

Did you know that...

About Bilingual Families Perth

... at the time of birth babies can make all sounds and during the first six months after birth they discard the sounds they distinguish as not necessary

... babies need to hear the sounds of their family language, they are very sensitive to voice intonation, can recognise 'sad' from 'happy' sounds and will soon start 'talking back' in their baby way

... the first twelve months in a child's life cover a critical period for the brain development responsible for binocular vision, emotional control, habitual way of responding and language

... language is usually established by three years of age. If the baby learns two languages before then, both languages become first languages

... parents are the first teachers of children



... if parents mix their mother tongue with English, the children are most likely to do so as well. To motivate a child to speak well, we need to model good language. New vocabulary is good for the brain

... 16% of Perth's population speak a language other than English at home (in some suburbs around 40%)

... monolinguals are the exception in the world as 75% of the world's population speak more than one language

Bilingual Families Perth is a not-for-profit network of families with more than one language.

Our network members speak:

Afrikaans, Arabic, Bosnian, Cantonese, Croatian, Danish, Dutch, English, Farsi, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Macedonian, Mandarin, Norwegian, Portuguese, Russian, Samoan, Serbian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Swiss-German, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, Vietnamese and Urdu (as of July 2004)

We Offer

- ✓ **Volunteer language co-ordinators**
- ✓ **Kids Language Clubs**
- ✓ **Parent workshops**
- ✓ **Social events** to meet and make friends
- ✓ **Newsletters** e-mail based
- ✓ **Website** www.geocities.com/bilingualfamilies

Membership Benefits

- ✓ **meet** other families, learn and grow with bilingual friends
- ✓ **access** to resources, workshops, camps, website & newsletter
- ✓ **initiate** new projects and kids clubs

Annual membership fees are only \$10 for families and individuals or \$30 for organisations

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Language Choice for New Parents

Handling Two or More Languages in One Family



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Advantages of Bilingualism

For more than fifty years, research has confirmed the advantages of bilingualism, which include:

Communication skills

- ✓ Stronger bonding with extended family
- ✓ Understanding that people can communicate in different ways

Cultural appreciation

- ✓ Enhanced sense of cultural identity through knowledge of two or more cultures
- ✓ Deeper acceptance and understanding of other cultures

Cognitive Learning

- ✓ Improved analytical and problem solving skills
- ✓ Better understanding about the mechanics of the languages being learnt

Personal development

- ✓ Increased self-esteem
- ✓ Greater confidence in social interaction and hence better interpersonal skills

Educational/Career benefits

- ✓ Knowledge of family language can be built on for Tertiary Entrance Exam (TEE)
- ✓ Enhanced career prospects

Make it fun! Do all sorts of activities like singing, dancing, cooking, drawing or sports. Share songs, little poems, games and rhymes with your children.

Maintain your proficiency in your own language. Use magazines, newspapers, books, internet. Don't forget the dictionary!

Read, read and read to your children. Start from the moment they are born and never stop.

Use all sort of media. Get books, videos, tapes & DVD's from your local & state library.

Form a Kids Language Club or Playgroup with other parents that speak your own language.

Try these TIPS

Create a social environment with your bilingual friends. Organise gatherings, picnics, or excursions.

Don't force it. Enjoy their progress, praise every effort, listen to them, and make them feel special.



Strategies for Bilingual Families

Every family is different and has to explore and find their most suitable strategy to bilingualism. These are some of the strategies that bilingual families use:

One person one language

Each person consistently speaks the language she/he speaks best – recommended where both parents do not speak the minority language equally well.

Minority language at home

The minority language is spoken at home – recommended when both parents speak the minority language quite well.

Both parents both languages

Parents choose which language is spoken to the child according to location, time of day or environment.

Frequently Asked Questions

When should I start talking to the baby in my mother tongue?

Start at birth. Babies begin to learn about language while in the womb. By speaking your mother tongue – the language you speak best – you are providing the best language model for your baby. Speaking in your mother tongue will also enhance your relationship with the baby because you will feel more relaxed in communication. After all, language is strongly linked to emotion, affection and identity.

Can I start using my mother tongue later?

Yes, but the later you leave it, the harder will be for the child to be fluent in both languages.

Will my baby be confused with more than one language?

No. Children can easily learn two or more languages at the same time, providing they have plenty of exposure to the languages and good role models to imitate and interact with. Some times children may use a word from the other language and will appear to be mixing the languages. This is normal and should not last long.

Will my baby's speech be delayed?

No. There is no scientific evidence that hearing two or more languages leads to delays in language acquisition. Children vary from one another irrespective of whether they are monolingual or bilingual, some will speak earlier than others. Bilingual children will learn twice as many words as monolingual children plus producing different sounds within different grammar structures. This is a challenging and rewarding process that benefits the child's development.

What if I have more questions?

Go to our website at www.geocities.com/bilingualfamilies and follow the links. Also, explore resources at your local library and on the internet.