

# 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.

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.

## 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 listen to a song in Spanish today”, “I will practise the new phrases I have learnt in Language Futures today”, or “I will try and teach my younger brother how to say “hello” in French.” Please praise your child for their efforts but don't forget that learning is a journey and we all take different amounts of time to reach our destination. Children progress at different rates and therefore should not be judged against each other, but by their own progress over time.

## 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.

***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.***

### 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 or about the target language country
- 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 (try [Cooking with Languages](#) for child friendly recipe books with activities)
- 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
- Find cultural events connected to the language and culture being studied. Put dates in calendar and research a bit about them
- Make a scrap book about the target language country
- Make a poster of the words you have learnt so far and pin it up around the house
- Write your own book – find a book in the target language and make your own copy by writing out some of the key phrases. Illustrate it and label the pictures
- Create a door hanger for your room with a slogan ('I'm busy learning languages'/'I love languages')
- Find a song on You Tube and learnt it (see resources list for ideas)

### 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. Pupils 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
- Pupils 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 pupil 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 Free Online Resources

#### French

[BBC Radio Labo](#) - a 10 part series to support French language learning at upper KS2. Topics include dates, numbers, clothing and technology

[Alain le lait](#) – a range of you tube songs to help learning topics such as numbers and colours

[BBC Primary languages](#) – games, videos, pronunciation practice

[Leon le chameleon](#) – good for practising colours

[Frère Jacques](#) – performance singing

[French games net](#) – a range of interactive French games

[Hello –world](#) - a range of on-line activities and games

#### German

[Hello Word](#) – step by step German lessons

[German games.net](#) – a range of interactive German games on a variety of topics

[Duden](#) – picture dictionary

[Amira](#) – a range of audio books in German

[Children's books forever](#) – children's books which can be read on-line

[YouTube playlist with lots of German Peppa Pig programmes](#)- or children can find their favourite programme on YouTube and add the word 'German' or 'Deutsch'.

## Spanish

[BBC Primary languages](#) – games, videos, pronunciation practice

[The Premier Academy](#) - a Spanish teacher at a school in Milton Keynes has set up a Spanish area of the school's website full of primary resources

[Spanish games.net](#) – a range of interactive games

[Hello-world](#) - a range of on-line activities and games

## Mandarin

[BBC Primary languages](#) - games, videos, pronunciation practice

[You Tube cartoons](#) – cartoons in Mandarin

[Hello-world](#) – step by step mandarin lessons

## Italian

[Teach your children Italian with Professor Toto](#)

[Numbers song](#)

[Italian games.net](#) - a range of interactive Italian games

[Hello-world](#) – step by step Italian lessons

## Russian

[Language Guide](#) - Useful audio pronunciation for Russian vocab

[BBC Languages – Russian](#) - A Guide to Russian – 10 facts, 20 key phrases, the alphabet and more

[Digital Dialects](#) - Basic interactive topics – colours, numbers, days, etc. with sound files and games

[Hello-world](#) - a range of on-line activities and games

## Japanese

[Kids Web Japan](#) - A website for children from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, designed to introduce 10-14 year olds living in other countries to Japanese language and culture. The website contains interactive games about all aspects of Japanese culture, facts and figures about Japanese life and eight lessons for Japanese language learning

[Hello-world](#) - a range of on-line activities and games

## Latin

[Primary Latin Course](#) – free primary resource comprising language, history, archaeology

## Urdu

[You Tube games](#)

## Arabic

[Hello-World](#) – step by step Arabic lessons

## Polish

[FunKids](#) - Most used words and phrases including greetings, directions, music chat, animals, cooking etc.

## Other resource ideas

- [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)
- [Google translate](#) – pupils find this quite fun and find the microphone useful to hear the word
- [Mama Lisa's World](#) – songs rhymes and traditions from around the world
- [One Third Stories](#) - stories that start in English and end in French or Spanish