

Baby Signs for Everybody

**Book Pitch, Detailed TOC and Sample Chapter by
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THE PITCH

Baby Signs for Everybody will be the first book of its kind to blaze a bright path against the current line of sludgy “Baby Signing” books in the Parenting marketplace niche. You don’t have to be a baby to learn Baby Signs because “baby signs” is really the first step in learning American Sign Language so anyone and everyone can use this book to learn how to sign.

Our book is unique because it takes the viewpoint of the baby as the center of the book as the expert teacher who sets the foul lines for learning.

Baby Signs for Everybody supports the importance of facial expression and grammatical gestures as the major base of communicating with infants – infants as young as a day old can instinctively imitate deliberate facial expressions made within their direct view. If you go down to an infant’s level and make eye contact and smile and then slowly stick out your tongue, the infant will answer you by smiling and sticking out the tongue at the same deliberate pace you used.

Many parents are not attuned to subtle communication signs from their infants and toddlers and they miss out on the early ability to share conversation on a base and universal level. Parents get stuck in voiced speaking because they believe it to be the only viable form of communication but babies are able to communicate clearly and cleanly if the parents are able to recognize the gestures, hand shapes and facial expressions their babies are using to stake their mark in the world from the first moments of birth.

THE HOOK

A baby’s first language is sign language and parents can hone their receptive visual listening skills to interpret the needs and wants and wishes of their baby by using the modular information found in each chapter of our book.

Communication of prescience is vital even in an infant and the ability for an infant to make its presence known as a conscious form is not simply cute and magical – it is an organic genetic marker for survival.

Baby Signs for Everybody employs intricate line drawings that will step the reader through each part of the sign idea.

We may also host and create images and videos on our American Sign Language Web Portal <http://HardcoreASL.com/> where our readers can visit our platform for updated information, ask us questions and provide feedback for future editions.

THE MARKET

The time for our book is now because the market is ripe for a total communication baby book that actually meets the communicative needs of both baby and parent. The Baby Signs books on the shelves today only address signed communication in a precious, childish way that has no edge nor fun nor unified concept to help the reader interpret and put into use *Baby Signs for Everybody* in everyday life.

THE AUTHORS

Janna M. Sweenie and David W. Boles have been married for 17 years and they share American Sign Language as their common language and preferred method of communication.

Janna M. Sweenie, M.A.

Janna was born Deaf in Council Bluffs, Iowa where she then attended the Iowa School for the Deaf until high school graduation. Her B.A. in Psychology is from Lehman College in the Bronx where she was one of the first Deaf graduates of that City University of New York institution. Her Master's degree in Deafness Rehabilitation is from New York University.

For the past 15 years at NYU she has taught six ASL courses a year from levels 1 to 4. Over 10,000 of her students have been taught the "Hardcore ASL" method and her students have gone on to use their signing skill working as interpreters, doctors, performers and therapists.

Janna's medical signing experience is deep and far. She was contacted this week by the Beth Israel Medical Center at Kings Highway to help them create an ADA-compliant professional grade interpreting program for the hospital.

When Janna was Senior Counselor for the New York Society for the Deaf's Tanya Tower Housing Project she would regularly interpret for her clients in a wide variety of medical situations: Emergency Room, Doctor's Office, Ambulance call or Fire Department first responders.

As the Building Manager for NYSD's Co-Op City apartment complex in the Bronx, Janna did emergency interpreting – ectopic pregnancies, knife wounds, pill overdoses, fist fights, spousal abuse – for first responders and hospital emergency rooms both for the Hearing and for her Deaf residents.

Janna's rare gift is that of the middleman stuck, but balancing, between two worlds – the Deaf and the Hearing – and she is able to successfully facilitate meaning and understanding between a vast gap of language inadequacies in life and death situations.

Janna also teaches ASL at Montclair State University and she serves as an instructor for the Juilliard Interpreter Training Program and as an advisor for the Theatre Development Fund's interpreted Broadway productions. Broadway credits include *Phantom of the Opera*, *Hamlet*, *42nd Street*, *Wonderful Town*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and *Flower Drum Song*. As a performer and teacher, Janna has worked with and advised Cyndi Lauper and Marlee Matlin and Governor Pataki and former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

After the 9/11 tragedy Janna was deeply involved in *Project Liberty* where she helped the Deaf and Disabled who worked in the World Trade Center come to terms with their losses in that awful watershed event. Janna presently works full time as a Vocational Rehabilitation counselor for the state of New York Department of Education.

She is also SPCI - Rated "Superior Plus" in American Sign Language and a full narrative biography for Janna may be found online at <http://BolesBooks.com/sweenie.html>

David W. Boles, M.F.A.

David W. Boles, M.F.A. is co-author of *Hand Jive: American Sign Language for Real Life* to be published by Barnes and Noble New York in the Fall of 2006. David is also the polymathic author of "Windows 95 Communication and Online Secrets" for IDG Books Worldwide and his periodicals work include c|net's "Builder.com," "Windows Magazine" and "Boot." He served as the East Coast Editor for "Eypiece" – the Official Publication of the Guild of British Cinematographers.

David is a member of the graduate school of Public Health faculty at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey and he has taught World and Dramatic Literature at New Jersey Institute of Technology and Theatre and Forensic Speech at Rutgers University-Newark. Other teaching credits include New York University, Fordham University, Columbia University, the College of New Rochelle and Saint Peter's College. He has many years of teaching Freshman composition, Critical Writing, and Advanced Research Skills. David has also taught American Sign Language at New York University.

David recently served a Visiting Professorship with the University of California, Davis Program in Sports Medicine where he studied and researched the causes and the remedies for hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) as it concerns young athletes dying early and he is finishing writing a case study concerning killer nurse Charles "The Angel of Death" Cullen entitled *A Nosocomial Outbreak* for the University of Medicine and Dentistry's Center for Case-Based Training Institute and the Center for Bio-Defense.

His scholarly research paper, *Creating Aristotelian Irrevocable Change in Tourists Touching Down at Newark Liberty International Airport* was accepted by the Sheffield Hallam University School of Sport and Leisure Management's conference concerning *Tourism & Performance: Scripts, Stages and Stories* in the United Kingdom in 2005.

David's B.A. in English is from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and his M.F.A. is from Columbia University in the City of New York where he earned a terminal degree in Playwriting. He was a Shubert Organization/Presidential Scholar during his entire tenure at Columbia. His work as an award-winning Playwright has been seen on national tour in 16 states and 27 cities.

A complete C.V./Resume and list of Teaching Credits are available on request. A full narrative biography may found online at <http://BolesBooks.com/boles.html>

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Don't start trying until the seventh month

Watch for eye contact lingers with you

Follow That Look

Eyes tell all

Baby's gaze teaches you what is important

Visually share the same object

Identify object with voice and sign

Identify with baby on found items

Hear That, Too

A world of sounds

Watch baby's eyes to see what baby is hearing

Reinforce you hear the same sound

Crashes can teach

Flower pot go boom!

Show you heard the sound, too

Show results of the crash to baby

Act out the crash again for baby to make connection

Take That Point

Pointing is the first sign baby is ready to sign

Active fingers mean a need to talk

You joining the point

Making the point together

Visiting what is being pointed at...

Voice and sign combinations work best

Smile to show understanding

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Here are some tips to get you going with specific Baby Signs. The more you use signs as part of your day the sooner baby will start to hook up the idea that a Handshape with movement means something.

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Gathering tools

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20 pages

All Baby Signs are really American Sign Language Handshapes. This chapter will show you every Handshape you need to learn to make all the Baby Signs in this book.

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A
Bent B
Flat B
C
Single C
F
N
Flat O
T
U
Bent V
W
X
Y

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One
Five
20
25

Handshapes from Objects

Claw
Fist
I Love You

Part II: Coming Face-to-Face with Signing

2 pages

Now you get down with your hands and figure out some more vocabulary signs. These signs are simple to get and fun to make.

Chapter 5: Starter Signs 101: Teaching Basic Needs **26 pages**

Start off slow and easy here. You might already know many of these signs because they are pretty common. Who knew you already know how to Baby Sign?

Starter Signs

Hi
Bye
Momma
Dada
Grandma
Grandpa
More
Baby

Food Needs

Milk
Water
Eat
Drink
Banana
Apple
Hungry
Cookies
Crackers

Fun Needs

Candy
Hat
Pacifier
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Want
Thank You
Good
Bad

Body Needs

Toilet/Bathroom/Go Potty
Change Diaper
Help
All Done

Chapter 6: Teaching Safety Signs **14 pages**

The safety of your baby is important. With these signs you can really get the message across that being safe is a good shared thing.

Safety First: Signing Everything from Hot to Cold

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Go
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Sorry
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**Chapter 7: Call of the Wild! Signing Your Favorite Animals
and Monsters**

14 pages

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Signing Your Favorite Pet or Animal or Monster
Pet
Bird
Cat
Dog
Elephant
Cow
Fish
Giraffe
Bear
Spider
Earthworm
Dragon
Monster
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Chapter 8: From the Sun to the Moon: Exploring Worldly Signs

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Everything baby does is an adventure. This chapter will help baby chat while exploring the new world.

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Chapter 9: ZZZ... Signing at Bedtime

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Favorite Bedtime Stories
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6 pages

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Belly Button
Eye
Head
Foot
Arm
Hand
Toes
Fingers

Leg

Part III: Now We're Communicating! Signing to Speech to Battling Stumbling Blocks

2 pages

The signs here get a little more advanced as baby grows beyond a year old. The signs in this part are most appropriate for ages 12-24 months but some babies learn faster and others learn slower. Don't get sweaty hands worrying about baby's progress just enjoy whatever baby gives you!

Chapter 11: When Fingers Fumble

10 pages

Sometimes baby gets stuck and you both get frustrated. Here is some advice on getting un-stuck and keeping a positive experience going for both of you.

Keeping it Fun

Let baby decide the pace

One sign out of many is better than zero out of none

Inventing Signs

Do not make up signs

Universal communication beyond the family is important

If baby makes up signs

That's good imagination

You gently correct - a "cow" is not a "cat"

Real Signs vs. Home Signs

Limiting Distractions

Pets, plants and other rants

Environmental entertainment

Other People

Morning is better than evening

Chapter 12: Combining Signs

12 pages

Now you will see how to combine signs. Once the idea is in head, the hands will have it down in no time.

Put This with That

Where + shoe

Want + milk

No + touch

Pretty + cat

Stop + hurt

Eat + apple

Eat + more

Drink + more

Need + potty

Music

How to make hand songs

Sing along without voice

Game Time!

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Expressing urges in public places
Behind-the-back signals
Invisible discipline

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Chapter 15: Emergency Signs 4 pages

Chapter 16: Bedtime Sign Stories 4 pages

Appendices

Chapter 5

Starter Signs 101: Teaching Basic Needs

In This Chapter

- * Starter Signs
- * Food Needs
- * Fun Needs
- * Body needs\

It's time to start putting into practice the ideas and plans we've been working on together and there's no need to be nervous or uncertain as you take your first official Baby Signing steps. Use this chapter as an easy reference to calm any questions about how to get comfortable creating signs. There's no rush to hurry through this chapter. Sign at your leisure and remember baby is only nervous if you're nervous. Baby Signing is about getting baby to, at first, imitate you and then to begin to create and then express baby's own thoughts in sign. Be confident and baby will reflect that confidence, too!

Starter Signs

Okay, you're ready and baby is ready and now it's time to get down to throwing some Baby Signs. A sign a day is enough for now. See Chapter 3 for clues on when and how to add more signs to your day as you and your baby begin to catch on to the idea of Signing together. Then you can use the old signs to help explain the new.

<Remember>

Repetition and patience are important. While you are formally teaching a new language you should keep the tone and environment spontaneous and casual. Do the sign and wait for a reaction. If there is no reaction, do the sign again. Do the sign at a deliberate and even pace. Baby will begin to recognize the pattern of the sign in the air and by creating the sign the same way each time you are making the learning quicker. If, when you feel baby is beginning to sign, even if it's just a vague reaction to you, heap on lots of praise and smooches and hugs to show you understand baby understands.

“Hi,” World!

One of the first signs you learned growing up, probably without realizing it was a sign, was waving “Hi.” You can say “Hi” with a wave in different ways. Sometimes you might shake a flat palm in the direction of a friend to bid a “Hi” while other times you might make a quick “hello” salute. These variations in signs with the same meaning can be confusing for baby so we are going to show you a simple, but clear, way to wave “Hi” that baby can understand.

<Handshape>

The Handshape for “Hi” is “Five.” You can find the complete Handshape reference guide for all the signs in this book in Chapter 4. Figure 5-1 shows an example of Handshape “Five.”

- 1 Smile to show how happy you are to see baby.
- 2 Slowly Raise your arm.
- 3 Present your hand to baby in the Handshape “Five” position with your palm facing baby.
- 4 Gently, shake your hand back-and-forth three times while saying “Hi!” with your voice while you sign (see Figure 5-1).

<Figure 5-1>

Figure 1: Saying “Hi” in Baby Sign uses a waving Handshape “Five.”

<*Game*>

Hi Sign: Now it’s time to play around a bit with the “Hi Sign” game. Similar to “Peek-a-Boo” you will say “Hi!” instead.

- 1 Hide your face behind your hands so the palm side of your hands covers your eyes.
- 2 Reveal your face by opening your hands like barn doors away from your eyes and sign “Hi!” with both hands.
- 3 Move down a bit outside baby’s line-of-sight.
- 4 Slowly rise from a new place.
- 5 With a big smile on your face, sign and say “Hi” the moment baby sees you.
- 6 Enjoy the giggling!
- 7 Have Daddy join the “Hi” sign game.
- 8 You say “Hi” to Daddy.
- 9 Daddy passes along the “Hi” sign to baby.
- 10 Everyone giggles as baby responds to the interaction or even signs “Hi” back.

<*Tip*>

Every time you pass by baby during the day, even if you aren’t in a structured Baby Signs session, say “Hi” in sign and voice and soon baby will beat you to signing “Hi” first. Then you will both have tasted the first sign of success.

You just learned your first Baby Sign! Who knew just saying “Hi” was so complicated? Well, not anymore!

Buh-“Bye-Bye”

Okay, so you’ve mastered “Hi” but all good things must come to an end so it’s time to sign out with “Bye-Bye.” Signing “Bye-Bye” takes a steady torso and an even hand. The hand movement is simple and your Facial Expression gives the sign its emotional connection.

<*Handshape*>

The handshape for “Bye-Bye” is “Bent B” and is created with a flat palm facing forward and then gently bending forward the four fingers together.

- 1 Raise your hand and present your palm to baby.
- 2 Using Handshape “Bent B,” voice “Bye-Bye” as you sign by bending your fingers in unison forward and then straight back up again three times from the flat-palm starting position.
- 3 Take a few slow steps backward.
- 4 With each step, repeat the sign so baby can see how the location of the body moving away hooks up with the meaning of the sign movement (see Figure 5-2).

<Figure 5-2>

Figure 5-2: “Bye-Bye” uses Handshape “Bent B” and either a positive or a negative Facial Expression depending on the context of the conversation.

<*Warning*>

When really young babies sign “Bye-Bye” their fingers are not in the perfect “Bent B” Handshape. That’s okay! Many babies begin signing “Bye-Bye” by just using the “Hi” wave and that’s cool, too. Some babies just kind of repeatedly squeeze their fingers into their palms an in imperfect imitation of what you are doing and that is also fine. At the start of the Baby Signs

process you're just looking for baby's imitation of what you are signing. If you feel you are getting even a hint of imitation then you are both doing really well. The more you practice together the clearer and the more specific your signs will become.

<*Game*>

Peek-a-Bye-Bye: You can play the "Hi Sign" in reverse with a game we call "Peek-a-Bye-Bye."

- 1 Instead of saying "Peek-a-Boo" start the game by signing "Bye-Bye" and having your face disappear behind your hands.
- 2 As you slowly leave baby's line-of-sight, you can say "Bye-Bye" and you move all the way out of eye shot.
- 3 Daddy says "Bye-Bye" to Momma and leaves.
- 4 Momma says "Bye-Bye" to baby while backing away.

<*Remember*>

You can also add "Hi" into "Peek-a-Bye-Bye" and have some "Hi" and "Bye-Bye" fun coming and going.

"Momma" Knows Best

For many babies the first word out of their mouth is "Momma" so why can't "Momma" be the first hand movement that leaps from baby's palm? You will reuse the same Handshape "Five" you used to sign "Hi." You and baby are already building a vocabulary based on repetition and shared concepts that can be used again and again.

<*Tip*>

You can always modify any sign definition to reflect your region or accent or cultural need. For this early exercise, we prefer "Momma" over the sweet "Mommy" or plain "Mom" or the dull "Mother" because "Momma" is sillier to say. In our experience, folks who can make their voices animated are easier able to make their signs livelier. We feel "Momma" the most vocally animated choice as well as being a fun and funky way to have the most joy learning this sign.

<*Handshape*>

The Handshape for "Momma" is "Five" and, for emotional definition, can be created with rigid or loose fingers. When you're angry the fingers will tend to get rigid and when you are happy and relaxed, the fingers will soften.

- 1 Bring Handshape "Five" to your chin and place the tip of your thumb on your chin with your pinky finger pointing straight into the center space in front of you.
- 2 Tap that thumb in Handshape "Five" position against your chin two times as you speak "Momma" with an animated voice.
- 3 Lower your hand to indicate the sign is complete.
- 4 Pause a moment before you repeat the sign to help give the sign's movement its final definition so baby can begin to learn where the sign begins and ends (see Figure 5-3).

<Figure 5-3>

Figure 5-3: Using Handshape "Five" tap your thumb on your chin a couple of times to sign "Momma" and if you are feeling happy about "Momma," show it in your face as well.

<*Game*>

Who's Yer Momma?: This game is best for babies over the age of 12 months because there is some higher brain maturity needed to have the most fun.

- 1 Bring Daddy in the room.
- 2 Point to him and sign "Momma" but make your voice into a question as

if you are confused.

- 3 **Pause and point to yourself while smiling.**
- 4 **Sign “Momma” and use a bright, reassuring, vocal inflection to affirm for baby that you are, indeed, the “Momma.”**

<Warning>

You may need to present the “Who’s Yer Momma?” choices a few times over several days for baby to get the idea of the game. Once baby is actively choosing the right Momma, move the game on to include dolls, the cat, a pillow and an apple. The better baby gets at picking the right Momma the goofier and more creative you can be in choosing funny Momma choices. If one day baby picks the apple as the Momma of the doll -- and means it -- you’ll know creative vocabulary connections have been made and that is a wonderful sign of great intelligence in action.

“Dada” to the Rescue

You have bonded baby and “Momma” in Baby Signs. Now it’s time to add “Dada” to the signing mix. This sign is almost exactly like the sign for “Momma” with one small exception.

<Tip>

In American Sign Language the face is divided across the nose on the horizontal plane into two regions. Above the line of the nose most signs are given a masculine meaning. Below the line of the nose most signs are feminine. Since the Handshape and the sign are exactly the same -- as in “Mamma” and “Dada” -- it is the location of the hand that gives the Handshape the definition of gender. So it is really important you know what side of the face you’re on -- masculine or feminine -- when you are using what are, basically, Handshape synonyms.

<Handshape>

The Handshape for “Dada,” like “Momma” before, is “Five” and you can use crisp fingers to add authority to the sign.

- 1 **Bring Handshape “Five” to the center of your forehead.**
- 2 **Using the back edge of your Handshape “Five” thumb, slowly tap that thumb twice against the center of your forehead. You can voice “Dada” as you if you wish.**
- 3 **Lower your hand to indicate the sign is complete.**
- 4 **Give it a second to seep in that the sign is over and then repeat the sign so baby will know where the sign begins and ends (see Figure 5-4).**

<Figure 5-4>

Figure 5-4: Using Handshape “Five” tap your thumb on your forehead a couple of times to sign “Dada.”

Bonus signs “spanning the generations”

Now you have mastered the signs for “Momma” and “Dada” it is simple to make those signs into “Grandma” and “Grandpa” with two new motions. To sign “Grandma” you follow all the steps for “Momma” but instead of tapping your chin twice you instead thrust your Handshape “Five” forward and straight away from your chin in two small arcs of two or three inches each. Think of this sign as if you are “spanning the generations.”

The sign for “Grandpa” is a similar reverse extension of “Dada.” You follow all the steps for “Dada” but instead of tapping your forehead twice you “span the generations” by thrusting your Handshape “Five” forward and straight away from your forehead in two small upper arcs.

The finish for these bonus signs is to hold them in mid-air after you’ve reached the end of your second arc for a moment and then dropping your hand.

“More” and then Some More!

Babies, as you remember from Chapter 1, are selfish and self-centered -- as they should be -- while they learn to crawl their way to the top. The sign “more” is one command always being expressed by baby, but few parents are able to catch the subtle communication without the benefit of signed expression. By teaching this sign for “more” you will help baby learn to clearly express an inner craving that will become your command.

<Remember>

Baby will probably not sign “more” as perfectly as you do right away. Baby might use a clapping motion or a pointing indicator or a modified clapping/pointing mode. That’s okay, but keep signing “more” with the proper Handshape movement and baby will soon join you in using the right Handshape position. You are taking all this time to learn Baby Signs so using a little extra effort to be clear and consistent between the two of you is important. Repetition and correction-by-example also helps when you later want to communicate with other families learning Baby Signs because you will all share a basic understanding of what the signs mean and how they are created.

<Handshape>

The Handshape for “more” is “Flat O” and it will sort of look like you are making two birds meet in front of your chest for smooching.

- 1 Create Handshape “Flat O” on both hands and have the fingertips on both hands face each other in the center space in front of your chest.
- 2 Gently tap both Handshape “Flat O” fingertips together twice as if they are kissing while you voice “more.”
- 3 Make sure you have eye contact with baby. Smile and let baby know the sign is finished by lowering your hand to neutral start position. Then, repeat the sign a few times (see Figure 5-5).

<Figure 5-5>

Figure 5-5: Using Handshape “Flat O,” make your fingertips “kiss” in front of your body to sign “more.”

<Tip>

If you are asking a question with your “more” sign, make sure to raise your eyebrows along with your vocal inflection to teach baby you are seeking an answer to your question. If you are making a statement like giving baby “more” cereal, then your facial and vocal tone will be definitive or neutral based on your action.