

Parenting Counts

Speaking, Learning, Living

Bilingual Babes: Teach Your Child a Second Language

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

Chinese Chicken Stir Fry Recipe

This chicken stir fry recipe is made with boneless, skinless chicken breasts, sugar snap peas and carrots. If sugar snap peas are not in season, you can make this recipe with frozen sugar snap peas.

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 10 minutes

Total Time: 20 minutes

Yield: 4 Servings

- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch
 - 1 egg white
 - 1 Tbsp. rice wine (or apple juice)
 - 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into bite-sized chunks
 - 2 Tbsp. sesame or vegetable oil
 - 1 cup sugar snap peas, cut into bite-sized pieces
 - 1/4 cup shredded carrots
 - 2 Tbsp. teriyaki sauce
1. Whisk together cornstarch, egg white and rice wine in a medium bowl. Add chicken pieces. Toss to coat. Let chicken marinate at room temperature for 10 minutes.
 2. Heat heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add oil. Add chicken. Stir fry until chicken is browned. Add vegetables, stirring constantly until crisp. Add teriyaki sauce. Stir fry until chicken is cooked through and vegetables are tender. Serve chicken stir fry over hot, cooked rice.

activity block

It's a Felt Pizza Party!

Supplies Needed Felt of different colors and scissors

<http://www.toddertoddler.com/indexfeltpizza.htm>

Time to make a pizza, of felt, of course! Use colored pieces of felt and create your own pizza, while reviewing colors, shapes, and food names.

To start, take a yellow (crust) piece of felt and cut it into a circle about 8 inches in diameter. Then take a red piece and cut it into a circle about 6 inches in diameter. Now take that red circle and cut it in half then cut the halves into 3 wedges each (like pizza slices.) Now you can take your other colored pieces of felt to create the toppings:

- Black for olives (cut into little pieces, squares)
- Green for green peppers, or broccoli (triangles)
- White for cheese (strips, or small rectangles)
- Dark red for pepperoni (small circles), Brown for either sausage or mushrooms (squares)



After creating all the ingredients let your toddler put the pizza together. First lay down the yellow big circle, then add the slices of red felt on top and then add all the toppings as you please! You can do this again and again and keep making all sorts of different pizzas. One for you, for mom, for dad, for little brother, big brother and so on! **Tips/Suggestions** - Make sure to supervise your child so he doesn't put the felt pieces in his mouth.