



Top 12 Things to Know About Raising Your Child Bilingually

1. Start young! The earlier a child learns another language, the easier it is. Once your child knows two languages, it is a smoother path to learning three or four! Building on a child's skills in a first language has been shown to help acquisition of a second one.
2. Research by developmental and linguistic experts have shown that multilingual children have cognitive advantages in reasoning and problem solving tasks over monolingual children. Their "executive function," or the ability to manage tasks, is also better.
3. Bilingual children have the advantage of knowing two cultures, of being able to communicate with a wider variety of people, and of having an economic "edge" in their future.
4. As they acquire language naturally, most children can hold a casual conversation after 3-4 years of exposure to a language without formal instruction, while developing proficiency through classroom-level academic language study can take 5-7 years of exposure and instruction. In addition, the pronunciation is almost always accented in the latter case.
5. Your home is a strongly supportive, consistent, and rich language environment. As the child's parent, *you* are your child's best language teacher; *you* use the minority language that you want your child to learn. Examples of how to use languages so that children learn them naturally can be seen in the One-Parent-One-Language Model, Minority Language at Home Model, or Alternating Languages Models (see [Raising a Bilingual Child](#); ask for it at the office).
6. "Dual immersion" or "2-way immersion" preschool and elementary schools are a good way for your child to learn to read, write, and speak in English and another language.
7. "Code switching" – or the use of two languages in one sentence by mature and developing bilingual speakers – is a sign of advanced linguistic skills, not confusion (Romaine, 1995).
8. It is normal for bilingual children to make sentences in one language that follow the grammatical rules of their other language. Dominance in one language is also common.
9. It is not uncommon for children to resist speaking their home language once they become proficient in English. Accept their responses in either language and continue using your home language when you speak to your child.
10. Some professionals, including some pediatricians and speech therapists, will tell you to stop speaking a particular language to your child. Don't believe them! If you are concerned about why your child is not learning language, request a hearing screening followed by a referral to a bilingual speech therapist.



11. There is no scientific evidence that children with developmental disabilities or specific language impairment cannot learn more than one language (Paradis et al., 2003). Even children with Autism can be bilingual.
12. There is no scientific evidence that giving up one language will benefit another. “In fact, the abrupt end of the use of the home language ... may lead to great emotional and psychological difficulties both for the parents and the child” (De Houwer, 1999).

Internet Resources

www.multilingualchildren.org Web site containing links to bilingual schools, immersion child care, language play groups, blogs, forums, book sellers, and other resources

www.multilingualparenting.com A network of parents and professionals supporting multilingual parenting

www.multilingualliving.com Multilingual/Multicultural Family Network for support, resources, and monthly online magazine *Multilingual Living*

www.colorincolorado.org Web site dedicated to helping children read in Spanish and English

www.omniglot.com/language/articles/bilingualkids1.htm Five steps to success in raising a bilingual child and links to other articles by Christina Bosemark, founder of the Multilingual Children's Association

www.nethelp.no/cindy/biling-fam.html Bilingual Families Web Page with definitions, politics, and myths about bilingualism

iteslj.org/Articles/Rosenberg-Bilingual.html Raising Bilingual Children

Printed Resources

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