

How can I support my bilingual child at home?

- Talk to your child in your home language(s). Socialise in your home language community and keep in touch with your extended family.
- Encourage your child to learn new words in their first language. These words will help them make links when learning English words.
- Read and talk about dual language books with your child. Your school and public library should be able to access dual language books in most languages. Use your home language to talk about the pictures and ask questions e.g. Who? What? Where? Why? When?
- Talk to your child about their day in your home language(s); encourage them to tell you about one thing that they learned/did that day.
- Talk about class subjects; link this to your home country/culture if possible e.g. similarities and differences.
- Play turn-taking games such as I-Spy, Snap, Dominoes, Lotto, Snakes and Ladders and practise the language involved. Ask your child's class teacher or EAL teacher how to play these games if you're not sure. They will also be able to explain why these games are good for learning.

Remember: It can take up to two years to develop social English. However, it can take up to ten years to fully develop the academic English language skills needed for education. Your child's first language "provides the best foundation for learning additional languages and new concepts." Continuing to develop your child's home language will allow them to develop concepts and reasoning, independently of their English language learning.

Resources

- <http://www.booktrust.org.uk/programmes/primary/booktime/> - Guide on reading with your child
- <http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/>
- <http://www.dk.com/uk/> - Visual dictionaries
- <http://uk.mantralingua.com/> - Books
- <http://www.usborne.com/> - First words books
- <http://www.worldbookonline.com/kids/home> - encyclopedia with translations
- <https://www.overdrive.com/> - online books in a variety of languages - sign in with library card
- <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/libraries/>

Acknowledgements

- Learning in 2+languages (2005)
- www.bilingualism-matters.org.uk/
- City of Edinburgh EAL Service

Be Bilingual!



What are the advantages of being bilingual?

Speaking two languages can help a child to:

- maintain a link with their family culture and heritage. The home language is very important for passing on values and traditions and maintaining cultural identity.
- develop stronger skills in reading, language learning, attention and thinking. Learning and using more than one language can improve creative thinking, problem-solving and expression.
- express their emotions because the home language is usually the one which the child learns first, so it has a special value.
- have a better understanding of how language works and can make learning other languages easier.
- have better job opportunities as many jobs and employers need people who can speak, read and write other languages.

What does it mean to be 'bilingual'?

We use the term 'bilingual' for people who use more than one language in their daily lives. It does not mean that the person has equal skills in each language.

My English is not very good. Should I speak English with my child?

It is better to use your home language because you will provide a good model of the language.

Will being bilingual affect my child's performance in school?

Initially your child may take more time to reach the standard they would achieve in their home language. However, in time and with motivation and support, they can achieve success and even perform better than monolinguals in national tests.

How will my child learn English?

They will be hearing and using English at school every day and in the community.

What can I do when my child doesn't want to use the home language?

It is normal for children to want to use English all the time because they want to fit in with their friends. Sometimes this only lasts a short time. Keep using your first language at home even if they reply in English.

My child mixes the two languages. What should I do?

This is very common when a child is learning two languages at the same time. Your child will gradually begin to separate the two languages. The age and speed at which they do this varies greatly. If you are worried, speak to the EAL teacher.

How can I help my child to read and write in both languages?

Reading and writing tasks need to be interesting and relevant to your child's experience. Your child's class teacher or EAL teacher can suggest suitable topics and activities. It is also important to read for pleasure - books, magazines, comics, websites, listening to CDs, radio, TV and DVDs etc. Community language classes are also a good way of developing home language skills.

Our home language uses a different script. Will this confuse my child?

Learning to read and write in English is helped by learning to read and write in the home language. Children can successfully learn to write in two totally different scripts.

My child has problems with reading/writing/spelling in their home language. Will they have the same problems in English?

Some literacy problems do transfer from one language to another. Please provide any school reports and evidence of class work that you have to help the teacher support your child. They don't have to be in English.