

What do I do if my child only wants to talk to me in English?

If your child only speaks to you in English we recommend that you do not worry and continue to talk to them in your first language(s).

Our home language uses a different script. Will this confuse my child?

Learning to read and write in your first language will help your child to learn to read and write in English. With practice, your child should be able to learn to read and write in two completely different languages.



The importance of maintaining first language skills

– A guide for parents with pre-school children



This leaflet is also available in:

- Bulgarian
- Hungarian
- Latvian
- Lithuanian
- Polish
- Portuguese
- Romanian
- Russian



HFD3403

It is really important for your pre-school child's development that first language skills are maintained. We've produced this guide to explain why it matters and how you can help your child develop their language skills

Why is it important for me to continue to develop my child's first language(s) skills?

Maintaining your child's first language(s) is vital for their education and it also helps them to retain their own culture and identity, whilst their English language skills are developing.

It is important that you continue to speak your first language(s) with your child at home - your child will have plenty of opportunities to hear and speak English outside of their home environment.

Your child's first language(s) provides a firm foundation on which they can build to acquire English language skills and, at pre-school age, it is also important for their social development.

Research proves that children with well-developed first language skills acquire additional languages more quickly. Children who do not continue to develop their first language(s) may experience difficulty with their English language skills.



How can I help my child to develop their first language(s) skills?

There are lots of ways in which you can help your child to continue their first language(s) skills. We've listed some simple ideas below as a guide:

- Read fact and fiction books in your first language daily with your child
- Talk about your child's day at pre-school in your first language
- Ask your pre-school teachers about topics they will be covering in the near future and talk to your child about them in your first language, before they learn about them in English
- Sing songs and rhymes and play counting games in your first language
- Keep in touch with your extended family and encourage them to talk regularly to your child in your first language
- Together with your child, listen to audio stories, watch films and television in your first language and then talk about them afterwards in your first language
- Together with your child, look at first language websites and do e-learning games and activities
- Talk about and encourage reading and writing skills in your first language

- Encourage your child to take books in their first language to pre-school.
- Encourage your child to feel proud of the fact that they can speak another language
- Speak to the pre-school teachers about your language skills and offer to read a story or teach a song or rhyme in your first language to all of the children

What do I need to do if my child mixes languages?

Children often mix languages at a young age; this is very common when a child is learning two languages at the same time. You don't need to be overly concerned because in time your child will gradually begin to separate the two languages.

