

# the Mommy Times

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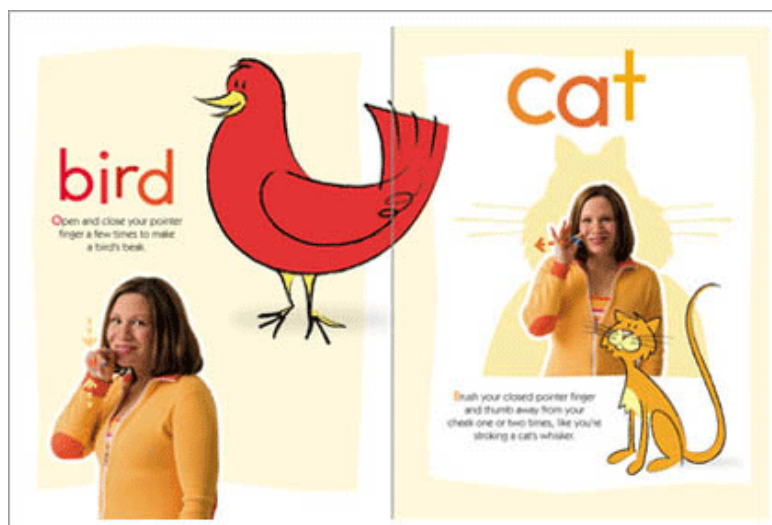
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Rachel Coleman, co-founder of "Signing Time" teaches sign language in the "My First Signs" board book.

## Talking Hands: Handy Tools for Teaching Sign Language to Your Child

After the first few times that precious baby cries for hours on end the routine becomes overwhelming and seemingly impossible to stop. The need to communicate with your baby is there but the ability is not.

Danielle Kolachick, a mother of two from Poughkeepsie, NY, was sleeping when her six month old began to cry. She went into his room, picked him up out of his crib, checked his basic needs to find nothing wrong and then laid him back down hoping he would sleep. "You're okay little guy you just have to go back to sleep," Danielle consoled him.

"Then he just looked up at me and signed the word milk," Danielle said. "It was such a fulfilling feeling ... I thought all right, now we're communicating."

Learning to use non-verbal communication, in the form of sign language, can be a window to ending long crying spells by helping you to understand your little one's needs.

Danielle Kolachick and Kelli Graham, had studied or worked with ASL before becoming mothers. The pair now run **SigningFun.com**, a website focused on teaching babies sign language, and they team-teach a baby sign language class to families in their local area.

Signing Time is a series of DVD's that teach American Sign Language (ASL) to

free shipping with minimum purchase \*

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children and adults alike. Rachel de Azevedo Coleman and Emilie de Azevedo Brown, two sisters, founded the company after Rachel learned the importance of sign language with one daughter being born deaf and the second born with spina bifida.

Signing Time claims that teaching your baby ASL has several benefits including:

- Eliminating the "Terrible Twos" (because a child can use a sign rather than a tantrum to communicate)
- Enhanced cognitive development
- Larger vocabularies
- Better relationships through better communication

The Signing Time DVD series, includes nine videos that teach a full range of useful signs as well as a three-video series geared towards babies. The videos are entertaining and fun in a way that both children and their parents can appreciate. The videos format is centered on repetitively showing the signs and saying the words being taught. And adult first shows the sign and then the video shows several children performing the sign.

Our mommy reviewers said they loved that the "music was not annoying and actually very fun." This is not surprising given that the Signing Time founders come from rich musical backgrounds. Other mommy reviewers were also pleased that the videos teach good behavior skills (i.e. polite manners) along with sign language. And one of the baby testers squealed with delight and would wave her hands whenever she heard the signature "Signing Time" theme song begin to play. Signing Time also offers board books (page from "My First Signs" board book is shown in photo above) and music CD supplements at [www.signingtime.com](http://www.signingtime.com). The signing time DVD's are available for \$21.99 at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Signing Time is also broadcast on several Public Television stations across the United States.

Baby Signs was created by Dr. Linda Acredolo and Dr. Susan Goodwyn after nearly two decades of research involving infant communication. These two doctors created a sign language based on simple gestures they found infants using to communicate words before they could actually speak. The founders claim that babies who are taught the Baby Signs develop language and cognitive skills faster and more efficiently. The six-week courses are available nationwide.

In addition to the courses, Baby Signs also offers learning supplements including DVDs, board books, and flash cards. Our mommy panel reviewed the Baby Signs DVDs and noted that their children seemed "very interested" although they weren't very appealing to adult attention spans. The Baby Signs videos rely almost entirely on cartoon images which can be a bit confusing for learning the correct signs. The Baby Signs DVDs are available for \$14.99 at [www.babysigns.com](http://www.babysigns.com) or [www.signingfun.com](http://www.signingfun.com).

-- *Becky Boushley*

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