



USING SIGNING TIME® IN HOMESCHOOL PROGRAMS



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One of the biggest challenges that homeschooling parents face is finding teaching resources that will meet their child's learning needs and effectively address those needs over time. In this guide, you'll learn how you can use Signing Time lesson plans and materials to teach American Sign Language (ASL) vocabulary to support your child's educational and social growth. We'll share stories from other homeschooling families who use Signing Time, and useful tips, recommendations, and resources to help you and your child get started.

Consider how Signing Time materials can be used to support important elements in your homeschooling plan:

Your child's learning style

Signing meets the needs of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile learners. Signing Time resources provide a rich, multisensory experience to target a wide range of learning styles and preferences.

Your teaching style

Signing Time has a complete library of educational materials, including videos, songs, flash cards, board books, and more. These diverse resources give you a wide range of teaching options, so you can present material in the way that works best for you.

Your budget

You can purchase the full Classroom Edition curriculum or create a personalized library of resources that correspond to your lesson themes. If you work with a homeschooling collaborative, your group may wish to invest in a collection of materials that can then be

shared among families. Check with your local Signing Time Academy Instructor to inquire about class and purchase order options for your homeschooling needs.

Ages, stages, and number of children

Signing Time materials appeal to children and adults of all ages. We have a Baby Signing Time collection for children from infancy to age three. Signing Time Series One and Series Two materials are designed for children from ages 3 months and up. Don't be surprised to see your older and younger children sharing some Signing Time together in fun ways!

Subject matter

Signing Time can be used to enhance any subject area because it adds a visual, auditory, and kinesthetic element to learning. This multi-sensory approach allows children to make many connections to the content of any discipline such as math, science, language arts, and social studies. In addition, Signing Time can help your child start to learn ASL – a true

language, complete with culture and community.

Your use of technology

Signing is a highly visual endeavor, so we were naturally drawn to creating fun and interactive videos for children to learn sign language. For parents who choose not to show videos or television programming in their home, Signing Time books, flash cards, and music CDs provide excellent support for your signing activities.





SIGNING BASICS

How to teach a sign

Make eye contact.

Sign and say the word at the same time.

Repeat! Look for natural opportunities to use the sign throughout the day. The more often children see a sign; the faster they will learn it.

How to start signing with infants and toddlers

Choose a few signs to start with. MILK, MORE and ALL DONE are good starter signs. Once you get into the habit of using those signs, add a few new signs or combine signs for sentences like “MORE MILK?”

Look for understanding. Babies will recognize your signs before they can sign back to you. Babies may smile, squeal, kick their feet or look in the direction of the object you are signing about to show you they understand.

Wait for it! Babies who are 6-9 months old may take two months or more to make their first sign. Older babies and toddlers may sign back sooner, depending on how many times they’ve seen the sign. Parents can help by signing at home with their child.

Praise any attempt babies make to sign. Initially, your baby will sign an approximation of a word. Praise this attempt as you

model the intended sign. This is the same in verbal English -- at first your child may say “ba ba” for bottle. This is developmentally correct so you would respond with something like “Good job! You are saying bottle”. When developmental skills increase they’ll make the sign just like the model long before they say a word with a model.

How to start signing with preschool children

Start with a few signs to use in your mealtime and bedtime

routines, such as EAT, MORE, PLEASE, THANK YOU, and ALL DONE.

Make signing games a part of daily life. Listen and sign to Signing Time songs in the car. Playfully quiz your child on signs they know while waiting in line at grocery stores or in restaurants.

Keep an ASL dictionary handy. Once children get excited about signing – they’ll ask you for more signs!

Ask your child to teach signs to others. Kids love to teach a parent or an older sibling (or even the family pet!) a new sign they’ve learned.

How to start signing with older children:

Introduce the manual alphabet, which can be used to support reading, writing and spelling.

Teach signs related to your child’s interests.

Read story and picture books together that use signs you are learning. Sign the words you know as you read.

Choose some favorite songs and begin signing key words. An online ASL dictionary or online videos will be a good place to get some extra support for this type of activity.





SIGNING IN YOUR HOMESCHOOL PROGRAM

Play is the work of children. ~Friedrich Wilhelm August Fröbel

Fröbel's idea that children learn through play is a guiding insight for many homeschooling programs. Parents often incorporate playing, singing, dancing, games, and gardening into their educational activities. Signing fits in naturally with this kind of learning because it is both physically engaging and fun. In this section, we'll present some guidelines for incorporating signing across subject areas and suggest themed play and learning activities that can contribute to educational and social development – and add an amazing element of fun to your homeschooling program.

Signing across subject areas

Vocabulary

Signing helps very young children build their receptive and expressive vocabulary. Signing helps older children understand word meanings too. According to Dr. Marilyn Daniels, signs provide a physical symbol that helps children learn words that can't be represented with objects or pictures, such as *the*, *that*, *and*, *fast*, etc.

Reading and Writing

Integrate signing into your book-reading time during homeschooling classes or just during casual story times. The Signing Time series teaches a lot of vocabulary easily found in classic and popular children's literature. Check out books by P.D. Eastman or Eric Carle to start and see where this adventure takes you. A trip to the library might soon be in order!

Teach your child the manual alphabet. Fingerspelling supports the development of letter recognition, phonemic aware-

ness (an understanding of how sounds work together), sight word acquisition, and emerging print knowledge. You can devise great little tricks, such as signing a “silent e” at the end of a word, and then covering it with the other hand to indicate it makes no sound.

Poetry

Teach your child key words in a poem and have them interpret what they can as they recite it. Or have them sing and sign along to family favorite music. This is a beautiful way to incorporate the language and to enhance interest in the arts.

Music

Music supports learning by adding an auditory element to signing, which is visual and kinesthetic. Sign along to the Signing Time songs and other songs your child loves. Or, create your own lyrics when learning new signing vocabulary.

Language

Signing Time introduces your child to ASL vocabulary and is a good foundation for learn-

ing ASL as a second language. However, if you choose to teach your child ASL as a language, you'll need to use resources that teach your child ASL grammar and word order because it is very different than English.

In bilingual environments, signs give children a common symbol that makes it easier for them to connect the meanings of corresponding words from each language.

Social Studies

Using ASL signs provides you with a natural opportunity to learn about Deaf culture, and the opportunity to communicate with people who are Deaf. Reach out to your local Deaf community to find an adult or a family that is willing to spend some time with you and your children, teaching you some new signs along the way. You may find someone who will love to share their language and culture, and perhaps make a new friend as well!

Math

Use sign language to support



your math curriculum. Using signs for numbers adds movement that helps support learning of foundational concepts of math such as addition and subtraction.

Themed Activities

As a homeschooling parent, you have the freedom to choose a wide variety of settings for your child's educational experiences - your home, your community center, a park, a library, a garden, a zoo, or a farm. In this section, we share some signing activities that can be used in these settings with children of different ages. We'll suggest Signing Time products that correspond to each theme so you can invite Alex, Leah, and Rachel to join in on the fun!

Experience animals: Prepare for your trip to a zoo, petting zoo, or farm with these DVDs: *Leah's Farm* and *Zoo Train*. Watch Rachel, Leah, and Alex teach ASL signs for the animals you'll see while on these trips. Play games with these words. Listen to the songs in the car on your way home.

Play at the park: Playing at the park offers a wide range of opportunities for children to explore, interact, and develop fine and gross motor skills. Games that ask questions, like *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, *how* naturally emerge in these settings. Learn these signs on this DVD: *Who Has the Frog*.

Explore a garden: Home and community gardens provide children with opportunities to learn about fruits, vegetables, and healthy eating. The following Signing Time DVDs teach children vocabulary for these activities in a fun and engaging way: *My Favorite Things*, *The Great Outdoors*, and *My Favorite Season*.

Celebrate: Throw a themed birthday party or create a special Signing Time event to give your child an opportunity to use and practice the signs on these DVDs: *Happy Birthday*, *Nice To Meet You*, and *Time To Eat*. Visit our discussion forum for families and you'll see plenty of great ideas for things to do at your themed event.

www.signingtime.com/forums





Move and groove: With rising rates of childhood obesity, it's becoming more increasingly important to teach children the value of daily exercise. With the *Move and Groove* DVD, you will learn signs for action words that you can use to talk about exercise. While you're watching and learning signs together, get up and dance, move and groove with Alex, Leah, and Rachel!

Help at home: Children can learn the value of helping others when they participate in daily chores around the house. Add an element of fun to household work by learning signs you can use together each day with the DVD, *Helping Out Around the House*.

Learn together: Many home-schoolers meet in co-op settings hosted by families; many also attend classes in the community that incorporate math, reading, and storytelling. If it's your turn to host, consider using these Signing Time videos to enrich your lessons and activities:

Once Upon a Time
Box of Crayons
Welcome to School
Days of the Week
ABC Signs
Practice Time ABCs
Practice Time 123s



PARENT RESOURCES

Curriculum

The Signing Time Classroom Edition is an excellent resource for teaching ASL signs to children ages 3-9. It includes a two-inch binder filled with 365 pages of themed lesson plans, fun songs, games, and activities. A set of 8 DVDs, 2 music CDs and 16 units of lesson plans is also included. Many home-schooling cooperatives pool their money and purchase a Classroom Edition to share.

Crafts and Activities

Download free signing-related crafts and activities at www.signingtime.com/resources/activities

References

Kellis, Maureen. "How to Choose a Homeschool Curriculum." What to Consider When Choosing a Homeschool Curriculum. Web. 10 Feb. 2011. http://www.squidoo.com/homeschool_curriculum
The important elements of a homeschool plan that are listed in the beginning of this guide are taken from this useful article.

Marilyn Daniels, Ph.D., *Dancing with Words: Signing for Hearing Children's Literacy* (Bergin & Garvey, 2000).
While many people may have heard about the value of sign-



ing with infants and toddlers, they are often surprised to hear that signing offers many educational and social benefits well into the elementary years. Daniels' book will fill you in with what research tells us about signing with hearing children.

Edmunds, Marilyn and Debra Krupinski. "Using Sign Language and Fingerspelling to Facilitate Early Literacy." Web. 10 Feb. 2011. <http://www.pbs.org/teachers/earlychildhood/articles/signlanguage.html>

Online ASL Dictionaries:

<http://www.signingsavvy.com>
<http://commtechlab.msu.edu/sites/as/web/browser.htm>

Local Classes

Signing Time Academy Instructors offer fun classes for parents and children of all ages. Find your local Instructor at www.signingtimeacademy.com.

Online Community

Interact with other signing families and homeschool families on the Signing Time Online Forum (www.signingtime.com/forums)

and the Signing Time Facebook Page (www.facebook.com/signingtime).

Deaf Organizations

Contact the National Association of the Deaf (www.nad.org) for local Deaf events where you can interact with other signing individuals.

OVERVIEW OF THE SIGNING TIME CLASSROOM EDITION

For teachers and parents who want a complete set of Signing Time resources to fully integrate signing into their curriculum, we've created the Signing Time Classroom Edition, which includes:

16 themed learning units full of fun and easy-to-do activities: At School, In My Classroom, Colors, Feelings, The Alphabet, Numbers, Getting Along, Family, Outside, Seasons, Eat and Drink, Fruits and Vegetables, Days of the Week, Pets, Farm Animals, and Zoo Animals.

DVD segments edited to correspond to the themes of each unit.

Music CD with songs from the DVD segments that relate to the unit themes. (Includes the sing-along versions for performance or practice.)

Ready-to-copy handouts, flashcards, lyric sheets, and more

Background information on Deaf culture, signing with children with special needs, classroom management and tips for effective teaching.

If you are new to signing, don't worry. The Classroom Edition is written in a clear and concise way and is full of illustrations and multi-media resources to help you get started. All you need is a desire to learn and a few minutes a day to bring the powerful benefits of signing to your students.



GUIDED TOUR OF THE CLASSROOM EDITION

Section 1: Lesson Overview

Designed for making lesson planning a snap, this page includes a list of signs, a list of the audiovisual materials you will need, and a summary of the lesson contents.

Section 2: Teacher Tips

Get useful tips about classroom management, assessing comprehension and quieting down students, signing with music, fingerspelling, and more.

Section 3: Sign Reference Guide

This is a signing “cheat” sheet for teachers to support you in learning new signs. Includes clear photographs of each sign along with concise descriptions of how each sign is made.

Section 4: Introducing Signs

This section includes several activities for you to choose from that will capture students’ attention, introduce the topic, and teach the signs in the lesson.

Section 5: Games & Activities

Includes games and learning activities for different ages and grade levels that help students practice the new signs they learned.

Section 6: Poems and Songs

Adding music and poems to the educational life of any student brightens their mood and helps them remember new

signs. Using these songs, you can create an assembly/stage program for your class to sing and sign with the entire school and their families.

Section 7: CD and DVD Lyrics

This section includes lyric sheets to keep handy during your lessons and copy and share with your students or their families. Lyric sheets can also be printed in large format to create lyric posters for your classroom.

Section 8: Book List

We’ve included a list of books that you can find at your local library or bookstore that support the lesson topic so you can easily plan for extension activities involving independent or group reading.

Section 9: Flash cards

These ready-to-copy cards show the sign on one side and the printed word with an illustration on the reverse side. These cards can be used in the classroom setting for review, flashcard games, and independent study. For example: In the Pets, Farm Animals, and Zoo Animals units, have students cut out pictures from magazines of animals that match the animals they are learning on their flash cards. This activity is especially useful before going on a field trip to the zoo or farm.

Section 10: Certificate

What a great way to reward learning! These printable certificates can be color-coded to allow students to keep track of their progress throughout the school year.



Classroom Edition

SigningTime.com/classroom-edition



WHAT IS SIGNING TIME?

Signing Time is a family of products (DVDs, Music CDs, books, and flashcards) that teach American Sign Language (ASL) vocabulary. Signing Time products are created for children from infancy through age 8, but appeal to all ages and abilities. Signing Time DVDs feature children and adults who model each sign, original music, real-life scenes, and animated segments. The combination of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic teaching results in an effective, multi-sensory approach to learning. Each DVD in Series 1 teaches approximately 25-30 signs.

At the time of this publication, there are 34 DVDs available for purchase. The co-creator and host of Signing Time is Rachel Coleman, who is a mother to two girls: Leah, who is deaf, and Lucy, who has cerebral palsy and spina bifida. Rachel and her husband, Aaron, began signing with Leah when she was diagnosed as profoundly deaf at 14 months old.

Prior to learning that Leah was deaf, Rachel was a singer and songwriter. She has personally written all the songs in the Signing Time series and her fascinating life story has been featured in numerous national publications and media programs, including NBC's TODAY show.

Signing Time appeared on public television stations from 2006-2009, for which Rachel received an Emmy® nomination for the category entitled "Outstanding Performer in a Children's Series." Coleman co-created the series with her sister, Emilie Brown, who is the mother of two boys, Alex, and Zachary. (Cousins Alex and Leah are both featured in Signing Time along with Rachel.)

As the host of Signing Time, Rachel teaches each sign and then uses the signs in an original song, featuring video clips of infants, toddlers, young children, and parents who sign the targeted words in a real-life context. The added visual component of the printed vocabulary word, along with an illustration, increases retention and comprehension of the new word and its sign. Verbal vocabulary often increases as ASL vocabulary increases.



The key mission of Signing Time is to make basic sign language simple and engaging, not only for the child, but for everyone in that child's life.



SUCCESS STORIES

We love Signing Time and have used it with both of our girls. Our oldest is almost 3 1/2 and we started watching Signing Time with her when she was 1. By the time she was 2 1/2, she was asking me to teach her to read, and now she is reading at 3rd grade level! I definitely credit Signing Time for promoting early verbal and reading skills!!! Now our youngest, who is 11 months, has been watching since about 8 months and she already has 20 signs she can use to communicate! Signing Time is such a blessing!!! We plan to continue homeschooling and using Signing Time as part of our curriculum. I think it would be awesome if we could all eventually become fluent in ASL! We absolutely love signing... what a gift it has been to our family!!!

Alexia A., San Antonio, TX

Signing Time is awesome for homeschooling! My girls are 5 & 8, K/2nd grade. I use Signing Time to supplement the things they are learning and it works out perfectly!

I will give you two examples: My 8 year old is struggling with math. One time she was doing her school work, and she was being timed for a test. 10+6 and so forth came along, and at first she was stumped. Then I said, "Remember your signs. If you

sign 10 and 6 together what sign do you have?" She remembered instantly, "16!" And so on, she flew through the lesson. What was the difference? She was able to 'feel' the numbers, and remember.

My kindergartener could not remember the days of the week. Although we had gone to online sources, like Starfall.com, we sang songs, etc., she still couldn't remember. When

"We absolutely love signing... what a gift it has been to our family!!!"

Alexia A., San Antonio, TX

I added Signing Time, 'Days of the Week' into the curriculum, not only did she learn the signs for each day, she can tell you them in order at any given minute! What was the difference? She had something to 'feel.' Making the signs helped to back up the songs, and reinforce the words that she heard.

I continue to use Signing Time in our curriculum as an added go-to for reinforcement. Now I have completed three classes for homeschoolers teaching them how to sign with their children, because I can say from experience, it really works!

Leslie L., Springfield, MA

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Colleen Brunetti holds an undergraduate degree in Special Education and a Masters Degree in Reading. She is currently an instructor for the Community College of Vermont where she teaches education courses. Her past experience with children includes those with Down syndrome, autism spectrum, and learning disabilities. She has also worked as a mentor to teachers on designing and implementing literacy curriculum. Colleen is an Advanced Signing Time Instructor with the Signing Time Academy and can be reached through www.LittleHandsBigIdeas.com

Liz Guerrini is a homeschooling mom who holds her Masters degree in Latin American Studies from UCLA where she learned about Brazilian educator Paulo Freire and his education philosophy; her undergraduate degree is from the College of Santa Fe in Education with an emphasis in language, literacy, culture. She has taught in private, public K-12, and college settings. Her experience also includes working with children living with Down syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, apraxia, dysarthria, autism spectrum, hearing loss, and speech delays. Liz is a Master Signing Time Instructor with the Signing Time Academy and can be reached at lizguerrini@gmail.com.