

# PARENTS SPECIAL: TEACHING YOUR CHILD A SECOND LANGUAGE

## *The Best Time to Teach Your Child A Second Language?*

### *When She's Learning Her First One, Says the Latest Issue of Parents*

"In our increasingly global world, parents realize that their kids will benefit from knowing more than one language," says Nancy Rhodes, director of foreign-language education at the Center for Applied Linguistics, in Washington D.C.

Exposing your child to a second language will help him learn about other cultures, say the editors of *Parents* magazine, in the feature "Bilingual Babes," published in the August issue.

Research has shown that bilingual children tend to be more creative thinkers than those who speak one language, and one study suggests that their brain functions may stay sharper as they age.

Here are a handful of tips to get your little linguist learning:

- **Start now.** The earlier you introduce a second language, the easier it will be for your child to pick up its unique sounds. The ability to hear different phonetic pronunciations is sharpest before age 3, and we lose the capacity to hear and produce certain sounds if we aren't exposed to them early on.
- **Create a casual learning environment.** The best way for a child to learn a new language is for him to hear people speaking it fluently. If he's exposed to conversations, he'll begin to pick up the sounds and the natural accent. Choose a language that is spoken in your neighborhood, on a TV show your child can watch regularly, or one that is offered in classes or playgroups in your area.
- **Teach a word at a time.** If you don't want to do formal lessons, you can introduce bilingual basics by pointing out to your child that objects can have two names – one in each language.
- **Have reasonable expectations.** A child won't learn to speak another language fluently from hearing words, watching videos, or singing songs. But simply being exposed to a language will help her understand phrases when she hears them.

"Bilingual Babes" also provides advice to parents who are already raising children in a bilingual household; suggests toys, games and CDs; and gives a link to [parents.com/august](http://parents.com/august) for free printables for making learning Spanish, Italian and French fun.

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