

TALK, READ AND SING TOGETHER EVERY DAY!

Tips for Using Language at Home and in the Community

Here are eight things you can do every day to help your child learn your family's language and become successful in school!

USE YOUR NATIVE LANGUAGE AT HOME

The easiest, most important step is to use your home language every day. Many families worry that using their home language will confuse their children. In fact, children can easily learn several languages at the same time. They have an easier time learning English when they have a strong foundation in their first language.



TELL STORIES AND SING SONGS

Your family has a rich heritage to pass on to your children. Stories, chants, rhymes, poems, sayings, and songs from your childhood are an important part of their heritage. Share these with your children and have fun!

TELL STORIES AND SHARE BOOKS TOGETHER

Read a book to your child every day—in whatever language you feel most comfortable—beginning at birth. And if you don't feel comfortable reading words, you can point out the pictures in the book and talk with your child about them.

CHECK OUT MATERIALS IN YOUR LANGUAGE FROM THE LIBRARY

Look for books, DVDs, and music in your language. If they don't have what you want, ask the library staff to help you find what you need.

TALK ABOUT YOUR TRADITIONS AND CULTURE

Visit your child's classroom or child care provider. Share your language and traditions, including family songs and games. Encourage your child to retell family stories and share your heritage with their teacher, friends, and others.

LOOK FOR ACTIVITIES IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Attend cultural festivals and concerts and meet other families who speak your home language. Join with other families and organize your own events!

CONTINUE USING YOUR HOME LANGUAGE AS YOUR CHILDREN GROW OLDER

Sometimes children start to prefer English as they get older. Talk with your children about the benefits of speaking two languages. Continue using your language, even if your children respond in English so you keep your lines of communication open.

DON'T FORGET THAT YOU ARE KEY TO MAINTAINING YOUR HOME LANGUAGE

Parents and other family members are the most important people in your children's lives. What you value, your children will learn to value. Help them learn that your family's language and culture are something to be proud of and to treasure. Remember the benefits of your home language and remain committed to continuing to use it, no matter your child's age.

THE BENEFITS OF BEING BILINGUAL

Researchers have found that speaking multiple languages at home provides a great benefit to young children. Speaking in your home language to your children from the time they're born helps build their young minds and prepare them for success in school and beyond. Developing the child's home language provides the foundation for reading and writing, preparing children to be biliterate.

THINKING SKILLS

Individuals who are bilingual switch between two different language systems. Their brains are very active and flexible. Research shows that compared to their non-bilingual peers, bilingual people have an easier time understanding math concepts, solving word problems, using logic, focusing, remembering, making decisions, and learning other languages, among other critical thinking skills.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

Being bilingual helps children maintain strong ties with their family, culture, and community. All of these are key parts of a child's developing identity. They make new friends and create strong relationships using their second language—an important personal skill in our increasingly diverse society. Research has found that babies raised in bilingual households show better self-control, which is a key indicator of school success.

LEARNING

School readiness and success for children who are dual language learners are tied directly to mastery of their home language. So use your home language every day! Because bilingual children are able to switch between languages, they develop more flexible approaches to thinking through problems. People who use more than one language appear better at blocking out irrelevant information, a benefit that may exist as early as seven months of age.

LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Globally, bilingual and biliterate adults have more job opportunities than adults who speak only one language. Bilingual and biliterate individuals have the opportunity to participate in the global community in more ways, get information from more places, and learn more about people from other cultures.

You can find more tips like these—as well as videos, information, and more—on Too Small to Fail's website, www.talkingisteaching.org.

For more resources on promoting early learning in young children who are learning more than one language, please visit [Head Start's National Center for Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness](http://HeadStart.org).

Every child develops at his or her own pace, but if you are ever worried about your child's development, don't wait! Acting early can make a big difference. Remember, you know your child best. Talk with your child's doctor if you have concerns. Get tips to help you prepare at cdc.gov/Concerned.



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