

Language & Learning

Read With Me

Reading With Young Children Who Sign

The book and videotape set *Reading to Deaf Children: Learning from Deaf Adults*, is a good resource for parents who are signing to deaf babies. Most of the children in this tape are not babies any more, but many of the ideas David R. Schleper gives parents can be used with infants, too.

First of all, **start right away**. You know your baby doesn't understand the language yet, but the closeness, attention, and bright, interesting colors and shapes are still exciting. Best of all, your baby has your undivided attention.

When you are sharing a book, **keep the book visible and your signs visible**. How can you do that? Most books for small children will stay open. You can put the book on a pillow so that your baby, in your lap, can see your signs and the book. You can sit side by side on the couch or on the floor and make many of your signs right on the book itself. When your baby is in her high chair, you can put the book on her tray and share the story with her if you can read and look at pictures upside down! Where do you and your baby like to sit and have conversations? Take your books there. Just be sure he can see your face, the signs, and the book.

Look for videos of popular stories. More and more companies and institutions are creating videotapes of popular children's stories in American Sign Language and Manually Coded English. The storytellers on the tapes mesmerize even very young deaf babies. When you get the actual books out to read your baby will be excited to see a familiar story and ready to communicate about it with you. Here are the names of some references that parents who use Sign Language might use:

Schleper, D.R. (1997) *Reading to Deaf Children: Learning from Deaf Adults*. Washington D.C: Gallaudet University Press. (booklet and videotape)

Twice Told Tales:

Gallaudet University

Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center

KDES PAS-6

800 Florida Avenue, NE, Washington D.C. 20002

1-800-526-9105

<http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu>

Shaw, P.C. *Visual Storyreading in American Sign Language*. Kansas School for the Deaf. (videotapes)

Schick, B. and Moeller, M.P. *Read With Me*. Boys Town Press,

Father Flanagan's Boys Home Boys Town Press,

14100 Crawford Street, Boys Town, NE, 68101

1-800-282-6657

www.boystown.org/btpress

Look for programs to help you to read in sign language. Many times hearing parents are nervous about signing stories to their deaf babies. If your baby is deaf, you probably recognize the feeling. "I don't know all those words. How can I read this book?" The Shared Reading Program* is one source of help for hearing parents. Deaf adults use videotapes and coaching to help parents feel comfortable with books for children from birth to age 8. Reading to your baby can become part of your effort to learn to sign. Reading and sharing books is an important way for the two of you to communicate.

Here is the address of the Shared Reading Project:

The Shared Reading Project. KDES PAS#11, Gallaudet University, 800 Florida Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-3695.

*The Shared Reading Project is a complete program of parent support using videotapes, Deaf tutors and book packets, and is not available in all areas of the country. More centers are being added every year.

Find Deaf adults to read. Even if the Shared Reading Program is not available in your area, you may be able to find opportunities to meet Deaf adults who like to read and tell stories. If you are lucky enough to find Deaf friends, encourage them to become part of your baby's book experience. You will have a chance to see all the ways that communication about books can happen. For example, Deaf adults may communicate with facial expressions, role-playing, pointing and gestures, and signs. Your baby will have a chance to see more than one person reading and to communicate with more than one person about books.

Read stories over and over. Every time you and your baby share a book, you will feel more confident about telling the story and about your conversations. Your baby will remember what is going to happen. She will wait to see the funny expression on your face, or to catch that new word or phrase that is so much fun to sign along with you. Your baby will learn something new with every reading.