

# Talk to me and listen to me!



12 guides to help us  
support our children  
to learn to speak

A brochure for  
parents of children  
aged up to 5

## Impressum

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Chur, June 2011

# Dear Parents,

Many congratulations on the birth of your child. The long wait is over. At last you can hold your child in your arms. You have certainly received many good wishes from relations and friends. You may also have wondered how your child will make out in life and how you can best help it.

Of course, you as parents want the best for your child. Often bringing up a child presents new challenges and sometimes one feels that one cannot cope, especially when it comes to making important decisions. Most parents face such problems.

This brochure «speak to me and listen to me» should help with one important aspect namely how you can support your child in its early years to learn to speak.

The early years in a person's life are important and you as parents can help your child both to learn to speak and to learn other languages. Fluent speech and knowledge of foreign languages are both today and will also in the future be very important in our society and to obtaining a good job.

If you yourself did not grow up speaking German or you learnt it as an adult, you may wonder how you can help your child to master it. In this brochure, you will find many helpful tips and useful information how a child can grow up speaking two or three languages.

Helping children to learn to speak is no trick. You'll discover that as you read this brochure. It requires your involvement and active participation. Read it therefore more than once and keep it by you. You will keep discovering new things which will help your child's development.

We wish you lots of fun with your child!

# Hello, you can't see me, but I can hear you!

# 1

Did you know,  
that ...

you can help your child's  
speech development  
even during pregnancy?

## **What do the experts say?**

Already in the fourth month of pregnancy, a child notices voices, especially that of its mother.

The melody of the mother's language influences a child before it is born. Also it notices music and noises whilst still in the womb.

Parents are the most important models for their children in their early years. It is therefore important to think about which language or languages parents will use to communicate with their child even as early as during pregnancy.

## **Everyday tips: What you can do for your child!**

Describe to the child your world during your pregnancy. Tell it what moves you.

The following thoughts will help you to decide which language or languages you will want to speak to your child at home:

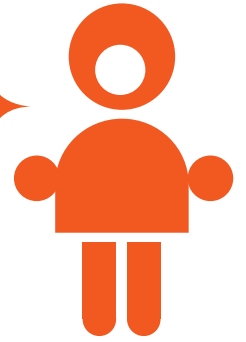
Speak to your child in the language you feel most comfortable with and that you command best. You can give your child the largest vocabulary in this language which will provide a solid basis for all the other languages that it will learn later in life.

If you as parents speak different languages well, this is a valuable start for your child. Each parent should speak his or her native tongue with the child which now has two speech models to copy.

Regardless of which language you decide to use at home, it is most important that your child learns the local language, German. It needs

good German to feel at home here, to make friends and to get a good education. Your child will be able to learn German well even if you speak another language at home.

# Mummy's language is okay! – Daddy's language is okay!



**Did you know, that ...**

**your child can learn the most when you speak to it in your native tongue?**

## ***What do the experts say?***

In general, including speech development, a good emotional relationship is an important foundation. The child can feel it when the parents speak to it in a language that they feel comfortable with.

The better the language spoken by the parents and imparted to the child, the better it is for its speech development.

The best basis to learn a second language is to speak the mother tongue fluently. Every language contains knowledge about the world that we can impart to our child through our speech.

## ***Everyday tips: What you can do for your child!***

Talk to the child in the language or dialect that you command best.

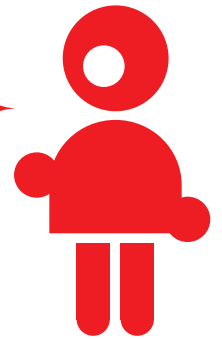
Speak a lot to your child and make time for it also to talk.

Stories, songs and children's games from your own country tell the child something about you and your native land. This is important because children need these roots.

Encourage your child to explore other languages. Be a good example! If you show a positive attitude to talking, to learning other languages, to cultivating your own language and to German, this will be transferred to your child.



# I am loveable as I am!



**Did you know,  
that ...**

**self-confidence is the  
best basis for the speech  
development of your  
child?**

***What do the experts  
say?***

A child needs the loving attention of its parents for its development in general and learning to speak in particular. It must experience and sense that it is loved and accepted to develop its self-confidence. This assurance is the key to its development.

A child also needs security. It must learn that sometimes parents have no time and cannot at once listen to it but that it will later gain their attention. It must learn why something must be done or is not possible.

***Everyday tips:  
What you can do for your child!***

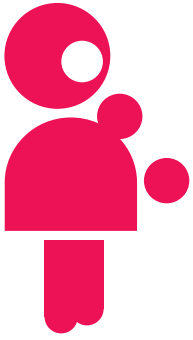
The daily routine offers many possibilities to communicate with your child and to join in conversations. You can and should begin on the first day of its life.

Explain to it what you are doing. React to its sounds and show your pleasure.

Don't put off your child to an undefined time. That makes it uncertain. Keep the promises that you make to it.

Listen to your child, talk to it and praise it! Let your child relate what it has experienced. Let it speak and don't interrupt it.

# 3



# There is room in my head for two or more languages!

Did you know, that ...

# 4

it is not too much for a child to grow up bi- or multilingual?

## What do the experts say?

Children have no problem growing up with two or more languages – millions of children live in countries where more languages are used everyday. The development of a child is not retarded by this.

Multilingual children develop like monolingual ones i.e. differently. Some begin to speak when very young, others later, some talk a lot, others less.

The development of speech is dynamic in a child. It is always learning something new and integrating it with the old. Mixing the different languages belongs to this development.

Special attention and a consultation with a doctor or expert is only necessary when a child makes no further progress or stops talking.

If children grow up monolingual, they need special support in all languages. Parents can help it to succeed in many different ways.

## Everyday tips: What you can do for your child!

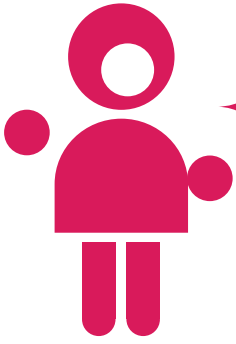
Let us suppose that you bring up your child using your mother tongue e.g. Turkish, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Kurdish, Russian, Spanish ..., and the language in your neighbourhood is German.

You talk to your child in your own language. Establish and maintain contact with your neighbours who speak German. Encourage your child to make German-speaking friends. Send your child to a play group or kindergarten. This promotes its development. The sooner it makes contacts with German-speaking children, the sooner and easier it is for the child to learn the second language.

Do both of you parents speak two languages well? In this case, the child has the possibility to learn a «mummy language» and a «daddy language». Take care to establish clear speech rules. This is especially important for small children. Mummy speaks her «mummy language» and the father his «daddy language». This enables the child to connect each language with a specific person. It also helps it to separate the languages clearly.

(Which language to use can also be selected according to the situation: in everyday circumstances one language can be used whilst at meals or doing the homework or the «good night stories» the other one. This is called «creating language islands».)

Whether your child grows up speaking one, two or three languages, it is important that you often talk to it, that you are good and patient listeners and that you praise it!



# Talk to me and listen to me!

Did you know, that ...

only children that have good hearing learn to speak well? Have you incidentally noticed that a child reacts more quickly to higher tones?

## What do the experts say?

Good hearing is a condition for good speaking. A healthy baby should after six months increasingly babble, make sounds and «speak» to itself, otherwise its hearing should be tested.

Even babies with poor hearing make sounds in their first months but this diminishes with time.

Speaking in a somewhat higher voice provokes the attention of an infant. This can induce the first laugh even at an early stage.

## Everyday tips: What you can do for your child!

Observe your child carefully especially after its sixth month. Does it react to sounds? Does it turn its head when you call it?

Music boxes and rattles are particularly suitable to arouse the baby's attention.

Talk often and a lot with your baby so that you can notice whether it hears well.

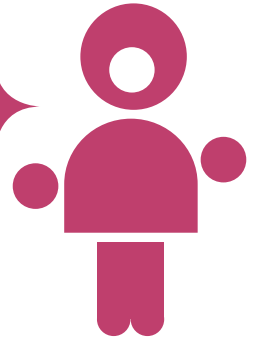
Imitate the sounds and babbles that your baby makes. Tell even a young infant what you are doing. Songs and rhymes are particularly loved by all children.

Get your baby or young child checked after any ear infection; go to a parents advisory office in your commune or to your doctor.

# 5



# I'll do it myself!



**Did you know, that ...**

**speech is learnt with all the senses? Not only is hearing important but also touching, seeing, experiencing, handling, ...**

## ***What do the experts say?***

Hearing, seeing, touching, movement, grasping, noticing movement, experiencing gravity and much more help a baby to experience and so to understand. These help to develop its emotional, mental and social abilities as well as its speech.

Your baby understands what «smooth» or «rough» means, when it can hold objects. It learns «sweet» and «sour» when it can taste food. It can learn about corners and edges when it can crawl. In this way it can build up mental concepts associated with words.

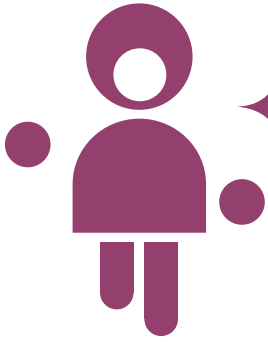
## ***Everyday tips: What you can do for your child!***

Take your baby in your arms and let it enjoy being cuddled.

Let your baby grasp objects, hold them and let them go! Give it something to bite! Let it gain as much experience as possible by itself!

When it is somewhat older, let it try out as many activities as possible: crawling at home, on the play ground or in the garden, walking, playing with sand and water, calling out and singing, helping with the cooking, laying the table, digging in the garden, planting out. This helps to make the child independent early on and will later make school easier.

# 6



# I can do more than you thought!

**Did you know, that ...**

**there is a connection between movement, play, a healthy diet, sound teeth free of caries and speech development of a child?**

## ***What do the experts say?***

Children need the experience of playing and moving. To promote speaking, the child needs lots of exercise. It should be allowed to walk, run, jump, dance, ... Speech and movement belong together.

If a child's movements, especially fine finger movement, is made more precise by play, then the mouth and tongue movements will also become more exact.

The teeth should be set correctly so that the child learns to speak properly. Clear diction is part of good knowledge of a language.

## ***Everyday tips: What you can do for your child!***

Let your child walk along low walls, eat with its fingers, drink through a straw, blow cotton balls, ... Go often to the play ground and into Nature. Make things with your child and let it handle the scissors. When you are there, nothing bad can happen. This enables the child to learn precise movements and it can develop its imagination.

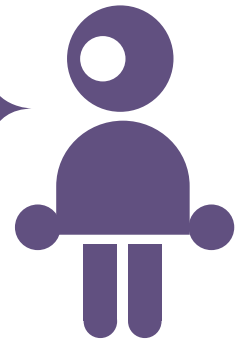
Make sure that the teeth are growing straight. Only let your child suck a dummy until it is three.

A healthy diet and something to bite between its teeth is important.

Your child should drink no sweetened drinks. Don't let it get used to such drinks!

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# Will you play with me?



**Did you know,  
that ...**

**playing and talking  
together each day bring  
enormous progress in the  
development of speech?**

## ***What do the experts say?***

The more you occupy your child, playing and speaking, the more the brain can form structures and networks. These structures and networks are decisive in speech development and later learning at school.

Regular hearing and speaking in one or more languages helps the child to find out the rules of each language. The child learns words, the grammar and to communicate properly with others. It needs constant «nourishment» in each language and should therefore hear and speak as much as possible.

## ***Everyday tips: What you can do for your child!***

Position yourself at the eye level of your child. Speak directly to and with it – for at least a quarter of an hour each day!

Talk to it about the daily activities – e.g. when taking off its shoes or jacket, giving it tea, going to bed, ... instructions and orders are not enough!

Use variable language so that your child can develop a good vocabulary, (for example use different words to describe something: lovely, beautiful, good, ...)

Rhymes and songs are wonderful sources for children of all ages to improve their vocabulary. If you can't remember your childhood rhymes and songs, ask your parents or older relations or get them out of a book. Or make up your own rhymes and stories.

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# Just let me talk!



**Did you know,  
that ...**

**one shouldn't constantly  
correct a child and make  
it repeat what you have  
just said?**

## ***What do the experts say?***

Correcting reduces the joy of talking. The most effective technique is «corrected repetition».

Children don't always show all that they can do. Often, they understand a lot but speak only a little. They need time, like seeds do to come up.

If children grow up with two languages, it is possible that one will be better than the other. This can change later in life depending on the circumstances which language may make one more relevant. For example, bilingual children may suppress their mother tongue if they go to a German-speaking kindergarten and German-speaking friends are important to them.

## ***Everyday tips: What you can do for your child!***

If your child says something incorrectly, casually repeat the word or sentence correctly. Don't make the child repeat it after you.

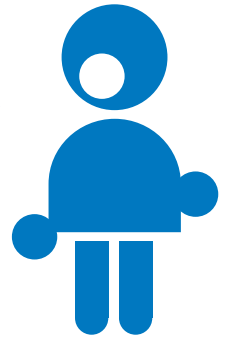
Don't insist on the child using a new word straight away.

Be patient! Talk to the child in your own language even when it replies in another one. If a child grows up with two languages, it can sometimes happen that it doesn't use one for some time.

If your child is going through such a phase, doesn't apply any pressure – simply give it as many opportunities as possible to use both languages actively. This is right way to do it.



# Will you continue reading the story today?



Did you know, that ...

10

reading out loud and talking about it are very important forms of promoting speech and preparing your child for school?

## What do the experts say?

Scientific investigations show that reading out loud in its first year has a positive affect on the speech development of a child.

Reading out loud and telling stories increase the vocabulary of a child. You create a good basis for both reading and writing since the written word may be different from the spoken language and reading out loud teaches the child the words of the written language.

Children who listen to stories and can tell them later learn a lot that is useful to them when they go to school: e.g. they learn to listen, to concentrate and remember things, learn new words, new types of sentence and much more.

## Everyday tips: What you can do for your child!

Read to your child every day from picture and story books, in the language or languages that you speak at home.

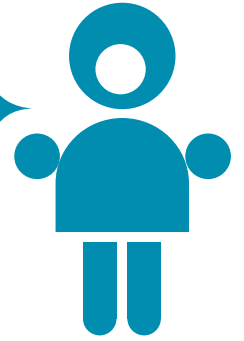
You can borrow books in different languages from many libraries. Ask at your local library if they have any books in your mother tongue.

Children love rituals! Your child too! The good night stories can become a ritual. Children like to hear the same story again and again until they understand all of it and know it by heart. Encourage your child to repeat the story, for example by asking motivating questions.

Even when your German is not so good, you can read out of German picture books.

Grandparents and other trusted persons are also good listeners and story-tellers.

# Television? No thanks! It is much nicer when mummy and daddy play with me!



**Did you know,  
that ...**

**children learn best  
when playing with others  
and not alone on the  
computer or watching  
television?**

## ***What do the experts say?***

To learn to speak, children must not only hear the spoken sounds but also their significance: they must understand what is said.

A child learns to speak only from direct contact with other persons such as their parents, siblings and later with friends.

Good children's films when watched with the parents are worthwhile. Watching television or playing computer games for hours damage children and they learn practically nothing.

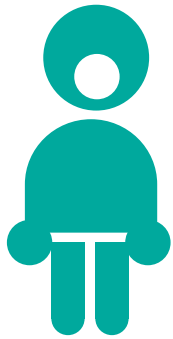
## ***Everyday tips: What you can do for your child!***

Let your child take part in the daily routine.

Give it the chance to understand new words. Helping with cooking or baking, playing with water, sand and stones or modelling clay are more suitable ways to support the child than watching television.

When your child watches TV, you should select a film and talk to it about the action. The child will then understand it better and will learn some new words.

You can borrow many good games from libraries. This enables you to wring the changes for a modest outlay and offer new inspirations.



# I want to be with other children!

Did you know, that ...

children can learn good German when they make German-speaking friends early in their lives or go to a play group or kindergarten?

## What do the experts say?

Good German is important for your child: for its life, well-being in school and for getting a good job.

To learn good German, your child needs various possibilities to hear and speak the language and to be well motivated. Friends who speak German well are a very good motivation.

Regular participation in a play group or kindergarten from their third year gives the child time to consolidate its German and so be well prepared for starting school. Even when you don't speak German at home, your child can learn the language when it has such an opportunity.

## Everyday tips: What you can do for your child!

Encourage your child to visit its friends or to invite them to your home. Normally, children learn the language that they need for everyday use very quickly.

Register your child in a play group when it is two and a half to three. Most children are mature enough at this age and look forward to making new friends and taking part in games and activities with other children.

Earlier attendance at a day nursery is also to be recommended when you need to for work reasons or you decide to for educational purposes.

When you speak another language than German at home, you can prepare your child by introducing some words and expressions that will be useful to it in a playful fashion. Try to awaken its curiosity.


Convey to it how wonderful it is to be able to speak several languages.

# 12



**What we wish  
to emphasise ...**





**If we don't cultivate languages, they get forgotten. We have to cultivate and use a language to prevent this.**

**When your child goes to kindergarten and later to school, German becomes an important language for it. It needs your help and encouragement. Don't forget to use your own or the family language.**

**Schools offer courses in the local language and culture (HSK). This is a good opportunity to promote the first language. Enquire about it and register your child for it.**

**Read newspapers and books yourself and talk to your child about new topics! This enables both of you to develop and broaden your language further.**

**Motivate your child to read, both in German and in other languages.**

**Besides German and English, it is worthwhile for your child to command a further language. This improves its chances of getting a good job.**

**Language is a treasure – every language. Its value grows, the better it is developed and cared for. A good command of languages is these days a deciding factor in the work place and society.**

# Institutions and Services providing Advice and Support to Parents

## Elternberatung Graubünden (Parental advice)

Advice for parents of infants and young children. Find out from the municipality where you live about services in your region.

## Municipal administration

Information about child support, play groups and pre-school establishments in your place of residence can be obtained from your municipal administration.

## Libraries and toy libraries

Libraries and toy libraries that lend books and games can be found in many places. Ask at your local library whether children's books are also available in your first or family language.

## Learning opportunities for children up to age 4

More than 60 short films with suggestions and ideas for how parents can support their children's development in everyday situations. Films available in 13 languages.

[www.kinder-4.ch](http://www.kinder-4.ch)

## Family and parent apps

There are many practical apps to support parents in various areas of day-to-day family life. Some of them are multilingual and free of charge.

- *Parentu – Tips for parents of children aged 0 to 16*
- *Kleine Weltentdecker (Little Explorers) – Tips for parents of young children*

## Elternbildung Graubünden (Grisons Parental Education)

The Grisons Parental Education association offers a diverse range of training courses for parents and guardians.

[www.elternbildung-gr.ch](http://www.elternbildung-gr.ch)

## famur – for families in Grisons

Provides information on services that supplement and assist care in the family such as childminders, nannies, children's day care centres and social assistance for families.

[www.famur.ch](http://www.famur.ch)

## **Heilpädagogischer Dienst Graubünden (Grisons Remedial Education Services)**

The Remedial Education Services will clarify the development status of your child and provide you with answers relating to the development of a child's personality and his or her education. Your child is given specific support in playing and in everyday-related activities, enabling him or her to enhance his/her skills.

*[www.hpd-gr.ch](http://www.hpd-gr.ch)*

## **Schulpsychologischer Dienst/Schul- und Erziehungsberatung (School Psychological Service/Schooling and Educational Advice)**

The School Psychological Service with its regional schooling and educational advice centres assists you in psychological issues and questions relating to education and schooling.

*[www.avs.gr.ch](http://www.avs.gr.ch)*

## **Kinder- und Jugendpsychiatrie Graubünden (Grisons Children's and Youth Psychiatry)**

Grisons Children's and Youth Psychiatry is a medical institution, offering assessment and treatment of children and young people with psychological, psychosomatic and psychosocial problems.

*[www.kjp-gr.ch](http://www.kjp-gr.ch)*

## **Beratungsstelle Opferhilfe Graubünden (Grisons Victim Support)**

If a child shows signs of abuse, the Beratungsstelle Opferhilfe Graubünden (Grisons Victim Support) can be contacted for professional advice and support services.

*[www.soa.gr.ch](http://www.soa.gr.ch)*

## **Elternnotruf (Parent crisis line)**

Bringing up children is often a major challenge for parents. The parent crisis line provides free telephone or e-mail advice and support, 24 hours per day, on parenting issues, conflicts, or family crises.

*0848 35 45 55*

*[www.elternnotruf.ch](http://www.elternnotruf.ch)*

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