

What do toddlers and chimpanzees have in common? They use the same unspoken language

Prior to developing the capacity for speech, toddlers communicate their desires, demands, and discontent using a diverse repertoire of physical gestures. As a new study shows, there's a significant amount of overlap between the gestures employed by human children and those made by other ape species, a finding that's casting new light on the origin of primate communication.

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"We thought that we might find a few of these gestures—reaching out your palm to ask for something or sticking your hand up in the air—but we were amazed to see so many of the 'ape' gestures used by the children," said [researcher Catherine] Hobaiter.

In terms of differences, the toddlers used pointing gestures more frequently than apes (weirdly, [chimps struggle to grasp finger pointing](#), whereas [dogs and wolves totally get it](#)). Also, the practice of waving our hands to say hello or goodbye appears to be a distinctly human gesture, the researchers say.

The big takeaway of this paper is that, though many differences exist between us and our great ape relatives, humans have retained some shared behavioral aspects, which are expressed at an early stage in our development. These gestures, the authors say, likely play an important role for children before they develop the capacity for verbal speech.

Read full, original post: [Toddlers and Chimpanzees Share a Surprising Unspoken Language](#)