

Supporting Children with Bilingual or English as an Additional Language

Top Tips for supporting your child:

- Supporting your child's home language supports the development of English
- Talk to your child in your strongest language
- If your child learns one language well from you, it will be easier for them to learn English or another language
- Encourage your child to feel proud of their home language and of knowing more than one language
- Singing songs and rhymes in your home language will help to support your child's language development
- Sometimes children can take a little more time to learn to talk when they are learning more than one language. In most cases, children catch up over time
- One Person – One Language is a good rule. So even if grandparents and other family members can speak different languages, ask them to decide, with you, which one to use with your child – and then stick to it
- Your child might continue to think in their home language, even when taught in English. They might need additional time to process instructions and form their answers.

So talk with your child at home in your first language

This will support them while they are learning English. It helps if they hear you speak with confidence and in a natural fluent way. This is best from you speaking in a language that you are comfortable with. If your child uses English words, then that is fine. You can repeat what they said using your language to acknowledge their communication but do not correct them or try to make them use one language over another.

My child is mixing up two languages – is that okay?

Sometimes children from a bilingual background will mix two languages within the same sentence. This happens most when they are not really aware yet that they are learning two languages and is a natural stage. They will soon work out the different vocabulary and rules of the two languages.

My child has gone quiet since learning a new language

For a child who is bilingual or has English as an additional language at home sometimes, when another language is introduced that is not their home language, for example English at nursery, some children may not talk as much for a little while.

This is typical and will take time for your child to adapt. This is sometimes called 'the silent period' and is often seen by practitioners at the child's setting. This is fine - your child will still be listening and learning.

Can watching English TV help my child?

Remember young children may sit in front of the television for hours but they will be watching the pictures, not listening to the words clearly. Research shows that this is not the way to help children learn English.

Remember...

Being bilingual is an advantage and is NOT the cause of a language delay. Many children who grow up being bilingual can have wider access to jobs, social life and cultural experiences. Bilingualism does not cause communication disorders.