

# Parenting Counts

Speaking, Learning, Living

## Bilingual Babes: Teach Your Child a Second Language

[www.parents.com](http://www.parents.com)

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The best time to teach your child a second language is the same time she's learning her first one. "Kids this age are developing language skills rapidly, and they quickly absorb whatever they hear," says Erika Levy, Ph.D., assistant professor of speech and language pathology at Columbia University Teachers College, in New York City. "They can learn to understand new words in two different languages at an incredibly fast rate."

You don't need to enroll your child in formal language classes to hear her repeat words and songs in a new tongue -- just listen in when she's watching television shows like *Dora the Explorer*, *Go, Diego, Go!* and *Sesame Street*, which teach basic Spanish words to the preschool set. Lots of parents are also supplementing this elementary knowledge with bilingual books, toys, and CDs.

Here's how to get your little linguist to begin learning.

**Start now.** Two- and 3-year-olds are not only increasing their vocabularies, they're starting to recognize the speech patterns they've been hearing since birth. The earlier you introduce a second language, the easier it will be for your child to pick up its unique sounds. The ability to hear different phonetic pronunciations is sharpest before age 3, and we lose the capacity to hear and produce certain sounds if we aren't exposed to them early on. So just hearing a television show, listening to music, or learning a few words in a second language will give your child essential tools for appreciating it now and learning to speak it later.

**Create a casual learning environment.** The best way for a child to learn to understand a new language is for him to hear people speaking it fluently. If he's exposed to conversations, he'll begin to pick up the sounds and the natural accent. Choose a language that is spoken in your neighborhood, on a television show your child can watch regularly, or one that is offered in classes or playgroups in your area.

**Teach a word at a time.** If you don't want to do formal lessons, you can introduce bilingual basics by pointing out to your child that objects can have two names -- one in each language. As your child learns new words, tell him what they're called in a second language too.

**Have reasonable expectations.** Of course, a child won't learn to speak another language fluently from hearing words, watching videos, or singing songs. But simply being exposed

to a language will help her understand phrases when she hears them. So even though you probably won't be having a French conversation with your child very soon, if you say "*bon appétit*" at meal time, she'll figure out what you mean

### Benefits of learning foreign languages at an early age

- Children develop a life-long love of communicating with others
- Children develop a greater appreciation for diversity
- A child's ability in English is enhanced from learning about the structure of other languages
- Children have the capacity to learn many languages without getting them confused. The body automatically compartmentalizes each language correctly.
- Children will achieve a more native grasp of both grammar and pronunciation in the second language
- Since we live in a global community that's filled with diversity, the need for a child to have second language capability is greater today than ever before.
- Standardized test scores are often higher than for those of children who do not learn second languages
- Bilingual skills are in great demand in the job market.

"Change your language and you change your thoughts."

why read  
today

funny bones



**Which dinosaur roamed the wild, wild West?**

Tyrannosaurus Tex

**And what did he ride?**

A bronco-saurus.



## Early Childhood Screening

Early Childhood Screening is a FREE health and development screening that is required by the State of Minnesota to be completed at least once before Kindergarten. The target age for screening is 3 years old, but it can be done earlier if you are concerned about your child's development.

During the screening process, your child's vision, hearing, growth, and skills will be checked and immunizations reviewed. The screening is a way to find out how your child is developing, get your questions answered, and link with your local school district.

To schedule a screening or communicate a concern about your child's development, call 387-1818, if you live in the Mankato Area Public School district. If you live outside of the Mankato Area Public School district, please call your local school district to schedule an appointment.

## kids in the kitchen

### Apple Pie Recipe for Babies

Apple pie is a great treat to serve your baby, but the pies that come in the grocery store are too sweet and too chunky for baby to handle. Here is an apple pie recipe just for baby. This recipe is for babies who are 6 months or over.

*Attention: Only use the egg yolk for babies over 10 months old. For 6 to 10 months take out the egg yolk and use baby cereal to thicken the pie.*

3 cooking apples  
1 egg yolk  
1/2 teaspoon lemon juice  
1 teaspoon brown sugar  
1 teaspoon water or apple juice  
Small pinch of ground cinnamon

1. Peel and core the apples and then cut up into small pieces. Pour lemon juice and water into a small saucepan, add apples.
2. Heat on medium for about 20 minutes or until the mixture is soft.
3. Puree the mixture to the consistency you want it.
4. Add in egg yolk (or if infant is younger than 10 months, add cereal) and sugar.
5. Beat until the mixture is smooth. If you are adding cereal, add in 1 tablespoon at a time until the mixture is the desired consistency.
6. Transfer to a baking dish.
7. Bake at 350 degrees for about 15 minutes, enough time for the pie to set. Serve cooled.

<http://babyandtoddlerrecipes.com>

## activity block

### Hide 'n' Eat

**Appropriate for:** 7 to 10 months, Skills developed: Fine motor, understanding of object permanence

**What you'll need:** A clean dish towel, finger foods, and some small opaque cups or containers

Show your baby a snack (anything that's not too wet or mushy), then cover it with a cloth dish towel or napkin. Let him lift the veil and discover that his treat is still there, even though he couldn't see it just a moment ago. You can also inject a little sleight of hand: Put two small pieces of food in front of your baby, then cover them with opaque cups or other containers, adding at least one extra container that's not covering anything. Swirl the cups around so he can't tell which ones are hiding food, then let him lift off the cups and find his treats.

### Supper Sorting

**Appropriate for:** 8 to 15 months, Skills developed: Fine motor, hand-eye coordination

**What you'll need:** Several small bowls and plastic containers with lids; finger foods

Fill small bowls with a colorful assortment of your baby's favorite finger foods – like small chunks of soft fruits or well-cooked veggies, O-shaped cereal, tidbits of chicken or fish, and little cubes of cheese. Give her some empty containers as well, and encourage her to mix and match, transferring the foods from one bowl to the next. (Be prepared for some smearing and throwing, too.) This is a great way to make a meal last long enough for a grown-up conversation.