

More than one language at home

Learning more than one language could help your child to:

- Focus better
- Solve problems and be creative
- Speak to more people and enjoy more books, music and shows

Some facts about children who speak more than one language:

- They may know the same number of words as children who speak one language.
 - If they should know 50 words, they may know 20 words in English and 30 words in your home language.
- They usually say their first word when they are 8-15 months old.
- They can mix their languages. This is called “code mixing” and it is normal. It does not mean they are confused.
- They will find one language easier to speak with than the others.
- Adults can speak any language to the children. “One parent – one language” is not true.
- If you stop speaking one language it will not make the other language better. Let children hear all the languages.



Children can learn other languages in different ways:

- At the same time: Usually for children under age 3
- One at a time: usually after they are 3 years old.
 - Children may be “silent” for a short time when they first hear the new language. This is a normal part of learning a new language.
 - When they start speaking the new language, they will start with simple words and phrases first.
 - They will get better with the new language over time.

You can support language learning:

- Talk to them when you play together and when you are doing things with them. The more they hear, the more they learn.
- Talk about things they like to see, do, or eat.
- Children learn best when they have fun.
- It is good for children to hear different languages from different people and places.
 - For example, they may hear one language at childcare and another with family.
- Talk to them in a language you are comfortable in.
- Give them many chances to hear and speak your home language.



If you are worried about your child’s talking or understanding, talk to your doctor about a speech pathology referral.