

What is sign language?

Sign language is a visual means of communication used by people who are Deaf or have a hearing impairment. It works by using gestures with the hands. By moving the hands and fingers in certain ways, sign language users sign single letters or full words to communicate with others.

Sign language isn't the only way that someone who is Deaf or has a hearing impairment can communicate; lip-reading is another possibility. People who can lip-read interpret the movements of the lips of others in combination with facial expressions and general body language. However, the majority of people who can lip-read also understand sign language, whereas those who know sign language might not be able to lip-read.

How it impacts your child:

Children in the early years often develop cognitive thinking before speech meaning they know exactly what they want; yet because their language skills are not yet at the same level are often unable to communicate these. This can cause frustration and behavioural problems, because some speech and language difficulties can lead children unable to communicate verbally.

Teaching children to sign through British Sign Language can hold so many benefits and can be used and understood by young children in baby rooms right the way up to adults. This gives children of all ages the opportunity to have a voice and to communicate their needs and interests with others.

There are many benefits of signing with children, these benefits include:

- ♥ Opening ways of communicating.
- ♥ Can be used throughout a setting and does not need to be restricted to a certain age.
- ♥ Allows children to express needs.
- ♥ Allows children to express interests.
- ♥ Prevents episodes of frustration and anger.
- ♥ Gives children a voice.
- ♥ Supports language development.

- ♥ Allows children with language skills to understand children who have speech and language difficulties.
- ♥ Can be used to help the children understand concepts further such as giving another level to singing
- ♥ It is fun to learn.
- ♥ Babies and children build confidence and social skills.

Facts about British Sign Language for children:

Whether it's [Deaf Awareness Week](#) or you're just wanting to engage children more with British Sign Language, here are five facts that could interest children and inspire them to learn more.

1. British Sign Language is thought to be first invented by Thomas Braidwood in 1760. Before this, people who were Deaf struggled to understand from lip-reading. Braidwood invented a series of signs through gestures which evolved over time but still are used today.
2. Despite being used by 87,000 deaf people and a wider total of 151,000, British Sign Language was not recognised as an official language until 2003.
3. To be a fully qualified interpreter of BSL, one must undergo seven years of training.
4. There are a huge amount of expressions and phrases needed to fully interpret and communicate sign language.
5. It is a full language with its own grammar, not simply a signed version of spoken English.

