

Top tips for parents

Tips for parents to help children learn their home language and English

- Always talk a lot to your child in your language. Even when the child is too little to understand you should talk to them about what you are doing when you are playing, reading, cooking, writing and shopping.
- Teach your child nursery rhymes and songs in your own language.
- Tell your child stories in your language. Encourage your child to join in with the story telling.
- Talk to your children about what they did at playgroup, nursery or school in your language. If they use English words, repeat what they have said using your language.
- Don't be frightened to use your language in public. If some people don't like it, it is their problem not yours.
- Make sure that your child knows the names of the different languages he speaks.
- Check that your child knows which language has which name.
- Take your child to concerts, plays, poetry readings, films etc. where they will hear people using your language.
- Try to make sure your children play with children who speak the same home language as they do – use video calls to talk to relatives.
- Find out if there is a community language school in your area where your language is taught. Your child might benefit from attending classes there.
- Try to find books written in your language for your child. If there aren't any at the library, try online. Or you can make your own.
- Help your child feel proud of your language.
- Don't laugh or tease your child because of her accent or if she makes mistakes.
- Don't give up if your child doesn't seem to want to speak in the other language, they will still be reaping the benefits of hearing it and having it around them.
- Don't worry if you slip from one language to another, sometimes the foreign word just won't come to you.
- If an older child seems shy of speaking in the foreign language (some are afraid of making mistakes) then try using puppets as then they can talk through them and it's the puppets that make the mistakes, not them.
- And finally, just keep going.

Originally created for Talk to Your Baby. Taken from Bilingual Children: a guide for parents and carers, written by Foufou Savitzky, London Language and Literacy Unit, South Bank University, 1994.

All text © National Literacy Trust 2017

T: 020 7587 1842 W: www.literacytrust.org.uk Twitter: @Literacy_Trust Facebook: nationalliteracytrust