

Video: Babies are language sponges—even with sign language

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Credit: Anna Langova/public domain

Just like early exposure to any other language, early exposure to sign language will support learning language later, whether it's sign or spoken. It's widely believed that the younger you are, the easier it will be for you to learn a new language, and new research is finding that holds true for sign language as well. University of California, San Diego (UCSD), psychologist Rain Bosworth says that by five months old, babies are

universal language "sponges," attracted to language in their environment, and this includes sign language.

With support from the National Science Foundation (NSF), Bosworth and her colleagues at the Infant Vision Lab (IVL) have been putting that theory to the test, investigating how deafness affects perception and cognition in babies, and the impact of early exposure to [sign language](#). The team includes Karen Dobkins, director of IVL, So-One Hwang, of UCSD's Center for Research in Language, and student researchers Adam Stone of Gallaudet University and Hector Borges of UCSD.

They are also following up on previous research that shows deaf adults have more sensitive peripheral vision than hearing people. Bosworth wants to know how early that enhanced visual perception starts.

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