

TIPS FOR LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OF CHILDREN (0 - 12 YEARS) IN MULTILINGUAL FAMILIES



IS YOUR FAMILY MULTILINGUAL OR DO YOU HAVE A FAMILY LANGUAGE OTHER THAN GERMAN?

Speaking several languages has many advantages: You gain access to different cultures and your children feel at home in various cultures. Children can easily learn different languages at the same time: simultaneously, consecutively or together.

A sound command of German is important for your child to be successful in school. Your child will learn German in the child day-care centre, kindergarten and school. As parents, you are your child's most important helpers in learning German. The following tips will show you how you can support your child in this process.

ACTIVE USE OF LANGUAGE IN THE FAMILY

Talk a lot to your child at home. Use your preferred language - the "language of your heart". Usually this is your native language. For example, ask your child to help you: "Let's put the laundry away now. You can fold the socks. Then I will put the towels into the cupboard." In case the parents have different mother tongues, father and mother should speak to the child in their respective language, e.g. mother Romanian, father German. Also sing children's songs from your home country or in other languages with your child.

READING AND READING ALOUD

Read to your children regularly - preferably daily, e.g. before bed time.

Tip: The project "Amira Lesen" www.amira-lesen.de offers free multilingual children's books in German, Italian, Turkish, Russian, Arabic, English, Polish, Farsi and Spanish. The stories are based on primary school vocabulary. The texts are read out slowly. Multilingual children's books in German, Arabic, Farsi, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Tamil and Turkish are available - also free of charge - from the Mulingula projects at www.mulingula-praxis.de

ATTENDING A CHILD DAY-CARE CENTRE ("KITA") / DAY-CARE PROVIDERS OR KINDERGARTEN

The longer children attend the day-care centre, kindergarten or day-care provider, the more time they have to learn German - and the better prepared they are for school. In the child care centre and kindergarten children learn to hear and speak and acquire a broad vocabulary: At the start of school, a child with German as a first language has a command of about 5,000 different words. Pupils with an extensive vocabulary can better understand lesson contents than pupils with a limited vocabulary. Ideally, your child should attend a child day-care centre before the age of three.

- > The town halls provide information about childcare services.



EXTENDING ACCESS TO THE GERMAN LANGUAGE

Library: Visit the local library with your child. Free passes are available for children and teenagers and you can borrow books, audio books, games and DVDs free of charge with your child. Ask the library staff for age-appropriate books for your child. Children's libraries also have good offers for reading promotion. Children who are used to books and read regularly are better at spelling and text writing.

Leisure activities: Find out (e.g. at the town hall), which leisure and sports activities there are in your area. Your child will come into contact with other children of the same age while playing football, making music or participating in other hobbies. This improves the child's communication skills and enables him or her to find friends.

School offers: Ask your school for offers in addition to lessons, e.g. homework assistance or reading sessions. If afternoon care is available (as core-time care or after-school care), make use of it if possible. This way, your child will acquire German language skills more quickly.

Children's channel: If your child has already started learning German, he or she can also watch age-appropriate children's films or television programmes on the children's channel (Kinderkanal KIKA) (www.kika.de). This improves the listening comprehension and expands the vocabulary. Films and children's programmes should only be used for a limited period of time. They complement the other measures, but do not replace them.

LEARN GERMAN YOURSELF

By learning German themselves, parents as role models can send an important signal to their children. Children realise that learning German is important and worthwhile. Find out about your own options for taking part in a German course. More information on this is available in the brochure "Deutsch lernen für Neuzuwanderer im Landkreis Heilbronn" [Learning German for new immigrants in the Heilbronn District], which is available online under Downloads at: www.landkreis-heilbronn.de/deutsch-lernen

We wish your family every success in learning German!

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