KEY WORD SIGNS FOR PARENTS



Down Syndrome Queensland

Effective communication is essential for children's development. When children can communicate effectively, they can express their needs, thrive socially, build strong relationships, and improve their verbal communication skills. For children with an intellectual disability, speech development may require additional time and support.

Key word sign, as defined by Key Word Sign Australia, is a valuable tool for individuals—both children and adults—who need communication support. It involves using signs alongside spoken language to highlight and clarify key messages within a sentence. Key word sign significantly enhances understanding and facilitates communication for individuals struggling with verbal expression.

Using key word sign is an excellent way to promote communication and inclusion by equipping your child with the skills they need to communicate earlier than their verbal abilities might otherwise allow. This can reduce frustration-driven behaviors resulting from communication challenges. It's important to dispel the misconception that using key word sign delays verbal communication; in fact, it often has the opposite effect, promoting overall communication development.

This resource provides a selection of key word signs that may prove useful in a family setting. Most signs are accompanied by a QR code linking to a video demonstration, showcasing various angles of how to perform the sign effectively. Signs included in this resource are the ones most commonly used in QLD. Other states may use other signs.

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eat

Close dominant fingertips onto ball of thumb. Tap formation on chin, twice.



milk

Open and close both fists alternately in the action of milking a cow.



more

Cup dominant hand, fingers spread and place fingertips on centre chest. Move hand forward.



drink

Shape dominant hand as for holding a glass then tilt to mouth as for drinking.



yes

Hold dominant fist palm down and move up and down from the wrist.



no

Shake dominant fist, palm down, sideways in front of body.



finished

Extend dominant thumb, fingers closed. Rock hand formation from side to side several times.



help

Place dominant hand bent at third knuckles, palm down, onto non-dominant palm. Or may place dominant hand onto non-dominant hand, palms together. Move formation forward.

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please

Move open dominant hand straight forward from chin, while closing into a fist with thumb extended.



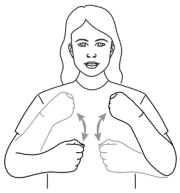
thanks

Move fingertips of open dominant hand, palm towards body, forward from chin, once.



toilet

Fingerspell 'T' quickly, twice, dominant index finger on edge or middle of non dominant hand.



bath

Make fists with both hands. Move up and down chest alternately.



mum

Fingerspell "M" quickly, twice.



dad

Fingerspell "F" quickly, twice.



play

Hold both hands at waist height with palms. Move simultaneously in small outward circles.



sleep

Place thumb of non-dominant hand at side of eye, flat hand open and palm facing the midline. Close fingers down onto thumb.

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