



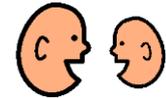
Bilingualism

Information and advice for parents and families

Bilingualism is when a person understands and/or uses two or more languages. Growing up learning more than one language is a great asset. It can support your child's learning and help them to think flexibly, and can help them to feel connected to their communities and cultures.



Some children will be exposed to more than one language from birth. Other children will start to learn an additional language later. Children need to develop strong foundations in their first language(s). The best way to support your child's language development is to talk to them in the language you are most comfortable speaking from the start.



Children who are learning English as an additional language should not be regarded as having a speech and language difficulty. Even children who have had limited exposure to English before nursery or school can become competent communicators in more than one language. Some bilingual children will experience speech and language difficulties, however, just as some children learning one language do. They will have difficulties using and understanding language in both/all of their languages, not just in English.

Speech and
Language UK



See [Speech and Language UK](#) for more information and advice for learning more than one language.



Strategies for learning more than one language:

- Talk to your child in your preferred language. Use the language you feel most confident speaking. Don't worry if this is not English.
- When two languages are spoken at home, this may mean each parent or family member speaks their own language to the child.
- Tell stories to your child in your language. Have fun singing songs and rhymes in your language.
- Repeat back. If your child uses English words at home, respond in your own language. You might want to repeat back what they have said in your own language. Do not correct them or make them say it again.
- When learning more than one language, your child may switch between languages or use words from both languages in the same sentence. This is normal and is not a sign of confusion or difficulty.
- When a child first experiences a new language environment, they may not talk initially. They will be watching and listening to help them to understand and learn. This quiet period is normal and can last several months.
- Do not feel you need to switch to using English once your child is at nursery or school. It is important to continue to develop skills in your child's first language(s) to support them to acquire an additional language.



For further information and advice:



[BBC Tiny Happy People](#) – for advice on bilingual babies and speaking multiple languages at home



[National Literacy Trust](#) – for bilingualism quick tips in a number of different languages

