



## Makaton

### Early Years Team

#### What is Makaton

Makaton, or “key word signing”, is a simple and easy form of signed communication. It is not a formal sign language. Makaton is based on British Sign Language but signs are used alongside speech at all times.

Makaton uses signs and symbols, in spoken word order, along with speech. It helps develop communication, language and literacy skills.

Symbols can be used to help choose between activities and transitions allowing the learner to understand and retain information.

#### Who Uses Makaton

Teachers, practitioners, health professionals, family, friends, carers and others can use Makaton to support adults and children with communication and learning needs.

Children and adults with communication or learning support needs can benefit from the use of Makaton. It is also helpful for people who use English as an additional language.

#### Why Use Makaton

Communication is an important skill in everyday life, so for children with additional needs who are unable to speak, or make their feelings or needs known, Makaton may be one way they can learn to communicate. Almost everything we do involves communication; everyday tasks such as learning at school, asking for food and drink, solving problems, making friends, playing games and having fun. These all rely on our ability to communicate with each other

Using signs can help people who have no speech or speech may not be clear, and symbols (for example on picture cards) help those unable to sign.

Makaton is flexible and can be used at any level appropriate to the individual’s needs.

Makaton also promotes an inclusive environment. Makaton encourages children and young

people to interact face to face; this enables social engagement and helps develop language skills.

## **How to learn Makaton**

The charity offers training from level 1 up to level 4 and Makaton Signing for Babies and Families (MSBF) - focusing on Early Years language. All courses are available as online or face to face workshops. The training is provided to help you develop the Core Vocabulary needed for everyday communication.

The best way to start learning Makaton is with level 1 or MSBF training. You'll learn with other people, receive feedback on your signing and symbol work, share your experiences and practise with other learners and a trained practitioner who can then go on to support you in the future.

Once you've completed a level, you can choose to go on to the next level to improve your knowledge and skills as a Makaton user.

To find out more about the Makaton Charity and what it offers, click the link below:

[Home \(makaton.org\)](http://makaton.org)

## **Solihull Early Years Service**

The Solihull Early Years Service provides Makaton MSBF training to all Early Years settings in Solihull. Please contact our admin at [eyenquiries@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:eyenquiries@solihull.gov.uk) to find out more.

## **Top Tips when learning Makaton**

- First, don't worry – Makaton is fun.
- Use signs and symbols as much and as often as you can.
- Always speak as you sign.
- When showing someone how to use Makaton, offer lots of encouragement.
- Don't give up – it may take time but it's worth it.

***“Children and adults who have difficulty understanding and speaking often become frustrated or withdrawn. Young children may communicate this through behaviours such as screaming and kicking; older children and adults may shout or hurt themselves. By using Makaton, we are helping them to communicate in a more acceptable way.”***

***The Makaton Charity***