Indications of Good Attachment

No Pain - Breastfeeding is 100% Comfortable
Any discomfort, pinching, burning, or stinging, is telling you that baby is not attached in the best possible way and will be damaging your nipples.
Ease your finger into the side of baby’s mouth & gums letting air in to break the suction. Take baby off the breast and try again.

Observe Baby’s Feeding Rhythm
When attached well baby will be relaxed and comfortable and feed in a rhythmic suckling pattern. This consists of:
Initial rapid, shallow sucks to trigger your “letdown”.
Followed by, groups of deeper, slower, suck &swallows.
Watch for deep jaw movement and swallowing as baby is removing good mouthfuls of milk from your breast.
Pauses: Pauses are a normal part of breastfeeding. If baby is “latched” well they will begin the next group of suck & swallows without prompting. As baby feeds, the groups of suck & swallows gradually become shorter and the pauses longer.

Observe Nipple Shape AFTER Feeds
If baby has been deeply and comfortably attached, immediately after a feed your nipple will look ROUND & SHORT, the same as it was before the feed.

Check Positioning & Attachment
Are your shoulders and arms in a relaxed natural position?
Is your body taking most of baby’s weight?
Are you supporting baby behind the shoulder blades?
Is baby’s whole body facing and closely applied to your body and breast. No gaps?
Is baby’s chin deep into your breast and baby’s nose clear of the breast?
Did you see baby take a large mouthful of breast below the nipple?
There should be no hollows in baby’s cheeks and no clicking or slurping noises during feeding, which sound quite different from noisy swallowing.
If your breast is moving in & out of baby’s mouth, or slips out easily, baby has NOT been attached in the best possible way. However if you would have to break the suction to remove the breast and you can observe all the above indications, then you can be pretty sure that you and baby have achieved good attachment.

Difficulty attaching baby may be due to:
Lack of practise, confidence or knowledge. Remember breastfeeding is a learned skill and practise makes progress.
Sometimes the size or shape of your breast or baby’s mouth, tongue or palate can make attachment more difficult, e.g. large nipples and a baby with a small mouth.
When attachment difficulties arise, they can often be overcome by practising an exaggerated attachment technique. Work through each step carefully.
However, if you are experiencing difficulties seek help from a health professional, or lay counsellor who has expertise in positioning and attachment/latch difficulties. You can also see these simple steps demonstrated in Rebecca’s DVD “Follow Me Mum”. Now available online - “Pay Per View” at www.newparents/videos.tv

Illustrations: Drawn by Rebecca Glover
References:

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