



Language Futures Parents' guide

Strategies to help your child practise language learning at home

A key aim of the Language Futures project is to “blur boundaries between home and school learning”. In order to maximise student learning, it is important that students devote as much time and energy to home learning as classroom learning.

How to use this booklet

This booklet contains many ideas and strategies to help you support your child at home. The aim is to give you and your child a range of strategies to choose from when working on language learning outside of school. We advise you to try out as many of the ideas as possible and decide which ones work best for you and your child. We would love to hear about any additional language learning activities you have tried out at home, including any useful resources you have found.

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Key considerations

Value of parental engagement

The Language Futures initiative supports the view that parents' attitudes towards language learning can play a considerable role in a child's success. This includes general interest shown in your child's learning, as well as supporting them while they learn and even learning alongside them.

Learning within an everyday family setting is the natural way that we pick up language as children. Of course you know your children better than anyone, their strengths and weaknesses and also their likes and dislikes. The great thing about learning languages is that learning can be tailored to individual interests and hobbies which we strongly encourage.

You may feel that you do not yet know enough about the language your child is learning, but this is not a problem. Of course having knowledge of the language is extremely beneficial, but your child will also gain a lot in learning alongside an adult who knows **how to learn**. In any case, we hope that the students enjoy learning alongside you, or even being one step ahead of you and teaching you about the language themselves!

Frequency

Learning a language could be likened to learning to play a musical instrument. Above all this means frequent practice, perseverance and patience. In fact, frequency is more important than length of practice. For example, hearing Italian for 20 minutes several times a week is better than doing so for two straight hours on Saturday.

Frustration

Some children can become frustrated by their inability to express more complex thoughts in a foreign language, as they can in English. Frustration can often be overcome by setting short-term targets e.g. "I will learn eight new words today and try to put them into sentences", "I will listen to a Spanish radio station for 20 minutes a day a few days a week". Students can also be overly concerned about making mistakes. As mistakes are part of the learning process, children should be encouraged to experiment with language and not worry too much. Of course parents can assist with some error correction, but should also give students the time to correct their own mistakes.

Fun!

Nowadays there are so many ways to learn a language, including the wealth of online material, such as, language learning games and activities, foreign radio stations and TV programmes, online newspapers and magazines etc. as well as other everyday opportunities for foreign language exposure, such as, watching a film or reading a book in a foreign language or even changing the language settings of household devices. Of course, language learning doesn't always have to be a sitting down experience. Practising language informally, for example, in the car, can allow for a more natural learning environment.

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We have included a range of ideas to help you and child work effectively together at home. Some ideas link more specifically to school procedures, but most are more general language learning ideas. We advise you to experiment with as many of the ideas as possible and decide which ones work best for you and your child.

[Insert name of school] procedures and resources

- Use the immersion chart
- Use resources list (in pupils' folders) and add to this
- Look at the list of topics we are learning in class
- Connect with other parents
- Share resources via parent email group
- Encourage email contact with mentor and remind pupils to check e-mail
- Assessments are generally at the end of a half-term or term. Pupils will have this date in their planner
- Encourage your child to read for pleasure
- Encourage use of text book. Each pupil has their own copy
- Encourage effective dictionary skills
- Check homework timetable

Language learning ideas

- Make your own word games e.g. snap, pairs, hangman
- Write words on cards (English on the back) to learn from and use for games
- Help children record vocabulary in a useful way e.g. in a vocabulary book or a mind map
- Record words and phrases on a mobile phone and listen to on the bus, in the car etc.
- Invent funny or silly rhymes or mnemonics to help remember new words or concepts
- Put labels/post-it notes on everyday life items until you have learned their names
- Make a survival word kit with your child and display somewhere useful
- Ask your child to teach other family members and friends some of the things they have learned in class, especially high frequency words like greetings, days of the week etc.
- Visit the local library and look for books in the target language
- Find short stories (online or paper) in the language and read several times
- Look for magazines (paper or online) in the language
- Use a language pin board to display pupil work, key things they are learning that week, interesting articles found, useful websites etc.
- Keep a language learning journal
- Encourage your child to listen to music in the foreign language
- Watch a familiar film together in the foreign language with English subtitles
- Follow a recipe in the target language
- Change language settings on a home device e.g. mobile phone, sat. nav., computer
- Read books about the culture of the target country
- Pick up leaflets etc. in other languages
- Arrange a holiday and try to book it together with your child in the foreign language

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- Find cultural events connected to the language and culture being studied. Put dates in calendar and research a bit about them

Some key things to bear in mind...

- In order to acquire new language, it is best to hear (this includes hearing parents speaking in the language!) and see words frequently and have many opportunities to apply them in everyday life and/or schoolwork
- Don't forget to revisit previously learnt vocabulary
- Learning can begin at word-level, but should move swiftly on to sentence level, so that language is being used to communicate ideas
- Understanding is always greater than speaking and writing
- The ability to understand more complex texts should not be understated. Students will develop strategies by reading and listening to material above the level they can speak or write in
- The value of reading for pleasure cannot be stressed enough. A good strategy is to look for books your child has already read in English. Focus on one page at a time
- Accuracy in writing will improve over time. In order to achieve the most effective results, it is often best if writing is integrated with reading, speaking and listening activities
- Students often forget to add variety of language and extra detail to their writing e.g. adjectives, opinions, time phrases, a range of verb forms
- Grammar is important, but grammatical errors are inevitable and should be seen as part of the learning process
- It is often useful to draw comparisons between English grammar and the grammar of a foreign language e.g. identifying nouns and verbs. The same goes for vocabulary, which has connections to English or another language the students knows e.g. French
- Learning about the culture of countries where the language is spoken can really boost motivation, as well as intercultural understanding.

Ideas for Online Resources

APPS:

Linguascope
Duolingo
MyLangPro
Memrise
Babbel

[Linguascope](#) Content includes language relating to the KS3 and KS4 curriculum. Many language games for a range of language, including French, Spanish and Italian

[Languages Online](#) Great for vocabulary and grammar (French, Spanish and Italian)

[BBC Languages](#) - Great for Spanish, Italian and Chinese e.g. Spanish steps - basic course, Talk

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Spanish - videos for listening skills.

www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips - Video clips in a range of languages, often including cultural aspects of different countries.

- Primary (for younger children - quite fun)
- Secondary (for older children - choose topic and browse)

[Master any Language](#) - Topic vocabulary and grammar for Chinese, Italian and Spanish.

[CULP - Languages at your fingertips](#) - Cambridge University Language Programme software for Italian, Mandarin and Spanish

[Newbury Park School](#) - A wealth of ideas for promoting language learning. Of particular interest is the Language of the Month section, which students are familiar with. Enter site, select language of the month, resources for schools and teachers - select language - basics (first words)

[Word Reference](#) - A good online dictionary for many languages

[ImTranslator](#) - Translation with pronunciation

[Languages on the Web](#) - Short stories in a wide range of languages including parallel English translation

[ieLanguages](#) - Go to **Languages** to find an excellent array of phrase banks for many languages, particularly students of Italian and Spanish. An excellent resource for our Italian students is under the **Comparative Tutorials** section, where students can compare language in French and Italian

[I Love Languages](#) - A website for those who love languages! Go to **Languages** **By Languages** to find a huge array of web links to explore

[MYLANGUAGES](#) - An excellent website for vocabulary and pronunciation practice in many languages. This website is particularly good for students of Mandarin

[Busuu](#) - A range of multimedia resources for lots of languages

[Master Any Language](#) Chinese, Italian, Spanish. Topics and Grammar

[Mama Lisa's World](#) - Songs and rhymes from around the world

[Verbix](#) - A great verb conjugation website

[Language Guide](#) - A collaborative project to develop interactive, sound-integrated language learning resources. The site is organised by topics and is very useful when students want to explore specific aspects/areas and they need to learn specific vocabulary

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Surface Languages - Free online language learning for the aspiring polyglot. There are thousands of phrases and hours of audio spoken by native speakers along with flashcard, multiple choice and language learning games.

Linguanaut - Linguanaut contains phrases, videos and the alphabets of more than 50 languages. Particularly useful when working on a new project or when students need to learn topic specific vocabulary

Livemocha - Fun, effective language lessons available in 35 languages

Memrise - Learning powered by imagination, combines games with memory improvement

Duolingo - Learn Spanish French, German, Portuguese, Italian and English for free. It's free, it's well structured, well thought through and students benefit from using it regularly (up to 30 mins per lesson). It has a recording feature built into their lessons which "forces" students to start speaking. It works on several different levels: repetition, explanation, cooperation, vocabulary, phrases, short sentences, listening etc.

Freelanguage - Innovative Language Podcasts and Mobile Apps. A fantastic way to get students to listen to their TL and all the courses are well structured and short. There are some mistakes in pronunciation and translation but that really doesn't matter as the benefits outweigh the small inaccuracies

Learn a Language - hundreds of free language-learning lessons, games, and activities

Babel Nation – on-line course in French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish

BBC Talk Courses – beginners courses in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish

BBC Active – a range of multimedia language resources including books, CDs, DVDs and apps

For ideas on specific languages, please ask your child's teacher for advice and explore the [Language Futures website](#).

****Schools can insert their own Language Futures Scheme of Work or Overview of themes/projects as well as assessment arrangements***

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