

Ottawa Issue 182

Signs of the Times

Signing Start Sign Language Classes

When a baby learns to wave “bye-bye”, it’s a developmental milestone that’s downright thrilling for a new parent. Just think about what’s happening in those tiny brains! Not only has the child learned to copy a hand motion, but it has also associated the motion with the act of someone leaving. It’s a connection, it’s communication, it’s...sign language.

Enter **Signing Start**, a local parent-and-tot class focused on American Sign Language and taught by Danielle Gaylord. It teaches toddlers to communicate through sign before talking begins, which can cut back on the frustration kids feel when they are ‘misunderstood’ (which in turn can cut back on temper tantrums).

ASL is a standard way of communicating for millions of deaf Canadians and Americans and is widely recognized around the world. Knowing ASL is a skill that will benefit children past infancy and is something they can carry with them for the rest of their lives.

Danielle’s classes cover many signs you’d use on a daily basis—eat, milk, more, potty, diaper, mom, dad—but also words that might be special to you and your family, like cat, or dog, or grandma. (You might even give your child the means to start a conversation! Think we’re kidding? It’s happened.)

In addition to teaching the signs, Danielle, who has two little signers of her own, shares catchy songs and activities to reinforce the learning. The signs are easy to learn and her advice is based on her own practical experience.

Teaching your children how to sign is a commitment. It will take a few months for a child to catch on (but we all know that kids are sponges, absorbing the world around them).

Part of the challenge is remembering to work the signs into daily activities (like saying “drink” and signing “drink” whenever a drink is being offered) but once you start seeing the results you’ll get addicted to the feedback.



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Parents with children of any age are welcome to attend [Signing Start](#) (even newborns!) but the class is best suited for parents with kids in the 7 or 8 month range and older.

We'll sign off by saying that eliminating guesswork in these kinds of situations seems like a pretty good reason to pick up a few signs. And say 'sign-on-ara' to a few tantrums along the way.

[How to Find
Signing Start
www.signingstart.com](#)

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Tested by Andrea T., Ottawa

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