

Speak

LIKE A NATIVE

Helping primary school children learn languages – a guide for parents and carers.

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Introduction

Do you think just having one 40-minute violin or piano lesson a week, without any practice between lessons, would be enough for your child to make any progress learning the instrument? Well, that's how most children in this country learn languages.

Languages, like music or sport, need one thing above everything else and that's time to practice.

This guide is designed to help parents with children at primary school but the activities can be modified for both younger and older learners.

As most primary school children in the UK learn French or Spanish, we use those for examples. However, all the exercises work with any languages.

Speak Like A Native is the UK's innovative language provider, delivering fun lessons every week to thousands of learners of all ages.

It's down to the adults ...

A recent study by Cambridge University says, "the trick to getting more children to learn languages is to win over the parents."

Let us help you with this!

Education

Children more willing to learn languages at GCSE and A-level if parents have positive attitudes, research says

Parents' beliefs about languages had almost twice as much influence on children as the opinions of their teachers, and were also significantly more influential than the views of their peers



The combined total number of pupils taking French, German, Spanish and other Modern Languages GCSEs last year was almost half that of 2001 (Photo: Anthony Devlin/Bloomberg via Getty Images)

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What the academics say...

"Language learning opens doors to new cultures and ways of thinking, and can have a transformative impact on individuals and societies. Regular practice and exposure to the language, whether through reading, writing, listening, or speaking, is crucial for success."

Dr. Alex Bellem, Senior Lecturer in Spanish and Latin American Studies at the University of Glasgow.

"Language learning is an enriching experience that broadens horizons, enhances intercultural understanding, and promotes social and economic mobility. Regular practice is essential for achieving proficiency and realizing the benefits of language learning."

Dr. Claire Gorrara, Professor of French Studies and Head of Modern Languages at Cardiff University.

Why is this for your child?

Studying a foreign language can have numerous personal, professional, and social benefits, making it a valuable skill for UK children to acquire in 2023 and beyond.

- Enhanced career prospects
- Improved cognitive abilities
- Increased cultural awareness
- Enhanced travel experiences
- Global citizenship

It can also be a lot of fun! And that's what we're going to concentrate on here.

Mistakes don't matter, it's all about having a go and having a laugh together.

Help! I don't speak the language!

Don't worry. You're not expected to be the teacher or the expert.

And you don't need to speak a *mot* in French or a *palabra* in Spanish at the beginning.

Use this as an opportunity to share the learning with your child and concentrate on the following:

- Encourage language learning!
- Have a go yourself and share the joy (and frustration) of trying to remember new words and pronounce them properly.
- Set up the activities - you may need your child to help with the tech!
- Be patient
- Keep going!

Getting started and targets



- Most children do about 40 minutes language learning a week at school. If you do an extra five or ten minutes a day at home, then you'll easily double their exposure to the language.
- Don't expect your child (or you!) to become fluent immediately. It does take time. Put in a few minutes regularly and progress will happen.
- Keep refreshing what you do. The ideas that follow can all be modified by you. Some things might not work for you, others might be a real success.
- The most challenging part of language learning is listening. This includes music, watching TV etc. Do as much as possible.

Sticky notes



Sticky notes are a great tool for learning vocabulary.

- Get your child to write down all the new words they've learned in their school lessons each week. For example, on one note they write *chien* or *perro* and on another they write dog. A quick activity is to put all the notes up randomly on a wall and get the children to match the definitions.
- Using a dictionary or Google Translate, your child can go around the house labelling everything they see. Then remove the labels and any time you want to practice, ask them to quickly put the labels in the right place. Make it fun and time them and see if they can improve on this. They won't even notice they're learning.
- Build categories and get your children to add new notes e.g. the house, my bedroom, family and display this on walls.

Stories



- We recommend that you choose books in French or Spanish that your child has already read and likes. It doesn't matter whether it's The Very Hungry Caterpillar or Harry Potter, keep to something that's familiar.
- They can read it silently, occasionally to you and you can have a go reading it to them. Anything that keeps them going is a good thing.
- Try comic books, as the pictures are always a great help with the context and story.
- Talk to them about the book (rather than test them on vocabulary). Ask what's happening and if it feels different to when they read it in English.
- If you can get the audiobook as well, they can listen and read at the same time. It's a great way of getting used to the sounds of words as well as intonation.

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Music



- If you use a music streaming platform, search for playlists such as “best Spanish pop songs” or be more specific based on your child’s tastes e.g. “French rap songs”. Have it on at home, in the car, wherever you are.
- Don’t worry about understanding all the words, most of us can’t understand lyrics in our own language!
- Listening to music like this opens up the cultural aspect of language learning and can be a motivating factor in the desire to learn more. The world is full of people who’ve learned English because of the Beatles or Adele.
- If you can access the lyrics then you can copy and paste into Google Translate. You can also use the original lyrics and blank out some of the words and let your child listen to the song and try to fill in the blanks. Teachers have been doing this exercise for years.

Games



- All those traditional games you've played can be modified for language learning. Try I-Spy on a car journey where the answer is in the language they're learning. And, of course, bingo is great for practicing numbers and hangman for words.
- Games like Scrabble, Boggle, Bananagrams are all fun to play with an extra language input. You could play in English but give double points for any word in Spanish, French etc. Or you could even try *only* playing in the language your child is learning.

Apps



There are many apps and online resources that can help your child learn a new language. For example, Duolingo is a popular language learning app that is free and easy to use. Other options include Rosetta Stone, Babel, and Mango Languages.

The trick is to get the language that your child meets in this form off the phone or tablet and into a practical way where they can use it.

With supervision, you'll also find lots of accounts on Youtube, TikTok and Instagram with 30-second lessons. Search and see what comes up.

If they spend 5 minutes on an app then get them to make a note of new words on sticky notes, which can then be incorporated into the games you play.

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Running dictation



Here's a fun activity that will change the way you think about dictations!

Choose a paragraph (no more!) from a story your child is reading, print / copy it and put it on the wall in the kitchen. Then sit in your child's bedroom and tell them they have to run to the kitchen, read and remember some of the text and come back and tell you. They will only be able to remember small chunks and will forget half of it on the way and have to run back to check. Eventually, they'll have told you everything to write down and then you can check together with the original.

Add an extra element by timing your child (just for fun) and see if they can do it more quickly next time.

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TV and movies



If you use a streaming channel like Netflix, you can search for programmes in almost any language.

- Watch a film in French or Spanish with English subtitles. This is great just for building awareness of the sounds of the language your child is learning.
- Watch a film in French or Spanish without English subtitles. Obviously, this is more challenging, so remember this advice:
 - Avoid saying, “what did they say?” or anything that puts pressure on understanding every word.
 - Focus on concepts like “what do you think is happening?”, “who do you think he is?”, “what do you think is going to happen next?”.
- As with books, we recommend sticking with programmes your child has already watched in English.

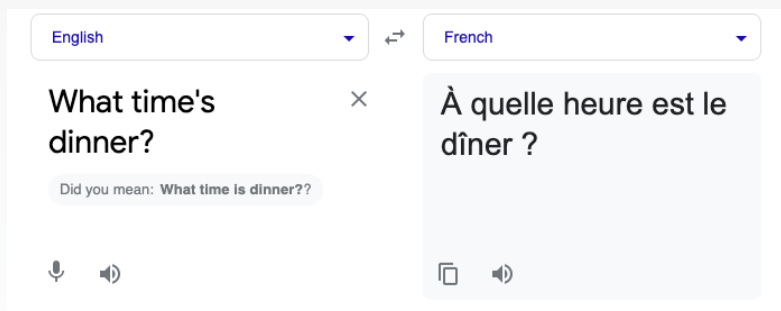
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French Friday or Spanish Saturday

FRI 2	SAT 3
French!	Spanish!

Google Translate is a fantastic free tool, not only because it can translate any word or phrase but you can also listen to the pronunciation.

We suggest allocating a language day at home where all conversation is in French or Spanish! If you use Google Translate then what you say is unlimited! The minimum you need is one phone / tablet / laptop that you can all use.



Start with doing this for just a couple of hours and then build up to the whole evening.

We predict that this will lead to learning and lots of laughter!

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Follow a team together



If your child is interested in sport then find a team to follow together.

There are 20 Spanish and 29 French speaking countries in the world, so why not pick a team from Cameroon or Ivory Coast, Argentina or Costa Rica?

- Find their website or Wikipedia page
- Discover the history of the club
- Check the fixture list and look up the scores each week
- Live the ups and downs of the team together
- Search for games on Youtube and see if you can understand the commentary

The process of this is about making learning meaningful and something your child can relate to.

Gaming



Could you motivate your child more by suggesting they should spend more time gaming?!

Well, try with the incentive of changing the default language for a few minutes from English to French or Spanish. They'll be too busy playing to worry about the language!

And one day they may be ready to chat with new friends in French or Spanish on Discord. What better incentive is there?

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Language Clubs



If your child's school has a language club, then we recommend you sign them up.

These are usually small groups where learning and practice is through games and activities.

As time is the most important investment any language learner can make, joining a language club doubles the amount weekly amount of learning.

If your nursery or school doesn't have language clubs or language lessons and you'd like us to set one up, then get in touch and we'll see how we can help.

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The future

Talk to your child about the advantages of language learning. Let them know that even if it seems impossible now to imagine being confident enough to have a proper conversation, it will happen.

With languages... the world will open up for them.

- More friends around the world
- More chance to enjoy the things they like (TV, music, sport, gaming, books etc)
- More chance to study and travel abroad
- And one day, there will be better job opportunities

Speak Like A Native system

- The only way to progress with a language is to participate in a range of activities over a period of time. In other words, put in the hours and progress happens. The universally recognised CEFR outlines the amount of time it takes to move from one level to the next.
- Our language clubs are built around modules of 10 hours that can either be a weekly session or a crash course.
- To move from one level to the next we recommend completing five modules.
- Progress is quicker if children study the language at school and have enough practice at home. The same as progressing with sport, music or anything else that requires putting in the hours.
- Children in a Speak Like A Native club have a passport and receive stamps for participation. All we want them to do is to have a go!

Speak Like A Native levels

SLAN levels for children

Language Superhero	A2.2 – 100 hours	10 x 10 modules	}	GCSE topics
Language Hero	A2.1 – 100 hours	10 x 10 modules		
Language Wizard	A1.2 – 50 hours	5 x 10 modules		Primary after-school club
Language Champion	A1.1 – 50 hours	5 x 10 modules		Primary after-school club
Language Explorer	A0	No set time		Nursery

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We're here for you

We hope this helps you have some fun with languages. It should be very rewarding for you and your family.

At Speak Like A Native, we're here if you need any assistance and always happy to hear from you about your language learning experience.

We have franchises across the country and if you're interested in working with us then drop us a line.

Good luck!

¡Buena suerte!

Bonne chance!



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