

# What you as a **parent** need to know about being multilingual

Age 6–12



de Bibliotheek

## 1 **Your role in your child's development of language**

Even if your child is already at primary school, as a parent you play an important role in their development of language. That's why you need to make sure that you continue to talk to your child and that they read or you read to them at home. An active 'culture of language' at home provides your child with the best opportunities for positive language development.



## 3 **Prefer speaking Dutch?**

Schoolchildren sometimes prefer to speak Dutch with their parents rather than other languages that they can learn at home. This is usually because they do not want to be 'different' from other children, and because there is little or no focus at school on other languages they speak. Be patient and understanding with your child, and encourage your child to use all the languages you think are important for her or him.

## 2 **Talk and read lots with your child, in the language you know best**

At this age, your child will discover everything about him/herself and the world around him/her. Thanks to language, children are able to learn to reflect. That's why good language development is important.

### **How do you make reading a pleasurable experience at home?**

*for the overall development of your child.*

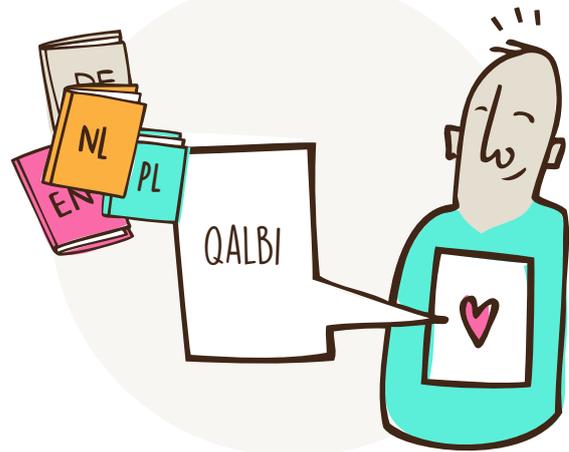
*Reading a lot helps with your child's development of language. And it is also a wonderful way of getting to know new people and stories or of immersing yourself completely in something. The tips below will help you on your journey in encouraging your child to read!*

1. Go to the library together. It's free almost everywhere up to the age of 18.
2. Let your child choose what he/she likes. Ask whether there are multilingual or foreign-language books for children.
3. Give your child a book they'd like to have as a gift. At the (children's) bookshop or over the Internet, you can order books in other languages.
4. Follow your child's interest and talk about books in whatever language you and your child want. Children often love a particular series or are interested in a particular subject. Nothing is as good for being motivated to read as enthusiasm for the subject matter!
5. Put fun books in a visible place where your child can always find them. Having your 'very own' book shelf or bookcase makes it even more personal.

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## Reading and writing

For many multilingual children, it is important to learn to read and write in all the languages they speak. If your child learns to read and write in another language outside of school, then maybe consult with your teacher about what order is appropriate for your child to learn in. Are you looking for activities you can do at home with your child to encourage reading and writing? Then take a look at [Language starts at home](#).



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## The benefits of multilingualism

It is evident from research that multilingualism is very good for the development of your brain, even in young children. Children do not get confused by multilingualism and don't perform any worse at school. However, it may be that people do not understand why you talk to your child in your own language. Or that teachers say that it's not good to keep talking in your own language and that you ought to be able to speak Dutch. You might wish to tip them off to take a look at [Meertalig.nl](#). Then they too will learn how important it is to share your own language with your



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## How do I prevent my child from falling behind in their language learning?

Knowledge of another language is never the cause of lagging behind. It may be the case that your child learns the Dutch language in a slightly different way than a child that only speaks Dutch. If your child is getting a good education, he or she will be just as good in Dutch as children who grow up in a Dutch-speaking family. If you are still worried about language development, then talk to the teaching staff or consult a speech therapist specialising in multilingualism.

### Would you like to find out more about multilingual education?

**Multilingual education. Your child will thank you.** Marinella Orioni. Published by Van Genneep, 2015.