

Speaking a Second Language

Tips to Help Kids Become Bilingual

According to many researchers, educators and early childhood specialists, the best time to introduce a foreign language is when the child is young, before language and speech patterns are fixed. In addition, other studies have suggested that bilingual teaching to toddlers is the perfect age to set multiple language development.

OPUS 111 Music Studio offers a unique, specialized "Mommy and Me" program to teach both children and parents a foreign language in a fun and highly interactive environment.

We offer the following tips for parents to start a foreign language program for their young children:

1. ***Create a relaxed and inventive environment.*** "Teach yourself" books and courses can be dull and tedious. At OPUS 111 Music Studio we propose a method whereby parents can join their children when learning a foreign language. Toddlers learn words for the colors of the rainbow, the number of fingers on their hands, the name of their favorite animal and much more – all with the person they love most.
2. ***Think of foreign language as building blocks.*** Each new word taught to your child is another block to the structure of language. The potential benefits of speaking more than one language are enormous. Not only does it broaden a child's understanding and acceptance of other cultures, but it also improves English comprehension skills. ***Research suggests that learning a second language at an early age can enrich mental development.***
3. ***Start with a single word and then slowly build up to two- and three-word phrases.*** When naming objects always point them out. Children remember words by visualizing them.
4. ***If you speak a language other than English, then use it with your child.*** Point to objects in your home, for instance, and say their name in English followed by their foreign language equivalent. It sometimes helps to make a game of labeling items around the house with foreign words.
5. ***Use lots of repetition.*** Repetition is the key to learning. In no time your child will be using these newfound words with surprising frequency.
6. ***Speak positively to your child about the value of learning another language.*** Play up the pleasure and excitement of traveling to far off lands. It is especially exciting when able to speak several languages.
7. ***Sing, play games and practice new words in the chosen language.*** If there is a cable TV station in your area that broadcasts in a foreign language then have the kids tune in to the cartoons and kiddy shows.
8. ***Play tapes, CDs and videos in the chosen foreign language.*** Children learn easily when the language is woven into their everyday life. In today's media there are wonderful multilingual programs. For example, *Dora the Explorer* and Univision (Saturday morning cartoons) are great tools for creating a multilingual baby.
9. ***Expose your child to people from varied language and cultural backgrounds.*** You may want to tune into a radio station and listen to music in the foreign language.
10. ***So how can parents help their kids become bilingual?*** For starters bilingual parents should not be reluctant (as some are) to speak in their native language around the house. The kids will pick up English through day-to-day exposure. Sometimes parents think that speaking both languages will confuse a child. It will not. ***Visit the native country.*** A child under the age of 13 will learn to speak the language in about three months' time.
11. ***Enroll your child in a foreign language program.*** Check out opportunities for formal language instruction beginning as early as "Mommy and Me" preschool. Many public schools now introduce foreign language learning as early as kindergarten. It is the greatest gift parents can give their children. Indeed, the potential benefits of speaking more than one language are enormous. Not only will it broaden a child's understanding and acceptance of other cultures, but it will also improve comprehension skills in English.

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