

Singing in your second language

Rationale:

Songs are a fun way to help your child remember words and sentence structure in a second language. Songs with repeated words or choruses give your child lots of practice, which helps memory. Catchy tunes also help him remember the words. Songs with a cultural or personal significance – for example, songs passed down within families – add extra meaning for your child.

Age range information

0-6 years

What you need

Choose a simple song in your second language to sing with your child. If you do not know any suitable songs you could look for CDs and DVDs at your public library, or search online.

How to do it

Here are some ideas to get you singing with your child:

- Choose songs with hand movements or make some movements up. Hand movements help your child remember what the song means, even if he does not understand all the words.
- Sing the song to your child. Do not worry about what you sound like. Most children love the sound of their parents' voices, even if they are off-key.
- Choose songs your child already knows in his first language, like 'Happy Birthday'.
- Put lots of expression into your voice and face as you sing.
- Encourage your child to sing along by praising him when he sings the words or copies the actions with you. He might only remember one or two words to begin with.
- Explain what the song is about. You do not have to translate every word.
- Look for opportunities to use some of the words and phrases from the song in everyday conversation. It can even be fun to sing bits of the song if you can fit them in to what you are saying.

Adapting for children of different ages

You can sing songs in different languages to your baby as soon as he is born (or even before). You do not have to wait until he begins to talk or until he is fluent in one language. Children can learn two or more languages at the same time.

A catchy pop song can be a good way for your older child to learn a language. He might only recognise one or two words or phrases, but if he likes it enough he will keep listening until he has figured a lot of it out. You might want to check the lyrics to make sure the content is suitable.



Recommended Reads by the National Library Board

Recommended Reads

- [Wan an, shui ge hao jiao! = Night, night, sleep tight!](#)
- [Xiao xiong hen mang. Shu wu jian zhu shi](#)
- [The Bug in the Jug Wants a Hug](#)

Engage your child with simple activities at home! Check out some of these things you can do together:

- [Rhymes and Songs Sing-Along \(Mandarin\)](#)
- [Rhymes and Songs Sing-Along \(Malay\)](#)
- [Rhymes and Songs Sing-Along \(Tamil\)](#)