

# Learning More Than One Language

A parent's guide to creating language-rich environments




## Talk Box

## Children can learn more than one language at the same time!

Anyone can learn more than one language! Learning a second language does not hurt speech and language development. Your child will develop speech and language in the same order as a child who speaks only one language.

- There is no recipe for learning more than one language.
- Some children learn two languages right from birth and some learn a second language later on.
- Some children speak one language at home and a different language at school.
- It is important for your child to know one language well.
- When your child knows the rules of one language, it's easier for her to learn another one.
- If you speak only one language, use that language to talk to your child at home. It's best for you to talk to your child in the language you know best.

Learning a second language takes time. Your child might mix up the words and sentences from the two languages. She might memorize and copy things that other people say. That's okay – she'll figure it out! If she already knows one language and is learning a new one, she may go through a silent period that may last for months. This will go away.



Si tu aimes  
le soleil tappe  
des mains.

Learning more than one language at the same time does not slow down a child's language learning.

## Everyday and everyway – How children learn language

Children learn language every single day and in almost everything they do! They learn new words, new sentences, and how to play with language. Any activity that you and your child do together is a chance to learn! He learns about his world by doing, seeing, touching, tasting, listening, and talking! Speak in the language you know best. Your child will learn that language. As a parent, you are very important in helping your child to learn language.

### Everyday tips – How parents make the difference!

There are many things you can do to help your child learn more than one language. Here are some ideas to make learning language easier:

- Talk to your child in the language you know best at home.
- Take your child to local events where your language is spoken.
- Look for books in your language. Libraries are getting more and more children's books in other languages. Ask for more books in your language.
- Use the pictures in any book to talk to your child in your language.
- Sing songs and tell stories in your language.
- Play games from your culture and use your language.
- Practice, practice, practice! Give your child many chances to practice talking and listening to the language you speak at home.

Talk to your  
child in the  
language you  
know best!



If there is more than one language spoken in your home...

- Each adult can speak to your child in their first language.
- Try using one language for part of the day and the other language for the rest of the day.



### When to get help

It's hard to know if your child needs help with his speech and language development – especially if he is learning more than one language! Use the **Talking and Listening Checklist** to help you.

You should be concerned if:

- your child is having trouble communicating with you in his first language.
- your child is not doing what is expected for his age in his first language.



### Where to get help

Are you concerned about your child's speech and language development? Speech-language pathologists can help. To find one in your area ...

- call your local health unit
- call Health Link Alberta:
  - Calgary area: 403-943-LINK (5465)
  - Edmonton area: 780-408-LINK (5465)
  - Toll free: 1-866-408-LINK (5465)
- go to [www.healthlinkalberta.ab.ca](http://www.healthlinkalberta.ab.ca)

Go to [www.parentlinkalberta.ca](http://www.parentlinkalberta.ca) for more Talk Box ideas.