

***For Reading to Babies as Soon as They Can Hear—
after 4 Months in the Tummy***



Our Baby's* Surprise

**By Nilah Curtis, R.N., M.S. and Veronika Otrupcek
Illustrated by Rebecca Olson**

***Using *your* baby 's name will triple the fun**

First: Please see Dear Reader on page 6

Our Baby's Surprise

Is Volume I of a Series:

Our Baby's Moment

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We suggest gluing an envelope inside the front cover
for a flat, washable object
for the baby who wants to "mouth" the book,
as any new object.

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Other Works by Nilah Curtis

The Magic of "I " Messages, (VHS) Tucson, 1982.

Series: Baby 's First Steps (VHS):

Steps to Respect

Steps to Cooperation

Steps to Communication

Steps to Development: OVI Television Productions: Tucson, 1985.

Talk Straight and Survive: Tucson, 1992.

Series: Our Baby's Moment:

Vol. I Our Baby 's Surprise [First published as Baby Bobbie's Surprise]: 2000

On Line, Sugar Cain Publishers, Coonabarabran, NSW: 2002, 2004

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Vol. II Our Baby's New Jacket: Ghost River Images, Tucson, AZ 2000

Vol. III Our Baby's New Hairdo: Ghost River Images, Tucson, AZ 2000

Vol. IV Our Baby's Buddy: Ghost River Images, Tucson, AZ 2000

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Harry Palmer is acknowledged for assisting me in coming to new perspectives about teaching children to reason.

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Profound thanks to Cheri Sohnen-Moe, whose assistance in ways too numerous to mention has made the creation and distribution of Our Baby's Surprise considerably less of a nightmare.

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Finally, Karl Cains and Jay Savera are also to be acknowledged. Without their support and encouragement, plus that of many friends and computer experts, this project would still be sleeping in a computer.

Bless you all!

Dear Reader,

How clever you are to think of reading to your baby, perhaps even before birth! And to select a storybook which introduces hand, or sign language, and a colouring book, for **after two months of age** when most babies' eyes can see **colour!**

This story is about your baby and events usually experienced about 2000 times by age two. Imagine the impact of an event repeated 2000 times!

If research* is correct, your baby will have formed patterns for learning [reading] and relating to the world (including the people who read to him) by the age of eighteen months. This is how being read to *now* can support later success in school and life.

For these reasons, being positive is important. If your child gets fidgety as you read, **please put away the book for later**. You can say something like "Perhaps you'd like to read about Baby 's Surprise later."

As you read to Baby, you're modeling one of the most important skills this Baby will ever learn. She does not know what "reading" is or how *you* know what words to say.

She only knows what interests her, created mainly through the **enthusiasm in your voice**. See the Forward about this, page 8.

Early in Baby's development, the delights of reading are: **sitting close** to you, feeling the warmth and scent of your body, your heartbeat, vocal vibrations in your chest and hearing your magical words.

From 7 months *in utero*, listening to language in order to learn how to form words is very important in Baby 's development, so your **gift of words** is a key activity.

Pronouncing words naturally but slowly, clearly, with excitement and eye contact, using his/her name as you read will boost Baby's speech development hugely...not to mention your relationship with this baby.

Baby may want to "**chew " the book**, as she would any new object. You can help to keep the reading experience positive by providing a page-like object to "mouth," reducing both her frustration and yours. Avoiding "No!" will prevent her being confused about "Are books a good thing or a not good thing?"

In time, she'll learn "the proper way" to handle books, from watching you. Turning pages is part of reading. You can teach this skill by saying "Let 's turn the page" when you do so. You'll know when Baby is ready to begin learning to turn pages if you **ask if he wants to help you turn the page** now and again. Even a child of four months will begin to associate between this question and the act of turning the page.

This association is one of the first stages in the development of getting ready to read.

What other skills can you think of which Baby must learn before learning to read?

If you are reading to a baby in the tummy, it is especially important to read slowly, giving special emphasis to words with resonant "n" and "m" sounds, and vowels "i, e, o, and u."

This will enable your baby to enjoy these sounds more fully as they resonate in the fluid surrounding him.

*See **Broussard and Corne**, page 26.

From one to three months of age, singing the words to a familiar tune will heighten Baby 's enjoyment of being read to.

The explanations (in the bottom bars) are for your information only, so you may want to read them when you are **not** reading to Baby. Still, Baby in your tummy may enjoy hearing you read even the explanations in your familiar voice!

Whether you ever read the bottom bars matters little, if you read about Our Baby often.

If you **use** the **bottom bar information during** Baby' s necessary **care**, you will probably find your baby much more cooperative, and both of you having more fun as you do bath, dressing, meals, nappy-changing and, yes, story time together.

There are many good ways to teach children respect, cooperation, communication, and a love of reading. Here are only a few, gathered from many teachers. For centuries, parents have wished they had known with their first child what they've learned by their last. Yet they were (and always will be) doing the best they can as their children's first educators and deserve only acknowledgement. It is their good parenting that has brought the world from barbarism.

Variations on Reading the Story:

We believe, if you use your child's name when you read, that your child will want you to read the story again and again... and again. **James Treelease** (see p. 26) can help with this, and in the meantime, here are some suggestions to hold **your** interest through many readings:

- 1) Invite Baby to select a picture for you to tell a story from (Your stories are best).
- 2) Looking at a picture, ask what each object is/does.
- 3) [Children five years and over]: Start from the back and read to the front. Ask, "What do you think happened before this?" Since this is not a memory test, all answers are O.K.
- 4) Invite Baby to "read" the story (or one he invents) to you, to a friend, to Grandma by telephone, to a doll, stuffed toy, or pet, etc. All versions are O.K.
- 5) Parents know their child best. Telling your own story from these pictures will be the best story.

Finally, have fun with the **Signing Glossary** (See Appendices).

We've cried inside seeing "could-be" third year readers struggle while their classmates soar. Those children have inspired us to attempt to provide some clues about the wonder, joy, and power of the first year of life as a springboard to reading easily and joyfully.

Please return the registration card to let us know if our efforts are useful to you, and share any suggestions.

*Happy Reading! Nilah Curtis
Veronika Otrupcek*

*P.S. For more reading tips see **Treelease** on page 26.*

Forward

Since time began, the parent-child relationship has been a “dance” for control...sometimes called a “control drama.” You may see this drama as you read these pages: at times the parent gives the child control, and at other times, must take control away.

To survive on his own eventually, the child must learn to control his actions, starting as early as six months old. As he is given choices (such as whether he'd like to be read to) and learns the results of his decisions, he makes better and better choices. He thereby earns parents' trust, so they feel comfortable giving him more and more control over himself.

Reading to a baby is a perfect opportunity for this give and take of control. If reading together is a positive activity, it can be a gateway to magical possibilities.

By starting very early to see the child's intelligence in this way, parents' tasks of daily care become easier. As the child is invited to participate in his care, *given time to react*, and taught how to help, his brain integrates what he sees parents/carers do with what he can do.

One day, he does it without coaching. Therein lie delightful surprises.

When Mother Teresa received her Nobel Prize, she was asked, “What can we do to promote world peace?”

She replied, “Go home and love your family.”

Reading to your baby is a way of loving from the heart...

***Our Baby's Surprise**

*** Please use *your* baby's name,
e.g. "Ian's Surprise"**



Dedication

Our Baby's Moment is dedicated
to babies everywhere,
and to parents and carers everywhere
who do the most challenging
and important job there is.

Our Baby
awakens and
opens her eyes.

**What
does she do then?**

She looks
and sees
the sunlight
beaming in.

**THEN what
does she do?**

She listens.

**What
does she hear?**

She hears
birds singing.

What else does she see?



*Our baby opens her eyes,
looks... and listens...*

“The child is always busy.”

Magda Gerber

She sees Annie,
smiling at her.

She reaches out...
(Ooooh! So good to
stretch!)... and touches
Annie's eyes.

[Whispering]

**Who's watching her
from the doorway?**

It's our baby's daddy.
He wants to change her
nappy,* but she is busy.

So, Daddy tiptoes away.
He'll come back later.

**Then what happens?
(when she wants to tell me
about the birds,
and the sun, and Annie)...**



Our baby touches the doll's eyes.

*nappy = *diaper*, in American English

"Annie" in her cot does not make Baby at risk for cot death, or SIDS, since our Baby has already reached twelve months of age.

Dolls encourage Baby to express feelings, especially since she cannot yet talk. She may see the doll as a friend. Even boys need dolls!

People of all ages need some alone time every day. Daddy allows alone time... time to finish the doll play "set" in her brain development.

She calls me: **"Mmma!"**

I'm away, so her daddy comes to her and smiles.

His hands cross his chest and he points to our Baby to say "I love you" in sign language.

Then he says, "You'll see Mum tomorrow."

Our baby feels sad, then glad to see her daddy. She tries to do as he does, crossing her hands on her chest.

"Hey! You're saying 'I love you'," says her daddy. "I'm happy when you talk with your hands, because we can tell each other things!"

Our Baby smiles inside and out. Her daddy's smile gets bigger.



Our baby answers as best she can: "I love you."

Baby doesn't understand "tomorrow," but the mention of mum tells her she was heard.

Babies, like everyone else, need to hear "I love you" often. In sign language they can see it across the room! (See *Signing Glossary*, p. 36.)

"I love you" with eye contact is a very powerful way to build relationship. Winking is a kind of eye contact, too.

Daddy uses an "I Statement" to clearly express his feelings in words, and "why" he feels them. This shows Baby how to express feelings in words when she can.

Daddy does not criticise imperfect signs. The effort is all that counts. She cannot mimic his words now, and she already understands a great deal.

Anything she hears or sees often, she will soon copy.

Suddenly her daddy gets a funny look on his face.

Why does he get a funny look on his face?

"Oops! I forgot something, sugarplum. I'll be right back."

Out he goes.

Our baby watches
as her daddy disappears
through the doorway.

She is sad to see him go away,
AND she knows he'll be back,
because he said he would be back.



Our baby watches her daddy go away ...

Telling the truth about where you are, and where you aren't, builds trust. It also models a communication expected of older children.

Until adolescence, children worry that they will be abandoned.

And here he is!

"Peek-a-boo!" he says
from behind a nappy.

Our baby laughs.
Her daddy laughs, too.

"Now, it's time
to change that nappy,
Peaches," he says.

"Let's go
to the changing table."

His waiting hands
and wiggling fingers
ask her to reach up
to him. ...And after
5 or 10 seconds,
she does!



*Daddy reaches out and waits, and...
Our Baby reaches up to him.*

* * * * *

Daddy does not give Baby a choice now because she does not have a choice.

Although her daddy does not give her a choice about getting her nappy changed at this point, he does give her time to react to the idea. He knows she will cooperate more if she shows him she is "with him" by reaching out to him.

Reaching to be picked up means she has let go of playing with him, and of seeing her mum, whom she had originally called.

Daddy wants Baby's help so that he can teach her about relationship, language, and what she can do to help.

"Looks like you're ready!"
says her daddy.

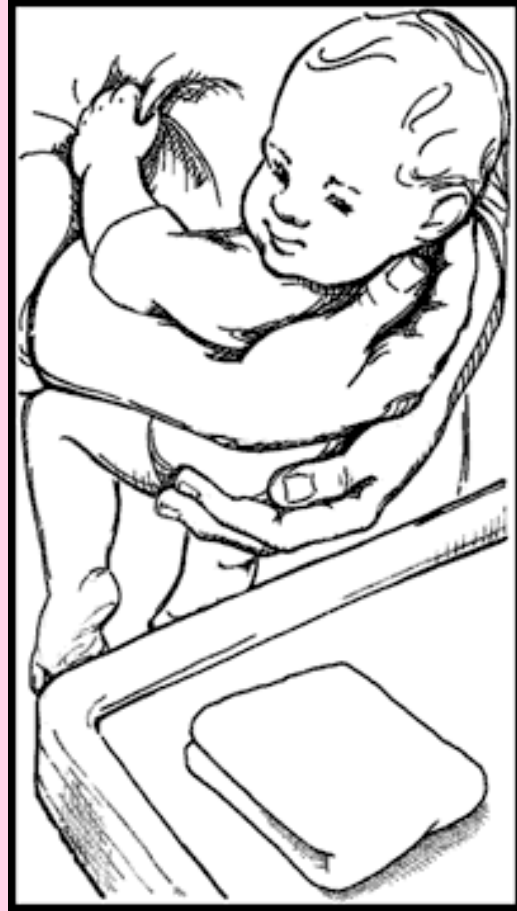
He takes our baby
into his arms, saying
"Up, up, up!"

He carries her
to the changing table,
and points to it
as he says,

"There's your changing
table, Sweetie."

Our baby looks at it.

Then her daddy slowly
lowers her to the table
as he says,
"Here we go,
down, down, down!"



*Daddy shows our baby the table...
"Here we go down, down, down!"*

* * * * *

Daddy puts our baby 's actions into words. This is called "reflective listening."

When our baby was younger, "Up, up, up!" etc helped her with the change she felt as she went from a lying-down to an upright position. Preparing Baby for the change in position will have increased her cooperation by lessening worry.

Now, the words are useful for language development, plus continuing an early pattern.

Daddy has put the cream, etc., out of her reach and sight so that instead of playing, she will listen to his information, requests, and acknowledgements. Most important, her eyes will connect with his eyes, which will deepen the relationship between them.

Then he says,
"Will you help me
change your nappy?
I'm happy when you help,
because I have more fun."

***Do you know
what's next?***

Up goes a hand.
Over goes an arm.

Up goes a knee.
Over goes a foot.

"Hey! Thank you for turning
for me!" says her daddy.

Now he can get the
wet nappy out.
He shows it to her, up close.
It smells strange.
He says, "That's your wet
nappy; it goes in the bin."
"Here's your dry nappy."



*"There's your wet nappy...
it goes in the bin."*

Daddy expresses his need in a Preventative "I Statement," which tells her how he feels when she helps. His goal is to gain her cooperation by letting her know that her help is important.

Becoming aware of the scent of her physical function is a step in self-toileting.

Expressing appreciation for her help models expressing appreciation.

**What
does our baby
do then?
You're right!**

Our baby rolls
to the other side!

Her daddy closes the
nappy as he says,

"Wow!
That was a surprise!

I didn't know that
you know how to
turn for nappy changes!"



*Our baby begins to turn just a bit
for the new nappy.*

Talking her through the process has taught Baby what to expect.

If she knows, she can help. If she helps, she is happy.

Daddy shows enthusiastic reinforcement of Baby 's accomplishment to share her pride in herself.

"We'll have to tell Mum how you helped me change your nappy," says her daddy.

Our baby is happy, thinking about telling me how she helped her daddy and hearing the pride in his voice.

Just then, they hear a new bird call:
"Ook ook ook aak ah!"

"It's a kookaburra, Honey Bun," whispers her daddy. "Do you think he's laughing?"



"That was a surprise!"

What do *you* think?

Changing the nappy by turning allows Baby to participate more easily than lifting the legs. It does require care that she doesn't roll too far or too soon!

Daddy acknowledges her contribution, showing her how to acknowledge.

When Daddy tells Mum what Baby has done, he will be celebrating her *and* Mum's accomplishment, as well as modeling the importance of celebrating.

Here, he starts her anticipation of the celebration.

Again, her daddy's hands invite our baby up.

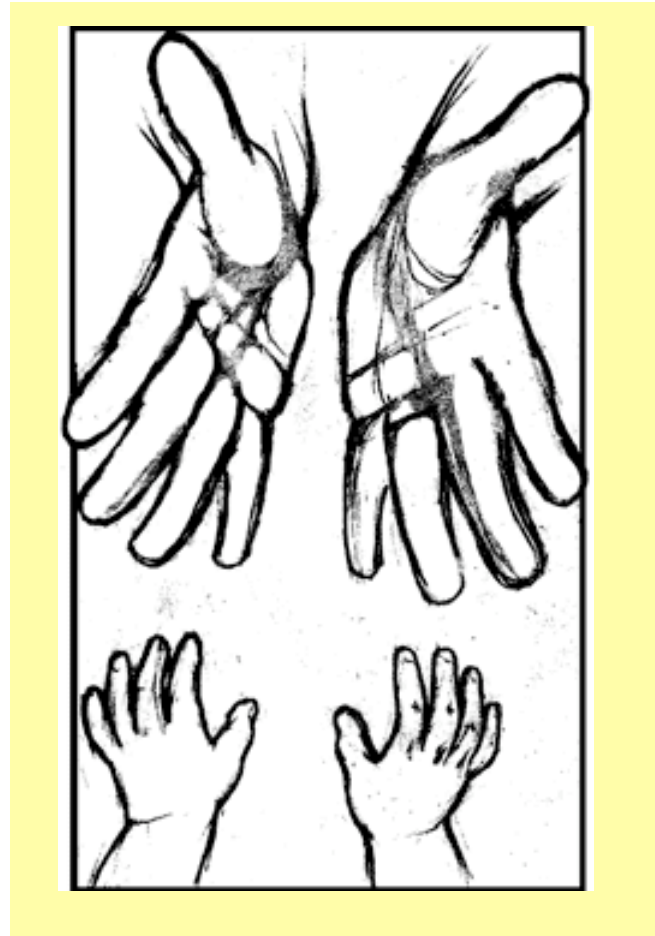
"Are you ready to come up?" he asks.

Our baby thinks, and decides she is *very* ready to come up!

She wants to give her daddy a BIG hug!

Happily, she reaches for her daddy's hands and *up she goes!*

"Up, Up, Up!" She thinks, because her daddy always says that.



"Are you ready to come up?"

And, sure enough, he says it again: "Up, Up, Up!"

Dad shows respect for Baby, modeling respect through his nonverbal and verbal message "I want you to know what's about to happen" before touching her.

Waiting for her response also allows her to **anticipate and think about what's about to happen** (this "little wait" is also called "tarry time").

Once more, she must decide that she is **ready to be picked up**. Her dad is **giving her time to decide** whether she wants to be picked up.

Children need individual time daily with all significant others. Because carer and child are physically close during caregiving, it is a **chance for eye contact** and **quality time, especially if interruptions can be avoided**.

Our baby snuggles into her daddy's arms.

She can tell that he is happy, so she is happy, too.

Suddenly they hear again: "Oook ook ak ah!"

Our baby and her daddy turn to look out the window.

"Ooooooh! Kookaburra!" says her daddy again, softly.

"Oooka!" mimics our baby, and they both giggle.

(Can you mimic the kookaburra?)

"Oh!" says her daddy.

"Aren't you full of surprises!"

"I do love you!"



Our baby snuggles into her daddy's arms.

The End

Hmmm... could it be that our baby has more surprises and wonderful Moments in store for us?

Find out in the next volume of Our Baby's Moment Series!

Young people can feel it when their parents (or others who are important to them) are proud of them. This pride strengthens their bond and gives them the message: "We're glad you're in this family."

Appendices

About "I Statements"

Carers who want young people to "use their words" instead of "playing up" (acting out, in American English), will want to teach those words by using them.

"I Statements" express feelings in a non-blaming way. When a person has a problem, he "owns" it by taking responsibility for his feelings. This empowers him, because he is reminded that he feels as he does because of his own perspective.

The four main feeling groups are: **Sad, Glad, Mad (angry), and Scared**. Babies need simple language, so sentences may be divided, and must be spoken slowly, with good eye contact.

Your "I Statement" may have 1, 2, 3 or 4 parts: *feeling, situation, effect on you, and/or what you want*. These parts may be used in any order.

Examples of "I Statements"

Using 1 part: "Thank you!" expresses [the *Feeling* of] appreciation.

Using 2 parts: "I'm happy when you bring me your jacket" expresses *Feeling* and *Situation*.

Using 3 parts: "If we wait till the cereal dries in your hair, it will hurt when we wash it, and I would be sad. [*Situation, Effect on me, Feeling*]

Using 4 parts: "I don't know what you want when you cry and I'm sad, so please just show me." [*Effect on me, Situation, Feeling, What you want*].

Using " I Statements " with Your Baby

To make "I Statements " part of your teaching language for your child, copy this format and fill in with situations you have experienced OR expect to experience with your baby:

One part: "I feel _____ right now."

("Sad, Glad, Mad, Scared") teaches Baby feeling words so that he can use them instead of acting them out (i.e. for tantrums.)

Two part: "When (_____ happens), I feel _____."

("Sad, Glad, Mad, Scared")

This helps Baby associate feelings and feeling words with the situation.

The description of what happened must not be blaming.

Three Part: "I feel _____ about (situation)_____,
because I _____"

(Describe the effect on you: how the situation blocks, costs, or hurts you)
_____."

Four part: To above, Add: "... and I'd like _____
to happen." State *what I want* as you would like the child to state his or
her preferences.)

CARERS' STUDY COURSE for CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDIT

As you read about Our Baby, you are being given information about child development during the first eighteen months of life. You choose whether to receive this information. By responding to the items below, you will integrate your learning and make your work easier to enjoy.

You may receive a certificate of recognition of your self-training. To receive it, see instructions at the bottom of next page.

OBJECTIVES :

1. After reading the enclosed story about our Baby, and with the help of the text at the bottom of each page, the reader will be able to:
 - a. List at least four ways our Baby's parents model respect for her.
 - b. Give at least six examples of how Baby's dad encouraged her to cooperate during her care.
 - c. Summarise the areas of child development that are supported in the story, and how Baby's daddy supported each area.
2. After reading the story 's yellow sections, the reader will be able to:
 - a. Explain how allowing for anticipation develops Baby's thinking.
 - b. Define "I Statements " (see the Appendix); describe the four parts, and give an example.
 - c. Explain why a child's play should be interrupted only if necessary.
 - d. Answer: "Why give babies dolls?" (*Our Baby's Surprise*)
 - e. List the kinds of learning that occur during caregiving when the baby is not distracted with toys, etc.
 - f. Explain why Baby is thanked when she helps.
 - g. List three ways to make caregiving tasks count for quality time with Baby.

Type or print your answers to the lettered items above, referring to the book as needed. Use no less than one page, and no more than two.

Send this with a self-addressed, large envelope and \$25 to:

Nilah Curtis

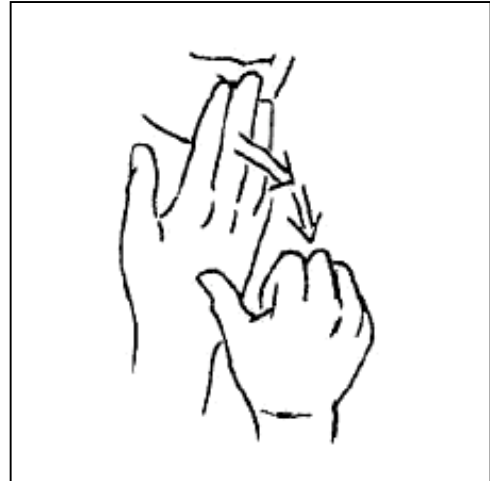
P.O. Box 218

Coonabarabran, N.S.W. 2357, Australia.

A Beginning Glossary of Our Baby's Hand Signs

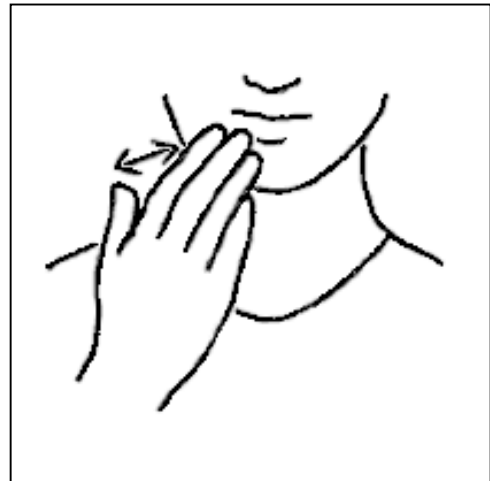
Please

Fingers touch lips, then curl to point to self.



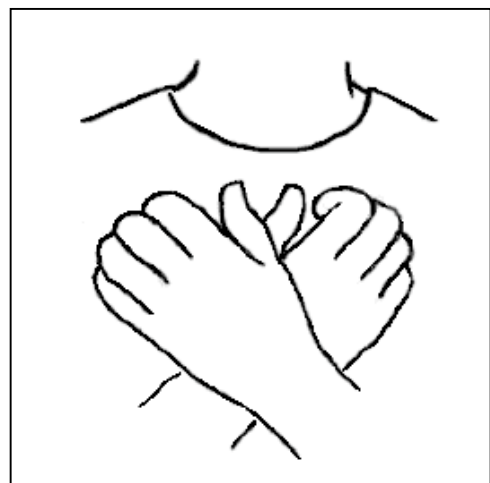
Thanks

Fingers move back and forth from lips. Two hands are often used for a more formal *Thank-you*. The same gesture means, "You're welcome."



I love you

Hands crossed over heart means "Dear." To say "I love you," point to self, cross hands over heart, then point to loved one.

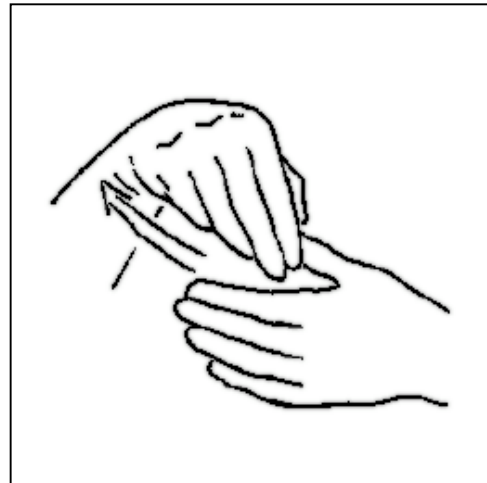


Glossary continued on next page...

Glossary of Hand Signs, cont'd

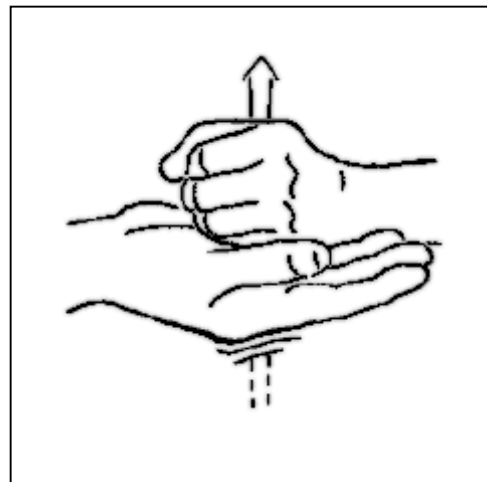
Outside

Right hand pulls out of cupped left hand, while right open fingers close together.



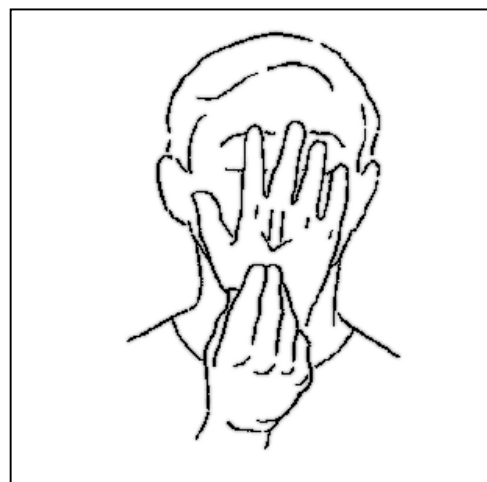
Help me

Cupped right hand supports and lifts the curled fist.



Sleep, Sleepy

Open hand brushes down over closed eyes as head dips forward for "Sleep." Do this twice for "Sleepy"



For Further Reading

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Registration and Comment Card

We want to hear from you. Please let us know if this book meets your needs, and offer any suggestions you have for improvement.

Fill out and return this card to receive free updates, current catalogues and a 25% discount of subsequent editions of the series, Our Baby's Moment, and other SugarCain publications.

Name _____ Occupation _____

Email address _____

Street address _____

City _____ State _____ Country _____

Post code _____ Date of birth of your baby _____

What is your relationship to babies you read to? _____

How did you hear about Our Baby's Surprise? _____

How did you obtain this book? _____

Comments/Suggestions _____

Return this card Today! Fold, Seal, Stamp & Mail

Nilah Curtis
P.O. Box 218
Coonabarabran, NSW 2357
Australia

Or email: happyfamily12@yahoo.com.au

Reading Australian English*

As an American*

You've seen these words:

Cot...crib

Mum...mom

Nappy...diaper

Expect more "u" appearances:

Behaviour...behavior

Favourite...favorite

Odour... odor

And fewer "zeds" (z's):

Realise... realize

Criticise ... criticize

* Our Baby's Moment represents the transition of an American to Australian culture. Here is a bit of the learning involved.

Build your child's appetite for reading,
Enhance the bond between you,
"Talk" by Signing ... **And Much More!**

"I loved this book and so did our baby! I wish I had had it the first time around!"
Mother of two

"There 's a lot of stuff here I wouldn't have known!"
A young father-to-be

"This is fabulous! I wouldn't have been afraid to have children if I had had this book!"
A would-be mum

"I've never seen anything like it!"
Retiring children's librarian

It 's a storybook!

It 's a colouring book!

It 's a communication book!

Nilah Curtis is a Master's level consultant and Workshop Leader in Early Childhood Education and Communication Skills. She is also a grandmother, artist, musician, board sailor, and world traveler. Previously based in Tucson, Arizona, she now calls home Coonabarabran, New South Wales, Australia.

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Back Cover – print on heavy paper.