

Bookstart Shine

A guide to enjoying
books and reading with
deaf children



Welcome to Bookstart Shine

This guide offers lots of ideas on how to enjoy books with your deaf child. It also suggests a range of books that you can share together. We have included tips given to us by parents and experts that you might find useful when you're sharing books with your child. Not all of the information or books will be right for every child but we hope that this is a useful starting point.

Bookstart Shine is part of our Bookstart programme which offers the gift of free books to children at key ages before they start school. Bookstart supports families to start sharing stories and books together from the earliest possible age.

Please note that for the purposes of this booklet, BookTrust is using the term 'deaf' to describe children across the whole range of deafness/hearing loss. See our website for more information. The leaflet also refers to British Sign Language (BSL). BookTrust acknowledges that some families may use another sign language such as Irish Sign Language (ISL), or a sign system such as Makaton.

Why share books with children?

- Sharing books together develops a closer bond between parent or carer and child.
- Reading with your child from an early age develops language and literacy skills.
- Books can help to develop a child's health and emotional wellbeing.
- Children become familiar with books, learning how to hold them and turn the pages.



Choosing books

Here are some ideas of the type of books you might want to consider for your child. There will also be specific book suggestions later on in this booklet.

- Very young children like books that are highly visual and colourful. Clear, uncluttered images can help children understand the story.
- ‘Touch and feel’ books are great fun and will give you plenty to talk about.
- Look for books about everyday routines and familiar environments. Or choose books that link with the seasons or special times in yours and your child’s life like birthdays, cultural events and holidays.
- Be prepared to share the same book over and over – young children love and need repetition.
- Picture dictionaries can be useful (even in different languages!) because they group together images of different items in a theme.
- When your child shows interest in specific topics, look out for books on these subjects.

- As your child grows, encourage them to play an active role in choosing books.
- Try to share a variety of books with your child – remember, your local library has many books for you to borrow.
- Try to include books that talk about feelings. Deaf children can develop empathy by thinking about how the characters in stories might be feeling.



Sharing books

Sharing books together is a fun experience for everyone in the family. Here are some suggestions for making it as easy and enjoyable as possible.

- Think about how you are sitting. Can your child clearly see your face? Sitting at the same level or angle as your child.
- You will want to try to keep your child's attention and establish good eye contact. Using a lively voice and showing enthusiasm in your face can help with this.
- Make sure there is enough light so your child can see the book and your face clearly.



- Initially, it might be helpful to focus on the pictures until your child is ready to concentrate on words as well. Enjoying the story through the pictures is just as important as understanding the words.
- If you don't use BSL, try using gestures to demonstrate the story. Try using your facial expressions to help you show characters' emotions.
- Don't rush. Be guided by your child's interest in the book – don't simply focus on telling the story as it is written.
- Talk about the meanings behind the words.
- It may help if you prop the book up in front of your child and try looking over the top of it (you will probably become an expert at reading upside down!) You can use a book stand, sometimes sold as a recipe book stand, to keep your hands free while reading.
- Give your child time to look between the pictures and your face as you're reading. This helps them to make links/connections between what you're saying and the illustrations as you're going along.

Moving along

With time, your child's confidence with books will grow, and they will become more and more involved.

- Encourage your child to play more of a role in telling the story. You could try getting them to join in with actions or words that are repeated in the story.
- Encourage your child to read the characters' emotions by looking at their expressions.
- Find new words (or signs if you are using BSL) and use books to develop your child's language. Exaggerate your own facial expressions to reflect the characters.
- If you use BSL, you might want to emphasise signs by making yourself very small when signing 'mouse', or by making big movements when signing 'elephant' for example.
- Older children often like books being repeated – this builds their confidence and is a natural part of language development.

Keeping it fun

You know best what your child enjoys but here are a few ideas about how to make sharing books as fun as possible.

- Use real-life objects or make props to help tell the story.
- Play at dressing up as characters and act out simple scenes from the story.
- Using funny facial expressions can help to keep children entertained.
- Try using different voices for the characters in your story. Changing your voice so it has ups and downs can help your child tune into what you're saying.
- Puppets by Post (details at the end of this booklet) produces many amazing puppets, including some with fingers so you can make them perform basic signs.



- Let children tell you the story themselves, using their own toys and props.
- Make a story sack! A great way of bringing stories to life, a story sack is a large cloth bag containing a children's book with interactive materials to make reading even more fun.
- Be aware that there will be times when your child will be more or less engaged depending on their mood.
- Look out for BookTrust Storytime events in your local library.
- Everyone likes to find themselves in books. Don't forget to look out for books with positive images – BookTrust's guide to accessible books and our website has some suggestions.



Books to enjoy

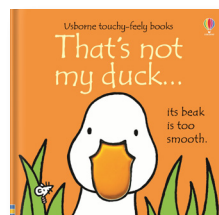
There are many, many wonderful books out there to explore with your child. Here are just a few you may want to consider.

'Touch and feel' books are great for sharing with all children. They are ideal for stimulating the senses and for discussing words like 'smooth', 'soft', 'bumpy' and 'sticky'. Look out for 'touch and feel' books which have plenty of variety, flaps and recognisable shapes and textures.

That's Not My Duck

by Fiona Watt, illustrated by Rachel Wells
Usborne Publishing Ltd
ISBN: 9781409565161

One of a growing series of 'touch and feel' board books with interesting textures and shapes for inquisitive fingers to explore. Series also includes *That's Not My Teddy* and *That's Not My Train*.



Can You Tickle a Tiger?

by Bobbie Brooks, illustrated by Carrie Hennon
Imagine That Publishing Ltd
ISBN 9781789589535

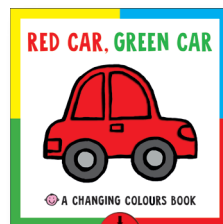
A playful and brightly coloured book that encourages interactive play. Alongside the fun, rhyming text there's a felt finger-trail on every page for young fingers to follow, plus a selection of other shapes to touch and explore.



Red Car, Green Car

by Roger Priddy
Priddy Books
ISBN: 9781783413744

A fun and imaginative book that will help your child start learning different colours. Children will love pulling the tabs on each page to change the colours and reveal a new animal surprise each time!



See, Touch, Feel

by Roger Priddy
Priddy Books
ISBN: 9781783417452

A sturdy board book with lots of bright photos of happy babies and lots of raised textures for them to explore.



We have more information and story ideas on our website:
booktrust.org.uk

Baby signing is becoming more and more popular. It can be a great way of learning to communicate long before children learn to speak their first words. You can start introducing your baby to simple signs from just a few months old. Signing and clearly saying the words at the same time (so your baby can see your lips) has been proven to help children's understanding of language and their attempts to communicate themselves.

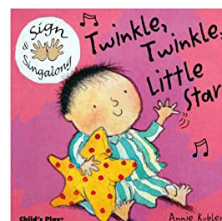
Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star **Sign and Singalong series**

by Annie Kubler

Child's Play

ISBN: 9781904550020

A series of bright, colourful books featuring children showing signs and actions to accompany simple rhymes like *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* and *Baa, Baa, Black Sheep*



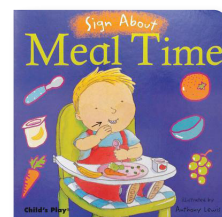
Sign About – Meal Time

by Anthony Lewis

Child's Play

ISBN: 9781904550785

A great introduction to simple signs which can be used with children from a very early age. One of a series which also includes *Play Time*, *Getting Ready* and *Going Out*.



Look for ways to make book sharing as interactive as possible. This can be done using DVDs, puppets, props – or any great book and a bit of imagination!

All children like to see themselves in books. Whilst there are not many early years books showing children signing and/or using hearing aids, there are a few, so they are worth looking out for.

Happy to Be Me

by Emma Dodd
Orchard Books
ISBN: 9781408355701

A simple rhyming book with bright and colourful pictures that celebrates every bit of the human body. It also reminds us that each and every body is different. One of the characters is a child with a hearing aid.



Elephant and the Lost Blanket

by Alex Naidoo
National Deaf Children's Society
ISBN: 9781909706156

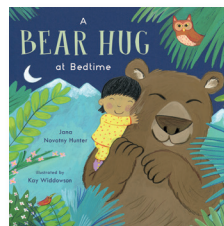
Elephant and her friends are enjoying a day in the park when her special blue blanket goes missing. Created with deaf children in mind, it presents deaf characters in a relatable story. Available direct from the National Deaf Children's Society.



All the books in this guide that feature signs use BSL, but not all books do – so check before you buy!

A Bear Hug at Bedtime

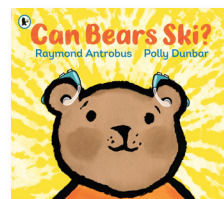
by Jana Novotny Hunter and
Kay Widdowson
Child's Play
ISBN: 9781846439889



A delightful picture book with a gentle story about the power of the imagination and the fun of play. It includes an extended, mixed-race family and the main character uses a hearing aid.

Can Bears Ski?

by Raymond Antrobus, illustrated by
Nick Polly Dunbar
Walker Books
ISBN 9781406394627



The story of a day in the life of Little Bear, this engaging picture book depicts the experience of being deaf or hard of hearing in childhood. Told in a relatable child voice, it includes a visit to the audiologist and details such as feeling the vibrations of Dad's feet on the floor.

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The National Deaf Children's Society

The National Deaf Children's Society is the leading charity for deaf children.

They are there for every deaf child who needs them – no matter what their level or type of deafness or how they communicate.

They support deaf children and their families, and work with decision-makers and professionals to overcome the barriers that hold deaf children back through their membership scheme. Registration is simple, fast and free to parents and carers of deaf children and the professionals who work with them. Contact the Freephone Helpline or register through **[ndcs.org.uk](https://www.ndcs.org.uk)**.

- **Freephone Helpline 0800 800 8880** (voice and text) offering clear, balanced information on many issues relating to childhood deafness, including schooling and communication options.
- A range of publications for parents and professionals on areas such as audiology, parenting and financial support.
- A regularly updated website with information on deafness and National Deaf Children's Society publications.
- A team of advice and guidance officers who provide information and local support across the UK.

- Specialist information, advice and support from their education appeals advisers.
- An audiologist and technology team to provide information about deafness and equipment that may help deaf children.
- Events for deaf children and their families
- MyNDCS app for parents and carers, with information and stories tailored to your child's age and stage.
- Online training for professionals working with deaf children and young people.
- A network of local deaf children's societies offering support in your area.



Resources for parents and professionals

Let's Sign Early Years, BSL Building Blocks Child and Carer Guide

by Cath Smith and Sandra Teasdale

Co-Sign Communications

ISBN: 9781905913220

An easy-to-use collection of everyday BSL signs. The signs are well chosen and illustrated with babies and very young children in mind.

TinyTalk Let's Sign: baby signing DVD

A DVD introducing 150 baby signs, clearly demonstrated and brought to life with imagery and music. One of many resources from TinyTalk.

tinytalk.co.uk/shop

Signed Stories

Signed Stories is an interactive website featuring some of the UK's best children's stories with wonderful animation, fun illustrations, and engaging British Sign Language translation, text and sound.

signedstories.com

I CAN

I CAN is a charity working for children with speech and language difficulties. It runs an Early Years programme called *Early Talk* to support the communication needs of children aged 0–5.

icancharity.org.uk

British Deaf Association

The BDA's website offers information, resources and advice about BSL.

bda.org.uk

Puppets by Post

Puppets from around the world, many of which are ideal for deaf children, can be ordered by both individuals and organisations. Look out for their series of 'mitts' which can bring songs and stories to life.

puppetsbypost.com

Afasic

A UK charity helping children and young people affected by speech, language and communication difficulties, their families and the professionals working with them.

afasic.org.uk

Let's Sign

Let's Sign provide a range of BSL materials, including some free downloadable resources.

letssign.co.uk

More useful websites:

avuk.org

talkfirst.net

Bookstart Shine is run by BookTrust, the UK's largest children's reading charity. We get millions of children reading. Children who read regularly are happier and healthier. This is why we work with families, supporting them to start sharing stories and books together from the earliest possible age.

Visit our website to discover more about the magic of sharing stories, books and rhymes at **booktrust.org.uk**



Special thanks to the National Deaf Children's Society for their help in developing the Bookstart Shine project and ongoing partnership.

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