



**What are the advantages of speaking more than one language?**

Speaking two (or more) languages can help a child to:

- maintain a link with their family culture and heritage. The home language is very important for passing on values and traditions and maintaining cultural identity.
- develop stronger skills in reading, language learning, attention and thinking. Learning and using more than one language can improve creative thinking, problem-solving and expression.
- express their emotions because the home language is usually the one which the child learns first, so it has a special value.
- have a better understanding of how language works and can make learning other languages easier.
- have better employment opportunities as many employers seek people who can speak, read and write in more than one language.

**How can I make sure my child keeps up their first/home language?**

- Talk to your child in your home language(s). Socialise in your home language community and keep in touch with extended family.
- Encourage your child to learn new words in their first/home language. These words will help make links when learning English words.
- Read and talk about dual language books with your child. The town library should be able to provide dual language books in most languages. Use your language to talk about the pictures and ask questions i.e. Who? What? Where? Why? When? • Talk to your child about their day in your language(s); encourage them to tell you about one thing that they learnt/did that day. • Talk about class subjects; link this to your country/culture if possible i.e. similarities and differences. • Play turn-taking games such as I-Spy, Snap, Dominoes, Lotto, Snakes and Ladders and practise the language(s).

**My English is not very good. Should I speak English with my child?**

It is better to use your home language because you will provide a good model of the language.

**What if my child does not want to use our home language?**

Children may want to use English all the time because they want to fit in with their friends. Sometimes this only lasts a short time. Keep encouraging the use of your first language at home. Over time, your child may become more confident and open to speaking both languages.

**Remember:** It can take years to develop social English. It can take many more years to fully develop the academic English language skills needed for education. Your child's first/home language provides the best foundation for learning additional languages and new concepts. Continuing to develop your child's home language will strengthen their English language learning.