Touch Cues / Body Signing

Who is it for?

- Children who have multiple disabilities such as complex learning / physical / sensory needs

For example, they may have visual impairment and/or hearing impairment

- They benefit from the extra sensory feedback from touch to support their learning.

If you find it difficult to see, hear or move your body, the world can be an unpredictable and scary place.

If we use touch cues/body signing consistently, your child will gradually learn what they mean and this will help them to understand what is happening next.

Touch Cues / Body Signing can either be done on the body or hand under hand:

On Body

The adult makes the sign on the child's body

Hand under hand

The adult puts their hands under the child's hands and supports them to make the sign.

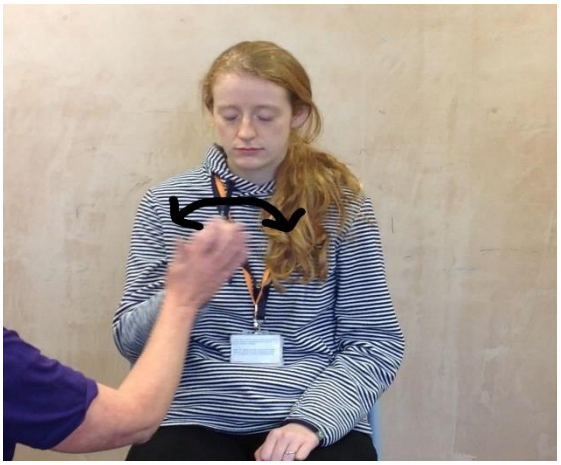
In hand-under-hand signing, the child rests their hands on the adult's hands. The adult can then gently guide their hands from underneath. The child can withdraw their hands at any time if they want to.

Move

Tap twice on your child's shoulders with both hands.

Hello

Make a clockwise circular movement on the back of one of your child's hands.



Goodbye

Hold your child's hand gently, lift it up and move it side to side as if waving goodbye.

More - On Body

Pat your hand twice on the back of one of your child's hands.

More – Hand under Hand

Put your hands under your child's hands and support them to tap one hand on top of the other.

Finish– On Body

Put your hands on top of your child's hands and brush briskly across their hands once in an outwards direction.

Finish – Hand under Hand

Put your hands under your child's hands and support them to move their hands in an outwards direction away from each other, in one brisk movement.

Up
(e.g. if lifting them up, hoisting up, moving chair up)

Brush your hand up their arm from wrist to shoulder finishing by clicking your fingers by their head.

Down
(e.g if putting them down, hoisting down, moving their chair down)

Brush your hand down their arm from their shoulder to their wrist finishing with clicking your fingers by their hand.

Top Tips:

Be patient and gentle.
Be persistent – your child will need to try a new task lots of times.
Trying new activities is challenging – they may pull their hands away
Respect what they are telling you – follow their pace
Be consistent – use the touch cue every time you say the word in lots of activities and situations.
Remember to always say the spoken word as you use the touch cue.

Adapted from Canaan Barrie and Tassels touch cue/body signing systems by Liz Stephenson, Portage Teacher, Maddie Walker and Andrea Friend, Speech and Language Therapists.