

By Cindy Post Senning

When I was traveling about the country talking to toddlers about our book *Emily's Magic Words*, I spent hours thinking about an activity I could do with a room full of three year olds beyond reading them the book (which would take about 7 minutes). Then I read an article about kids learning sign language before they can even speak. One of my sisters-in-law knows the Director of the Austine School for the Deaf here in Vermont. She agreed to teach us how to say the "magic words" in sign language and to write up simple directions for parents to reinforce the new way of saying "please" and "thank you" with their children.

It's been a great success. I have taught children from ages three to eighteen how to say the "magic words" in sign language. I also give out the written directions so they can practice after we've gone our separate ways. I thought you all might want to learn this skill. So let's start with:



**Please:** With the right flat hand facing your chest, make a circle to the right over the center of your chest.

and



**Thank You:** Touch the chin or lips with the fingertips of one flat hand, then move the hand forward until the palms are facing up. The hand moves out and down. This sign is similar to the gesture of kissing one's hand and extending the hand towards someone else.

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