

What if me and my partner speak different languages?

- That's not a problem for children's language development.
- You can speak your language with your child and your partner can speak their language. You'll have a shared language as a couple too. Multilingual children don't get confused about their languages or about who speaks what language.
- Remember that language learning takes time.
- Children can go through phases of preferring one language over another or responding to you in the community language. Keep speaking your language because this will at least develop your child's understanding.

What about mixing languages?

- Multilingual people mix and switch their languages. Children naturally learn the rules of when it's okay to switch and when it's not. Mixing is normal and not a sign of a language problem or confusion.

If I want to help my child learn some English before they start school what should I do?

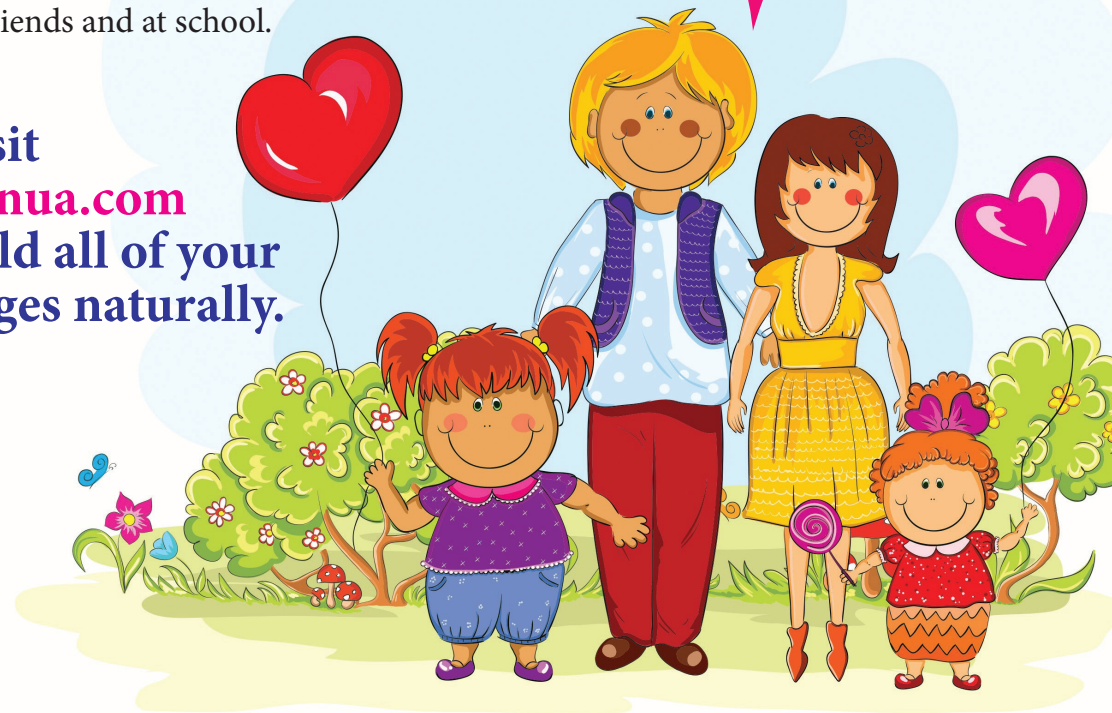
- It's really important to keep using your home languages. Reading together and talking about the letters and spellings in the stories in your home languages will help your child learn English better. They will pick up English from their English speaking friends and at school.

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GROWING UP WITH TWO OR MORE LANGUAGES



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Do you speak two or more languages at home?

Being bilingual or multilingual means needing to understand and use two or more languages.

'Home language' means the language(s) used by you in your home.

'Community language' means the language(s) used by the people of the community outside your home – in school, in the shops, in newspapers, on TV.

More than half of the people in the world speak at least two languages.

When should we start using two or more languages?

It's never too early. Your baby starts to hear at 26 weeks of pregnancy and starts to separate the languages before they're born.

There are many ways to raise a multilingual child. It's important to do what suits you and your family best. There's no right or wrong way to do this.

Should I speak to my child in English even though it's not my first language?

- You don't have to, as English is heard throughout the community. Your child will learn in preschool and school. A solid foundation in their home languages makes it easier to learn another language.
- Home languages are in danger of being lost once your child starts to learn the community language so it's best to support your languages as much as possible.

Will speaking home languages cause delays?

- No – multilingual children do things at the same ages as monolingual children. Like babbling at around 7 months, first words at between 12 and 15 months.
- Children who have autism or Down syndrome can also become multilingual.

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