

Feeling Signs Fun with T!

Focus: Introducing ASL signs for 'happy,' 'sad,' and 'curious'

Student: T (2.5 years old)

Materials Needed:

- Visual Cards: One for "happy" (e.g., clear picture or drawing of a smiling face), one for "sad" (e.g., clear picture or drawing of a crying/sad face), one for "curious" (e.g., clear picture or drawing of a thoughtful face, perhaps with a question mark element). Cards should be durable and easy for little hands to handle if desired.
- (Optional) A favorite puppet or stuffed animal.
- (Optional) A child-safe mirror.

Lesson Goal:

To introduce T to the American Sign Language (ASL) signs for "happy," "sad," and "curious," associating them with the actual feelings and encouraging T to participate in making the signs in a fun, engaging, and repetitive way.

Daily Activity Breakdown (Repeat daily or several times a week. Keep sessions short, playful, and engaging, approximately 5-10 minutes each):

Day 1-3 Focus: Introduction and Repetition

1. Warm-up & Connection (1 minute):

- Sit comfortably with T in a familiar space.
- Start with a warm, enthusiastic greeting: "Hi T! It's time for our special signs! Today we're going to learn about some feelings with our hands and faces!"
- Make eye contact and smile.

2. Introduce "Happy" (2 minutes):

- Show the "happy" visual card. Point clearly to the smiling face. "Look, T! This face is *happy*! When we feel good, we are happy!" (Use an upbeat, joyful tone).
- Make a big, genuine happy facial expression. Encourage T to mirror your smile.
- Introduce the ASL sign for "happy": With flat open hands, palms facing your body, brush upwards on your chest a couple of times. Say "happy" clearly and joyfully as you make the sign.
- Gently invite T to try: "Let's try 'happy'!" You can gently guide T's hands if they are receptive, or simply model it clearly. Praise any attempt or interest: "Yes, happy! Good job, T!"
- Connect to T's world: "Mommy/Daddy feels happy when we play together! Does T feel happy when we [mention a favorite activity]? Yes, happy!"

3. Introduce "Sad" (2 minutes):

- Show the "sad" visual card. Point to the sad face. "Oh, T, look. This face is *_sad_*. Sometimes we feel sad." (Use a softer, empathetic tone).
- Make a corresponding sad facial expression (be gentle, not overly dramatic to avoid upsetting T).
- Introduce the ASL sign for "sad": With open hands, fingers pointing upwards, bring your fingertips to your eyes and draw them down your cheeks, like tears. Say "sad" clearly and gently as you make the sign.
- Invite T to try: "Let's try 'sad'." Model the sign. Praise any participation.

- Connect to T's world: "Sometimes we feel sad if a special toy is lost for a moment. Sad." (Keep it light and relatable).

4. **Introduce "Curious" (2 minutes):**

- Show the "curious" visual card. Point to the thoughtful/questioning face. "Hmm, T, this face is *curious*! When we want to know something, we feel curious!" (Use an inquisitive, slightly playful tone).
- Make a curious facial expression (e.g., slightly tilted head, raised eyebrows, perhaps a soft "Hmm?").
- Introduce a simplified ASL sign for "curious" (or "question"): Bend your index finger as if it's the top of a question mark. Draw a small question mark shape in the air near your face. Say "curious" clearly and brightly as you make the sign.
- Invite T to try: "Let's try 'curious'." Model the sign. Praise efforts.
- Connect to T's world: "What's in this hand? (Hide a small, safe object). Are you curious?" Peekaboo games can link to curiosity.

5. **Gentle Review & Playful Wrap-up (1-2 minutes):**

- Quickly show each card again, say the word, make the sign, and use your expressive face: "Happy! (sign) Sad! (sign) Curious! (sign)"
- Sing a simple line or two, incorporating the signs (e.g., to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle"): "Happy, sad, and curious too, these are feelings, me and you!" (making signs).
- End with a positive note: "Great job with our feeling signs today, T!"

Ongoing Daily Integration & Practice (Post Introduction Phase):

- **Morning/Circle Time:** Briefly review the signs with their cards. "How is T feeling today? Are you feeling happy?" (show sign).
- **During Play & Daily Routines:**
 - When T shows an emotion, label it verbally and with the sign: "Wow, you're laughing! You're so happy!" (sign 'happy').
 - If T seems a little down: "Oh, do you feel a little sad?" (sign 'sad' gently).
 - When exploring something new or asking a question (even non-verbally): "Ooh, what's that? Are you curious?" (sign 'curious').
- **Reading Books:** As you read, point out characters' emotions and make the corresponding sign. "Look, the bunny looks happy!" (sign 'happy'). "Hmm, why does the bear look sad? I'm curious!" (sign 'curious' then 'sad').
- **Puppet Play:** Use a puppet or stuffed animal. Have the puppet express a feeling: "Mr. Snuggles feels happy today!" (Puppet attempts sign, or you sign for it).
- **Mirror Play:** Encourage T to look in a child-safe mirror while making faces and the signs. "Look at your happy face in the mirror! Let's sign happy!"

Tips for Success with T:

- **Be Patient & Consistent:** Repetition over time is key for young learners. Focus on positive exposure and interaction rather than perfect execution.
- **Keep it Fun & Playful:** Use an animated voice, lots of smiles, and a lighthearted approach. If T seems tired or uninterested, pause and try again later or another day. Follow T's cues.
- **Exaggerate Facial Expressions and Tone:** This is crucial for helping T connect the sign and word to the actual feeling.
- **Praise All Attempts:** Any effort, approximation of a sign, or even just looking and engaging is wonderful. "Great trying, T!" "I see you looking!"
- **Integrate Naturally:** The more T sees these signs used meaningfully in everyday contexts, the faster understanding will grow.
- **Always Say the Word While Signing:** This builds vocabulary in both spoken language and ASL.

Looking Ahead:

Once T shows consistent recognition and perhaps attempts these three signs, you can gradually introduce other feeling signs that are relevant to a young child's world, such as "silly," "sleepy," or "excited." Always scaffold by linking to clear visual cues and real-life situations.