

Harnessing the Power of Language Techniques

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ASL at Home

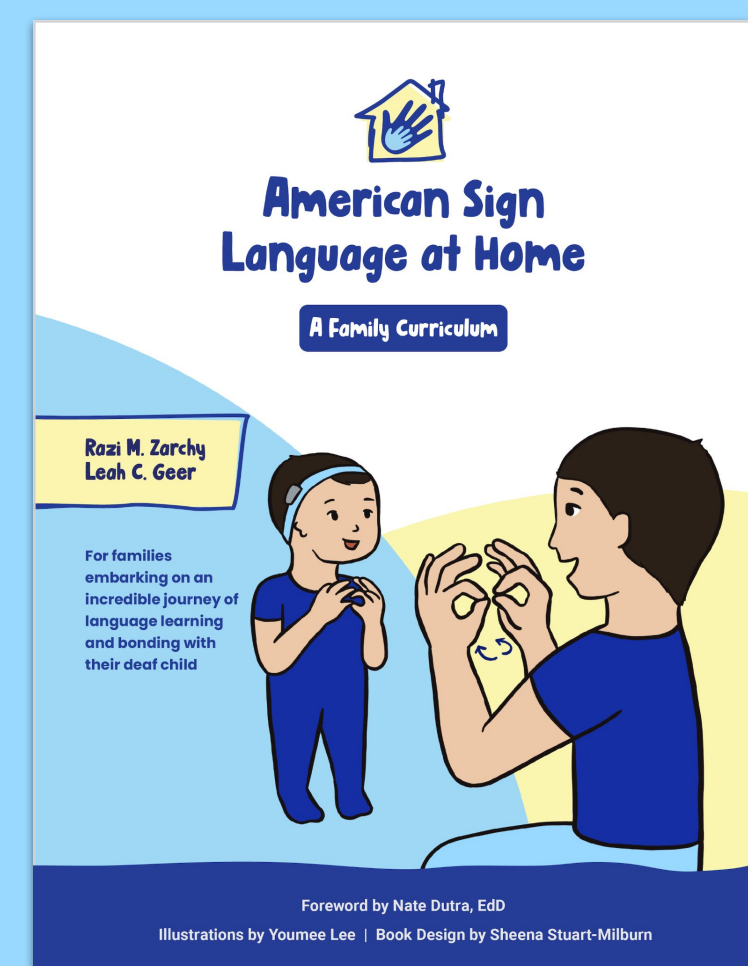
Background

What is ASL at Home?

- An innovative, family-centered curriculum designed for families with young deaf children and the professionals who support them.
- Language techniques presented here are embedded in each chapter of the curriculum.

What are the components of ASL at Home?

- Beginner-level ASL instruction with videos of deaf language models:
- Language enrichment techniques
- Deaf community cultural wealth (DCCW) lessons and discussion prompts

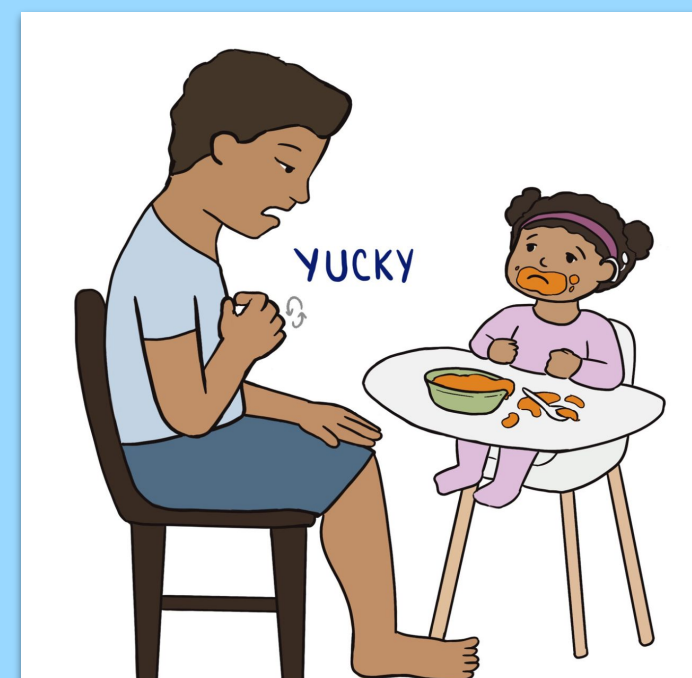


Purpose

To provide an overview of 12 easy-to-implement language techniques from this curriculum to prepare providers to teach families ways to enrich accessible language exposure at home.

What are language techniques?

- Type 1: Lessons from deaf parents
 - Visual and tactile strategies for establishing joint attention, based on research on how deaf parents engage with young children
 - Joint attention = those magical moments when adult and child are paying attention to the same thing. That's where communication happens!
- Type 2: Lessons from speech-language pathologists (SLPs)
 - Evidence-based strategies for growing language skills
 - Examples: getting language started, expanding vocabulary, teaching more complex grammar, applying social language skills, and more!
- Why use language techniques?
 - When adults use them, children's language grows faster
 - All children deserve an accessible, language-rich home!



Handout



References



Curriculum book download (free for families)



ASL at Home.org

Techniques 1 - 6

1. "Say what they're thinking!" (Parallel talk)

What: Let them see what they might say if they could.
Not just one word - what's a **full sentence** you could show them?

Why: This sets the foundation to understand what language is, and what people say in different situations.

2. "Do what they do!" (Imitation)

What: Imitate what your child does. If they are playing with a toy, get a similar toy for yourself and imitate their actions.

Why: When **you** imitate **your child**, you teach them to imitate **you**.
Avoid asking too many questions. Life is not a test!

3. "Say it over and over again!" (Repetition)

What: Whatever you say, say it a lot!

Why: Children's young brains seek patterns.
Repetition connects words with the actions and objects they represent.

4. "Watch and respond!" (Serve and return)

What: Notice every little thing your child expresses and **respond in some way**. Your child "serves" by communicating in some way, then you keep the interaction going by "returning the ball."

Why: This teaches your child that it is worth the effort of communicating with you, so they should do it more.

1. "Get close and get their attention!"

What: 2 strategies:

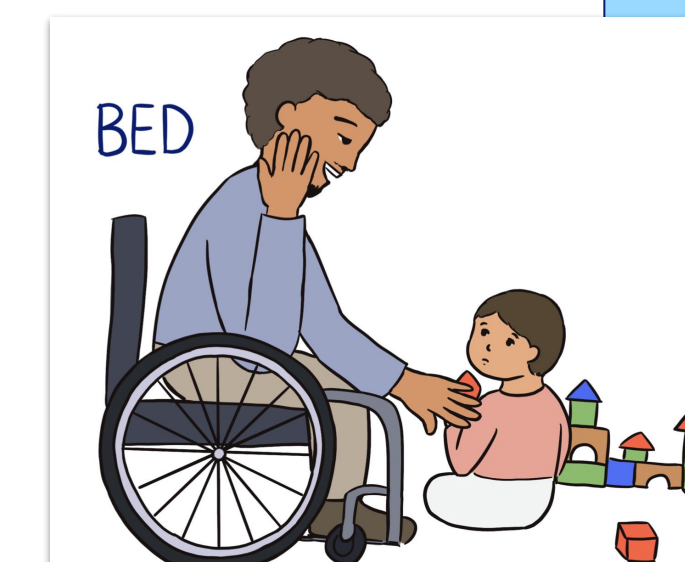
- Get face-to-face
 - Let them know it's time to look
- Make sure they can see your signs!

Why: Deaf children need to be able to **see** the person who is signing. The more you teach them where to look, the more their language will grow.

2. "Move your face!"

What: Use big facial expressions!

Why: Instead of using an exaggerated tone of voice to engage young children and highlight parts of language to help them learn, signed languages use exaggerated facial expressions.



Techniques 7 - 12

7. "Sign in their bubble!"

What: Sign where your child can see it.

2 strategies:

- Sign on the child's body
 - Sign directly on an object
- Use the child's body as your signing space.

When reading and signing the word "ball," place your hands on top of the picture of a ball.

Why: This helps them make the connection between your signs and what they could sign.

8. "Give them choices!"

What: Create opportunities for your child to make a choice.

For example, when you know that they want to play, offer two toy options.

Why: Choices give your child some control over what happens.
This added control can even improve their behavior!

9. "Do it the same!"

What: Create routines!

Pick one routine you tend to do the same each time, then pick a few fun phrases you can say every day for each of the steps through that routine.

Why: Routines help young children know what to expect during their day.
When they can anticipate what you will say, they know what they could say.

10. "Take turns!"

What: Create opportunities to take turns with your child.

Imitate them or do whatever you can to get them to repeat what they did. Then, you repeat what you did, and there you have it! You're taking turns!

Why: Turn-taking is at the heart of human interaction.

By taking turns with your child, you teach them that you will respond to their attempts to engage with you, and that they can respond to you, too.

11. "Change it up, then wait!"

What: Start with a familiar turn-taking game, **then change one thing!**

The goal: do/say something unexpected or especially silly to catch their attention.

Then, **wait** to see how they respond. Do this several more times; keep it silly!

Why: Your child will pay extra attention to you during this unexpected moment. This is a way to introduce new language in a way they will notice and remember.

12. "Stretch it out!"

What: Whatever your child says, take it up a notch.

Child points → you respond with a word or short phrase.

Child says a single word → short phrase or sentence.

Child says a short phrase → full sentence.

The important part: add to **their** words. This is called an **expansion**.
You can also add even more language, like a follow-up question. This is a **recast**.

Why: Children learn best when we use language that is one step above theirs. Using their own words back to them, rephrased into a more complete sentence, shows them how to fill in the pieces of grammar that they are still learning to use.

