

Tips for parents of children growing up with more than one language

All languages are equally valuable as each one has a whole culture behind it.

Therefore, all languages should be respected.

The following are important factors for you to help your child to learn one or more languages successfully:

- Have a **good relationship** with / a genuine **interest** in the child
- Be a **good language role model** (in the language/languages which you speak best)
- **Talk a lot** (as a way of giving your child as much and as varied linguistic stimulation as possible)
The best way to achieve this: Play with, talk to and read to your child, sing to him/her, tell him/her nursery rhymes, listen to stories on radio/audio, go out, visit other people
- **Don't lecture**; correct mistakes by simply repeating what was said, but as it should be

The following are some important things to know about learning to speak additional languages:

- Learn the **first language as well as possible** (This takes around 5 years)
- It is **perfectly possible to learn several languages at the same time**
- There is **no perfect method** for doing so
- With good stimulation and plenty of practice, learning a further language takes about 3 years
- You should not necessarily expect your child to be able to speak two or more languages **perfectly**
- Language mix-ups are normal, as are mistakes in the use of genders, articles and sentence structure
- Children should also learn to write the new language in order to consolidate their knowledge (e.g. through HSU courses: https://www.dortmund.de/de/leben_in_dortmund/bildungswissenschaft/schule/herkunftssprachlicher_unterricht/index.html)
- You should view **media critically** (no TV, mobile phone or PC below the age of 3; living language models are much better, radio/audio plays are good)

Make sure your child understands that **German is just as important** as his/her first or family language.

The advantages of being able to speak more than one language may include:

- Greater socio-emotional capabilities (including empathy/sympathy)
- Enhanced conflict management abilities
- Better memory performance
- Enhanced attentiveness
- Ability to learn other languages more easily
- Greater cultural experience
- More potential dialogue partners
- More professional opportunities

"As many languages you speak, as many times you are a human being."
(Johann Wolfgang Goethe, German writer)