



**MAIA HADLEY, 34,** is a full-time mum to Jacob, 3½ and Elijah, 21 months. Maia and

husband Mark started teaching Jacob baby sign language when he was about seven months old because they had read about the benefits of reducing a baby's frustration. Jacob had been diagnosed with a condition which affects his eyes, Ocular Motor Apraxia and this means that speech development could be a long-term problem.

"At first I was worried that sign language would replace speech but the speech pathologist said

it lays mental foundations for language and this helps with speaking. He didn't pick it up straightaway but at 10 months he started tapping his chest which means 'more please' and that was really exciting! He now has a huge sign vocab, which includes drink, biscuit, banana, toast, sandwich, dog, cat, little, big, thank you, ice-cream, apple, bath, sleep, TV, book, ball, bird.

"Baby signing has reduced our frustration and his frustration, too. When he first started signing successfully he would sigh with relief when we understood and nod his head. There are still elements of frustration for things he hasn't learnt to communicate but it's much better. I think these days he's a much calmer boy."



**TONI NIGHTINGALE,** 37, is mum to Charlie, nearly 4, and Amelia, 18 months and is step-mum to

Blake, 14, and Craig, 12. She runs a business from home in Everton Hills, Queensland, with husband Chris. She started teaching her youngest baby signing when she was just over a year old.

"I was intrigued by something I saw on TV - they said that it increased vocabulary and IQ but I did it to end the frustration in finding out what Amelia wanted to do. It took less than two weeks before she was signing back to me, though she was older than a lot of children who are starting to learn to sign. She started with 'milk', which didn't take long, then 'eat' and 'more'. She can now do 'biscuit', 'poo', 'duck' and 'bird'.

"I think it's fun but the signing is something Charlie does as well. Because I work

from home, I don't have time for tantrums. With signing I can figure out what Amelia needs and I have a much happier home."

## Examples of baby signs



TEDDY



MORE



EAT



These signs are taken from the book *Australian Baby Hands* by Jackie Durnin (Bookwise International, \$29.95)

