

Tips for parents

- › When talking to your child, use the language you speak best and feel most comfortable with, the language that is closest to your heart.
- › Home languages are important for your children's identity and the relationship between parents and children.
- › Talk to your children a lot, even when they are very young babies.
- › Take your children to nursery school or kindergarten early on, and regularly, so they can learn German too. Proficiency in German is important for their educational opportunities.
- › If you have any further questions, take advantage of counselling and support services for parents of bilingual children.



No. 1 – Achieving bilingualism Speaking your home language(s) with your children

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Using your home language(s)

- › It is beneficial for all when parents speak to their children in the language they speak best and feel most comfortable with.

Why?

- › It is important to have a common language in which both parents and children can express themselves well. This is essential for a good parent-child-relationship. As children grow up, conversations tend to become more sophisticated. For example, all family members need to be able to speak about their emotions, especially during puberty.
- › The first language is an important building block for further language learning. If you help your children to successfully master their first language, you will provide them with excellent conditions for learning other languages, such as German as a second language.
- › Bilingualism brings many linguistic and cultural benefits.



Promoting home language skills

- › It is important to speak with your children from birth onwards and to provide them with plenty of contact to your home language(s). Grandparents, friends and social activities can also be a valuable source of language input.



What if parents speak different languages?

- › There is no problem if mother and father speak different languages with their children. Language acquisition is most effective when both parents take plenty of time to speak with their children.

Promoting German as a second language

- › Going to nursery school and kindergarten early on helps children to acquire German as a second language well. It is important to attend regularly and to participate in all group activities, such as morning gatherings or projects, in order to use and listen to plenty of German on a daily basis.

From our research

- › The media sometimes criticises families with migrant backgrounds for not speaking German at home. Is this criticism justified? No, our research has shown that bilingual children who do not speak German at home can achieve equally good language outcomes in German as those who do.^[1]

^[1] A. Klassert & N. Gagarina: »Der Einfluss des elterlichen Inputs auf die Sprachentwicklung bilingualer Kinder: Evidenz aus russischsprachigen Migrantenfamilien in Berlin.« Diskurs Kindheits- und Jugendforschung 4, 413–425, 2010.