

ONE CHILD

many languages



CONGRATULATIONS!

Your child is one of millions of children who grow up in multilingual families.

TALK AND SING IN “THE LANGUAGE OF YOUR HEART” WITH YOUR BABY

- The better command you have of your mother tongue, the easier it is for you to learn other languages.
- The more you hear and speak a language, the better you master it.
- Playing with other children promotes a child’s ability to interact with others and to develop language skills.

LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT STARTS EARLY

- Even before they are born, babies learn to recognize their mothers’ language. Experiments show that four-day old babies prefer their mother’s language, spoken by another woman, to other languages spoken by the same woman.
- Babies make the sounds of all languages in their babble, but as they grow older, they retain only the sounds of the languages in their surroundings.
- At ten months, babies “talk” in long babble “sentences” that have the rhythm and intonation of the languages in their surroundings.

HOW DO CHILDREN BECOME MULTILINGUAL?

- Since Swedish will be the dominant language in your child’s life (friends, school, etc.), it is important that he or she is exposed to the family’s language in many different kinds of contexts.
- Continue to speak your mother tongue with your child even if he or she answers you in Swedish. Encourage your child to use your common language.
- Show your child that you are proud of your language, even if no one else in your surroundings speaks it.
- If neither you nor your partner speaks Swedish, it’s important that you have a positive attitude to seeing your child learn Swedish. If you and your partner speak different languages, it’s important that you have a positive attitude to the other person’s language.

MULTILINGUAL DEVELOPMENT

- Children who grow up with several different languages start talking at the same age as monolingual children.

- The process of learning two or more languages follows in principle the same course of development as learning one language.
- Multilingual children learn early on to distinguish their different languages from each other and therefore often become linguistically aware at an earlier age than monolingual children.
- Children's different languages will be dominant during different periods of their lives.

To have command of a language means being able to function in the environment you find yourself in.

If the environment is multilingual, children need all their languages.

Children pick up languages for the need to belong to the people they love and are close to.

The very best way for your child to acquire your language is by letting it be fun. So, try to encourage your child's interest by singing, playing and telling stories. And when the child gets older - read together! Children's books - in many languages - are available at your library.

NOTHING CAN MAKE UP FOR LOTS OF TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD

Human interaction is the best method for fostering both first and second language development. Of course, audio and video materials can also serve as a positive and entertaining source of support for language learning. However, nothing can ever make up for lots of talking with your child.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CONTACT A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST (LOGOPED)?

- if you think your child's language development is slower than it was for his or her siblings or children in the same situation and of the same age
- if your child has been in a Swedish-language environment (daycare, daycare mother) for one and a half to two years without learning the everyday Swedish you'd expect...

...then you should contact a child health-care center (*barnvårdscentral-BVC*) or a speech and language pathologist (*logoped*).

© Monica Westerlund, associate professor, licensed speech and language pathologist



The Language Network (Språknätet) is a cooperative venture between child healthcare centres (BVC), libraries, open preschools, and speech and language pathologists (logopedi) in the Uppsala region.

On the website of the Language Network (Språknätet) there is more information and advice pertaining to children's language development: www.spraknatet.se