



Fact Sheet

Multilingualism in the Family

Is your child growing up multilingually? Congratulations! This is a unique opportunity. Children generally have no difficulty learning an additional language in a multilingual environment. You can support your child during this process.

Multilingualism in the Family

Which language should be spoken at home? – The parents' native languages!

It is usually best if the mother, the father and other family members each speak to the child in the language in which they feel most comfortable and confident.

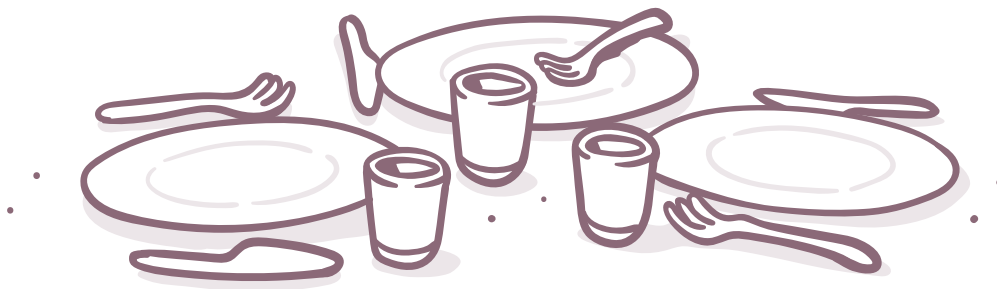
This is typically your native language. Your child needs you as a role model in your native language. This will help your child to learn your language and enable him or her to learn other languages more easily.

Regular attendance at preschool helps children learn German

Don't worry if your child doesn't speak German fluently when starting preschool. Continue speaking to your child in your own native language. He or she will learn German when communicating with the caregivers, teachers and other children at preschool. So that this works, it is very important for your child to attend preschool regularly. The more often your child plays with German-speaking children in places like preschool, the playground or the gymnastics club, the faster he or she will learn German naturally.

Children make mistakes and mix up their languages!

It is not unusual for children to make certain kinds of mistakes when they start learning a new language. These mistakes often demonstrate that the children are on the right track to learning German. For example, they may leave out the definite article („gib mir Blatt“ instead of „gib mir das Blatt“) or use the wrong preposition („bei Baum“ instead of „auf dem Baum“). In addition, multilingual children frequently mix up their languages for a certain period of time: „I can werfen the ball.“ This is a sign of increasing language ability. If you are unsure or have questions, ask your child's preschool teacher or pediatrician.



My child suddenly only wants to speak German!

Some families have reported experiencing phases in which their children refuse to speak the family's language and only want to speak German. This is not a cause for concern. Keep speaking your own native language with your child. Your child's language ability will continue to develop even if he or she only listens to you speak. Plus, you can rest assured that he or she will eventually go back to speaking the family's language.

Speaking is fun!

Talk to your child often and a lot about his or her experiences. Tell stories, read books aloud and engage in language-based play together. No matter which form of linguistic interaction you choose, you will encourage your child to associate positive feelings and experiences with his or her native language and in turn support his or her linguistic development.

Growing up multilingually is an opportunity!

You can help your child learn multiple languages by offering frequent opportunities to speak and experience the languages in a variety of different situations. Your native language and culture should be meaningful for your child, as should German, the language of the community in which you are living. It is essential that you demonstrate a positive attitude toward all of your child's languages. This will motivate your child to use his or her languages actively and to expand his or her linguistic ability, both in your family's languages and in German. In doing so, you will prepare your child optimally for preschool and primary school.



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