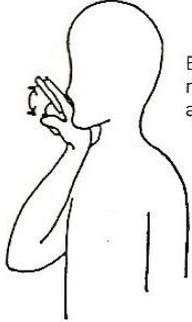
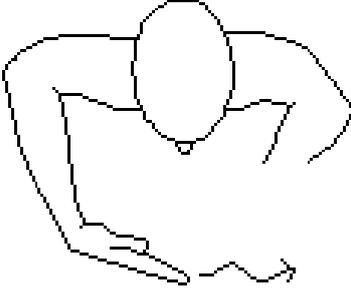
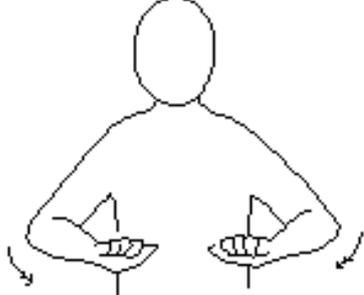
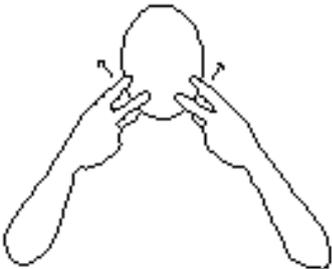
Horse

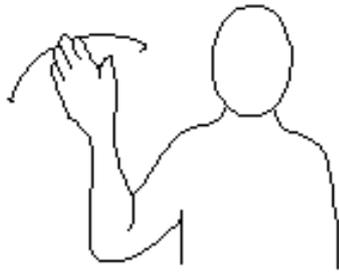


Sheep

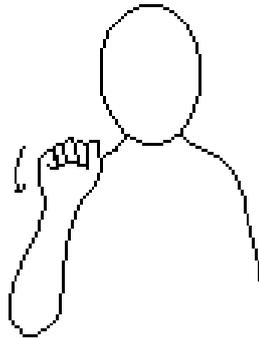


Pig

 <p>Extended index and middle fingers open and close onto thumb</p> <p>Duck</p>	 <p>Fish</p>	 <p>Chicken</p>
 <p>Rabbit</p>	 <p>Butterfly</p>	 <p>Dog</p>
 <p>Cat</p>	 <p>Bird</p>	 <p>Hello</p>



Goodbye



Yes



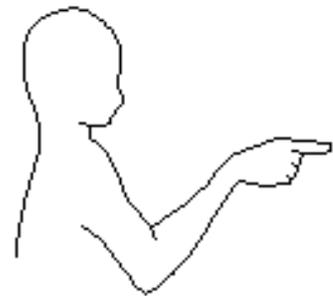
No



I/me



Mine



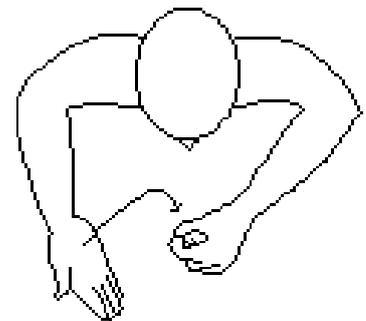
You



Please



Thank you



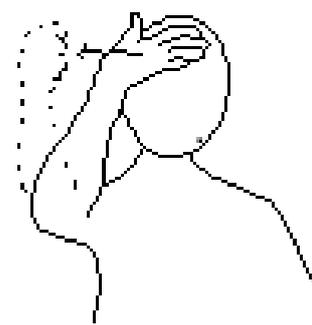
More



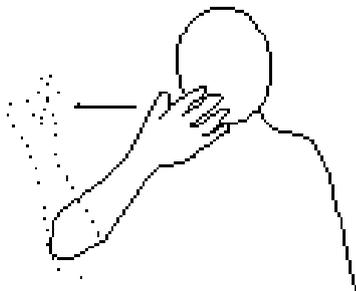
All gone



Good



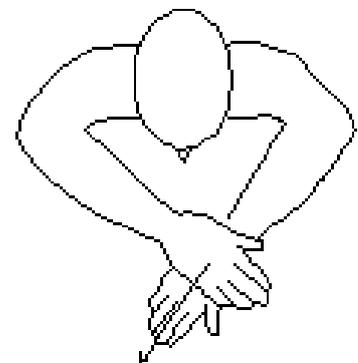
Hot (1)



Hot (2)



Cold



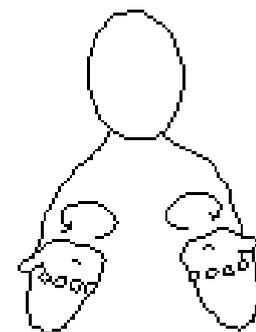
Clean



Dirty



What?



Where?