

Multilingual parenting: that's awesome!

Dear parent,

Kind en Gezin wants to give you all the support you need for the language development of your child and your multilingual parenting. Parents, grandparents, child minders, brothers and sisters ... all make sure that your child can learn one or more languages. For this reason we have translated the most important information about language development, language stimulation and multilingual parenting. More extensive information is to be found in the brochures "Kameleonboekje" and "Meertalig opvoeden".



Kameleonboekje



This booklet will assist you in your reflections on how you want to raise your child multilingually. It maps out your family and its surroundings, and as such you can make a choice together. Because there are many ways to raise your child multilingually. There is no one right choice. Every family is different and chooses for itself. But there are many things to consider.

‘Multilingual parenting in our family’

1. Our wishes

- Which languages do you want your child to learn? And why?
- What’s the purpose of the different languages?
- Are the different languages equally important?
- How much of a grasp on the different languages should your child have?
- Are everyone’s expectations in the family the same?

2. Who speaks which language?

A child learns the languages it hears when you talk to it. Those languages have to be used regularly.

- Parent(s)
- Brothers and sisters
- Grandparents
- In a childcare centre
- Others (aunts, uncles, neighbours, friends ...)

3. Where do we speak which language?

It’s possible you speak different languages with your child depending on the location.

- At home
- En route
- When visiting someone
- At the childcare centre
- At school

4. Our choice

How are we going to teach our child different languages?

- Which languages?
- With whom?
- How?



Language development between the ages of 0 and 3

Learning to talk is truly a miracle! Your baby unconsciously makes its first baby noises.

Two and a half years later, your toddler is babbling all day long and understands a lot.

1. During pregnancy
 - Week 21: your baby can already hear you!
2. Baby 0-15 months old
 - The first sounds
 - Crying
 - Cooing
 - Babbling: from the age of 7 months, a baby starts to babble: 'da-da-da' and 'ma-ma-ma'.
 - The first word: around the age of 1 year old, the first words are uttered. Not perfectly, but understandable.
3. Toddler 15 months to 3 years old
 - A lot of new words
 - The first sentences: around the age of 1.5 years old, your child will utter its first two-word sentences.
 - Longer sentences
4. Pre-schooler 3 to 6 years old
 - Sentences of 3 to 5 words.



How can you help your child with its language development?

1. **Talk a lot with your baby!**

Have conversations with your baby. Give it time to react.

And respond to its noises, movements ...

The more

you talk to your child, the more opportunity it has to learn language.



2. **Start from birth**

Talk to your baby from birth! Even if it doesn't talk itself yet, it is learning plenty of language.

3. **All day long!**

You can talk to your child all day long. While eating and nursing. Or during a walk. Or when playing together. It is something spontaneous and natural.

4. **Storytelling, singing, reading aloud ...**

There are several ways to help your child with its language development.

Your child enjoys it when you sing songs to it. Reading a book together is fun. Or tell a story. Your child will learn new words that way too.

Tips for multilingual parenting

- Speak with your child in the language or languages that you feel comfortable speaking and are best at. When talking feels natural and spontaneous, it will help your child's language development.
- Multilingual parenting? While you are pregnant, think about the function of the different languages in your family and environment.



Make agreements about who will speak which language or languages with your child.

- Ensure that the different languages are used enough. A child learns the language or languages you often use when talking with it.
- Do you know any songs, stories or books in your mother tongue? Let your child enjoy them too! That is how you pass on your mother tongue.
- Sound knowledge of the mother tongue
A sound knowledge of the mother tongue provides a solid basis for learning other languages. Spontaneous conversations between parent and child in the home language are very helpful for language development.
- Clear agreements
Make clear agreements about who speaks what language and at what times. This way, each language can be given sufficient attention. If the mother tongue is not given enough attention, chances are that your child will learn it less well or even forget most of it.
- First contact with Dutch
If you don't speak Dutch at home, it might be a good idea to have your child attend childcare for a couple of days. As such, your child will have heard Dutch before starting school. Moreover, it constitutes something positive for its well-being! Your child plays with other children and discovers the world! You as a parent will, on top of that, meet other parents there.
- Differences between languages
A multilingual child does not speak or use each language in the same way. That is very common! Much depends on the way in which they are exposed to the different languages and on the opportunities to use the languages: reading and writing at school, speaking at school and at home ...



Any questions? Who can you contact if you need any help?

If you want to talk about this with someone, contact Kind en Gezin with your questions. You can talk about this during the consultations before and after birth or during a home visit.

Or you can ask your questions by means of the Kind en Gezin-Lijn: 078 150 100.

In short: questions are welcome!



Ask your questions by means of the Kind en Gezin-Lijn: 078 150 100. You can contact a Kind en Gezin employee every work day from 8 am to 8 pm. Send us an e-mail by means of the contact form on kindengezin.be.

