

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I help my child to continue developing their first language?

Keep using your first language at home and share good text and story books written in your language with your child.

My child mixes the languages. Is this worrying?

Mixing languages is quite common with bilingual children; it does not mean that they are confused - they are simply using all of their language resources to express themselves.

My child will only talk to me in English. What shall I do?

Many children do this, especially when they know that their parents understand English very well. They will be able to revert to their first language very quickly when they have

to, providing the parents continue to use their first language with them at home.

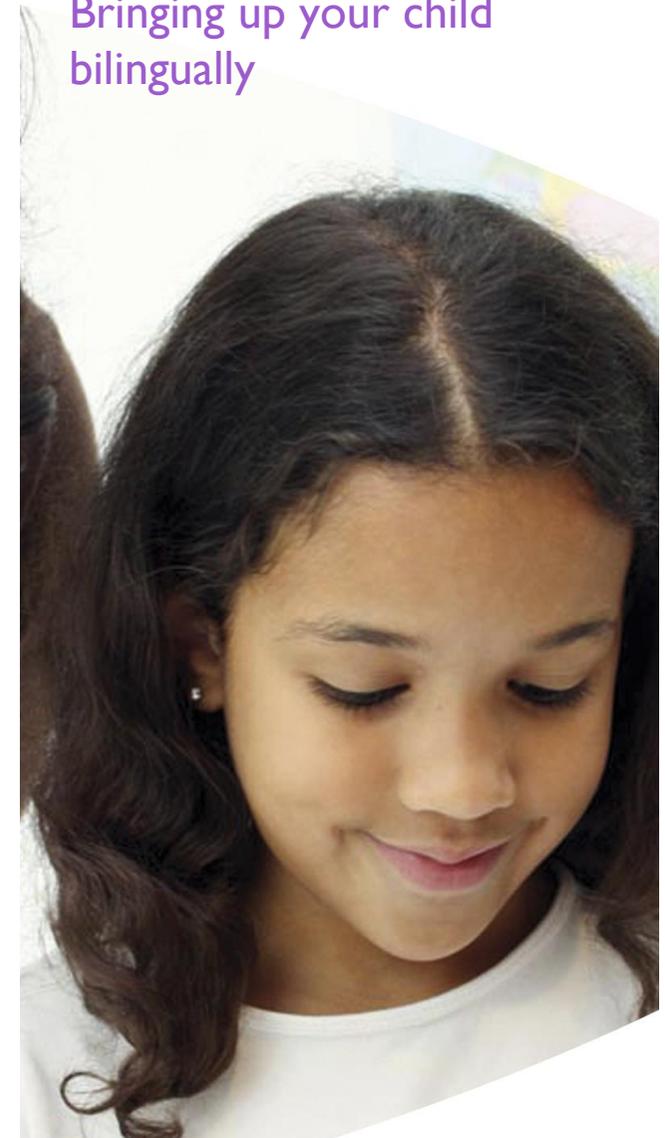
My child does not speak much English at school. Should I start speaking English to him at home?

Many children refuse to speak the new language for a period of time, maybe because they feel embarrassed or because they do not want to speak it until they can do it well. This 'silent phase' should be respected. Carry on speaking in your first language to them, otherwise they will feel cut off from everything they have known previously and this may make the situation much worse.

Further information

www.hants.gov.uk/ema

Bringing up your child bilingually



What the research says

Bilingual children tend to:

- do better at school
- achieve higher grades in their exams
- learn a third language more easily
- develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language if they come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue
- develop more flexibility in their thinking as a result of processing information through two different languages
- learn to read more rapidly
- be better at problem solving and demonstrate greater creative expression
- express more tolerant attitudes towards others

“Children will learn English more effectively if they continue to develop their first languages at the same time.”

Advantages of being bilingual

Speaking two or more languages gives people an additional valuable skill; a person with two or more languages will have a wider choice of jobs.

Bilingualism raises self-esteem, makes a child feel privileged and good about themselves.

Bilingualism gives access to two cultures and promotes greater tolerance of other cultures.

Children will not lose their cultural identity if they are proud or positive about their language and culture.

Being able to communicate with grandparents helps to build a sense of belonging to the extended family.

Where parents each speak a different language, a child who is bilingual can communicate and develop a close relationship with both. Each parent is passing on a part of their past and their heritage.

Advice for parents

- Always talk to your child in your first language, even when they are too little to understand.
- Teach your child nursery rhymes and songs in your own language.
- Read stories to your child in your first language in order to make them feel proud and to keep in touch with their language and heritage.
- Don't be afraid to speak to your child in your language in public.
- Take your child to community gatherings where they will hear people using your language and where they can keep in touch with their culture.
- Don't laugh or tease your child because of their accent or any mistakes they may make.
- Research shows that concepts and skills learned in a child's first language are transferred to the second language so speaking a second language is a bonus, not a hindrance.