

# My Best Tips for Raising Bilingual Kids

By Adam Beck, founder of *Bilingual Monkeys* and *The Bilingual Zoo*



*I hope this list of tips is helpful to your efforts. If so, other parents might find it helpful, too. This file can be shared freely, online or off, to spread more support for raising bilingual children.*

## 1. Start early

If you're proactive from the start, you'll stand a much better chance of nurturing a good balance in the child's bilingual ability. From birth to age 6 or 7 is a vital time for two reasons: 1) this is the period young brains are most primed for language acquisition, and 2) if the child attends elementary school in the majority language, it grows more difficult to "rebalance" the two languages after that. In other words, the investment of time and energy up front will make it easier to foster the balance you seek, then maintain that balance throughout childhood. Playing "catch up" with the minority language is much harder. (See [Warning to New Parents Who Dream of Raising a Bilingual Child](#).)

## 2. Prioritize it

Making this a priority goes hand in hand with being proactive. If the development of your child's minority language isn't one of your family's highest priorities, chances are the majority language will quickly come to be dominant and the minority language will be relegated to a more passive role. Don't underestimate how quickly this can happen once the child enters the world and spends the bulk of his hours bathed in the language of the wider community. Make the minority language a priority from the get-go and you'll strengthen the odds of achieving long-term success. (See [What Language Should I Speak in Public with My Bilingual Child?](#) for my thoughts—and many comments from others—on a parent's use of the minority language and majority language.)

## 3. Don't leave it to chance

Don't let the whims of circumstance determine the outcome. You should actively shape the situation, on an ongoing basis, so your child receives sufficient input in the minority language to counterbalance the weight of exposure coming from the language of your community. Some take a more laissez-faire approach, saying that the minority language can be picked up later, when the child is older. That may be true, in some cases, but there's also the natural desire of many parents to interact with their children in their mother tongue throughout the childhood years as well as the need for a shared language so the children can communicate with extended family members. (See [Why Communicating in English with My Kids is So Important to Me](#) for my personal thoughts on this point.)

## 4. Set a goal

Set a clear goal for your child's ability in the minority language. Will you be content with oral fluency, and less concerned with reading and writing? Or is literacy important to you, too, and you'd like to see her read and write at the level of a monolingual child? Whatever your goal is, articulate it, and make sure that your efforts match the goal you seek. Good reading and writing ability are attainable, but this goal will require a diligent commitment from both you and your child.

## 5. Get informed

By informing yourself on the subject of children and bilingualism, you'll be better able to promote the development of your child's language proficiency. Turn to [helpful books](#), [online resources](#), and other parents to broaden your knowledge and ideas. Seek out associations on bilingualism or parenting in your region for further support and comradery. (Join me and others around the world at [The Bilingual Zoo](#), a warm, lively forum for "keepers" of bilingual kids.)

## 6. Write about it

Along with reading about this subject, when you write about your experience raising bilingual children (in a journal, blog, forum, etc.), you naturally become more mindful and proactive—and more effective—in your daily efforts. To strengthen your outlook and actions, and your children's progress, the simple habit of writing regularly about your experience can be deeply empowering. (See [Do This One Simple Thing and I Guarantee You Greater Success On Your Bilingual Journey](#).)

## 7. Ignore the naysayers

Some people, even those who are otherwise well-educated, may warn that your child will become “confused” or suffer other hardships when learning two languages at once. Don't let such comments deter you. At the same time, take people's prescriptions with a grain of salt. There is no “one size fits all” when it comes to families raising bilingual children. In my case, I'm eager to hear about others' successful experiences—because maybe I can adopt or adapt those strategies for my own family—but only I can really decide what's appropriate for my particular situation. (See [When You Feel a Lack of Support for Your Bilingual Journey from the People Around You](#) for further advice.)

## 8. Keep the “core conditions” in mind

The two “core conditions” for successfully fostering language acquisition and active use are exposure and need: **the child must receive sufficient exposure to the target language and feel an organic need to use it.** If one or both conditions are lacking, the more likely outcome is “passive ability” in that language. In other words, the child understands much of what is heard, but tends to rely on the majority language to communicate. Of course, this passive ability can be later activated, but again, progress requires satisfying these two “core conditions.” At heart, success on the bilingual journey is always tied to exposure and need. (For much more on this key concept, see [What to Do When Your Bilingual Child Won't Speak Your Language](#) and [Why Raising a Bilingual Child Is Very, Very Simple—and Very, Very Difficult](#).)

## 9. Adopt a strategy

How will you use the two languages within your family? Two common strategies are the “one person, one language” approach (where each parent speaks his or her mother tongue) and the “minority language at home” approach (where both parents use the minority language at home and the majority language is acquired from the community). Whatever strategy you choose, the important thing is making sure that the child has a natural need to use the minority language and receives sufficient daily input in that language. The family should then stick consistently to its strategy, unless a change in circumstance warrants a change in approach. See [What's the Best Language Strategy for Raising Bilingual Children?](#) for more on this central question.)

## 10. Decide on schooling

The language strategy you choose to adopt may also depend on the schooling decisions you pursue. Will your child attend school in the majority language? The minority language? Some combination of the two? Maybe homeschooling? Whatever you decide, look broadly at your child's language exposure and seek to maintain an effective balance between the two languages. **For the minority language, a good target would be about 25 hours of exposure per week.** (That's roughly 30% of the child's waking hours, depending on routine. Anything less than 20 hours a week could be a cause for concern.) Conversely, if your child attends school in the minority language, you may need to shore up certain aspects of the majority language—particularly reading and writing—with additional support. (See [How Many Hours Per Week Is Your Child Exposed to the Minority Language?](#) and [Why I Don't Want My Kids to Do Well in School.](#))

## 11. Seize each day

A child's bilingual development is a long-term process, but it's a process that can only be advanced bit by bit, day by day, through regular habits and routines. Thus, the idea of "seizing each day"—taking action day in and day out—is at the very heart of this challenge. Strive to be mindful of your long-range goal and commit to doing your honest best, each day, to move forward another few small steps. Remember that the majority language will continue its relentless development, so you must be as consistent as you can, as persistent as possible, when it comes to providing minority language support. (For inspiration in this vein, see [8 Meditations on Time and the Art of Raising a Bilingual Child](#) and [A Friend of Mine Died.](#))

## 12. Practice "preventive medicine"

One of the keys to minimizing difficulties on the bilingual journey is "preventive medicine." In other words, our aim is to prevent larger difficulties from even arising at all by making effective efforts beforehand. For example, by being proactive, and providing the child with strong exposure to the minority language during the first few formative years, active ability in the language can be fostered and the problem of activating passive ability later on is avoided. By thinking ahead, and taking appropriate action, the journey can proceed more smoothly, more successfully. (For more on "preventive medicine," see [What Frustrates Me About Raising Bilingual Children.](#))

## 13. Stay patient

Language development is an incremental process over time. This is true, of course, for a child's progress at any age, but the first couple of years—eagerly awaiting the child's first words—can be a special test of patience, particularly for new parents. It isn't uncommon for new parents to wonder if their child will *ever* start speaking. But when there's sufficient exposure to the language, and a genuine need to use it—and no other developmental concerns are present—then the child will inevitably speak when the time is right. The same is true for language development throughout childhood: given adequate exposure and need, gradual progress is guaranteed. (For a helpful metaphor of this process of early language acquisition, see [Important Thoughts on Babies and Hammers.](#))

## 14. Make it fun

There's no getting around the fact that raising a bilingual child is a lot of hard work for everyone involved, so it's vital to make the experience enjoyable, too—to whatever degree you can. It's an

odd balance, but I think it's important to be both very serious and very playful at the same time: serious about the process and yet playful when it comes to carrying that process out. Half of this is simply attitude, but the other half involves implementing activities ([books](#), [stories](#), [riddles](#), [games](#), etc.) that can nurture language development in a lighthearted way. (See [Be Very Serious. Be Very Playful. The Bilingual Journey Demands Both.](#) and [Thought Experiment: What Will Your Children Remember Most About You?](#))

## 15. Talk, talk, talk to your child

Research has shown a correlation between the volume of speech spoken by parents to their children in the earliest years and the child's language ability at a later age. In other words, the sheer quantity of speech directed at the child by the parents and caregivers from birth to age 3 has a tremendous impact on language development. (Of course, the quality of that speech is important, too!) Although I don't recommend talking a poor baby's ears off—infants need quiet time, too, for their brains to consolidate each day's new discoveries—I do advise parents of the minority language to be proactive in interacting with their children. (See [The Most Powerful Thing of All in Nurturing Language Development](#) for more on this research and my thoughts on the subject.)

## 16. Clone yourself

When your children are small, and are especially in need of exposure in the minority language, it can be frustrating when you serve as the main source of that exposure yet are unable to spend as much time with them as you'd like, due to work or other factors. One way to address this lack of input—and, again, have fun in the process—is to create videos of yourself reading picture books, telling stories, singing songs, and talking to your children. I did this when my kids were younger and asked my wife to play these videos every day for about 30 minutes. The videos captivated them (and amazed them when I happened to be in the same room!), while adding many hours of targeted language exposure over those years. (See [The Busy Parent's Guide to Cloning Yourself](#) for all the details.)

## 17. Read aloud every day

Reading aloud to your child in the minority language, for at least 15 minutes each day, is a vital practice when it comes to nurturing good bilingual ability. It may seem too simple, but reading aloud regularly has an enormous impact on a child's language development as well as his interest in books and literacy. If you don't read aloud—preferably from day one and continuing for as long as you possibly can—it will be far more difficult for your child to develop strong proficiency in the minority language. (For more on this important subject, see [The Secret to Raising a Bilingual Child](#) and [Recommended Resources: Good Books on Reading Aloud.](#))

## 18. Turn to chapter books

As soon as your children reach a suitable age and language level, I highly recommend reading aloud chapter books that come in a series to help get them “hooked on books.” Do this daily and chapter books will quickly cast a spell and whet their appetite for literacy. And if reading regularly in person is difficult, try “cloning yourself” on video and have your spouse play a chapter or two each day. (See [How to Get Your Child Hooked on Books](#) for a list of good series in English.)

## 19. Build a home library

You can't read aloud to your child regularly if you don't have suitable books in the minority language, including chapter books that come in series of 5 or 15 or even 25+ books. The costs can add up quickly, I know, but in the long run, books are a small investment, really, when the eventual payoff in good language ability is so great. Cut back in other areas of your budget, if you must, but don't scrimp when it comes to putting children's books in your home. (See [How Many Books Do You Have In Your Home?](#) for research which stresses the importance of a good home library.)

## 20. Bring in “home run books”

“Home run books” are books that children not only like a lot, they also inspire, more profoundly, a love for reading. The more of these books you're able to bring into your home, throughout the stages of childhood, the more your children will likely grow to become eager readers. And by helping your children find favorite books and develop a passion for reading, their minority language will continuously benefit, now and into the future. (See [The “Home Run Book”: A Key Idea for Promoting a Child's Language Development.](#))

## 21. Give books as gifts

By making a practice of giving books in the minority language as gifts for birthdays, Christmas, and other special occasions—and encouraging family and friends to do the same for your kids—you achieve three important things: 1) You help foster their love of books and literacy; 2) You convey the idea that books are special and valued by their loved ones (including Santa); and 3) You continue growing your home library, which should be an ongoing effort.

## 22. Visit the public library

This will naturally depend on your location and target language, but perhaps the public library in your area has a selection of picture books that you can access for free—it can't hurt to investigate. Here in Hiroshima, the children's library has a fairly large collection of books in such languages as English, Chinese, Korean, French, German, and Russian. Maybe your local library has books in minority languages, too, or would be willing to acquire some.

## 23. Use comic books

One of my “secret weapons” for promoting literacy in the minority language, with both my students and my own children, is the use of comic books. Research shows that comic books have effectively fueled literacy development and a love of reading for many, many people (including me!), thereby fostering the competence and confidence to then read “real books,” too. And because bilingual children may not be eager to read in the minority language during their limited free time, the powerful appeal of comic books can help motivate them and advance their literacy development. (See [How Comic Books Can Give Your Kids Bilingual Super Powers](#) and [Recommended Resources: Captivating Comic Books for English Learners.](#))

## 24. Subscribe to magazines

Children's magazines, if available in your target language, are another useful resource that should not be overlooked. Subscriptions to colorful, kid-friendly magazines are generally quite reasonably priced, even with the additional fee for international mailing. We've had subscriptions to a number

of children's magazines over the years, and my kids are always excited when a new issue arrives. To help boost exposure and interest in the minority language, I recommend a steady stream of magazines. (For more on magazine subscriptions, and good children's magazines in English, see [Recommended Resources: The Magic of Magazine Subscriptions](#).)

## 25. Commit to “captive reading”

To encourage literacy development and reading practice in the target language, you can take advantage of the phenomenon I call “captive reading”: the natural tendency to read any words that fall under our gaze. Put posters of the writing system and common words on the wall; label things in the house; include notes in your child's lunchbox; put up a small whiteboard in the bathroom and write little messages and riddles on it; later on, post short stories in the bathroom, too, like [my versions of well-known fairy tales and fables](#). (For a full look at this highly effective strategy, see [What Is Captive Reading and How Will It Help My Bilingual Child?](#) and [If This Isn't a Big Part of Your Strategy for Raising Bilingual Kids, It Really Should Be](#).)

## 26. Write “serial stories”

Another version of “captive reading” makes use of “serial stories.” These are particularly fun and motivating for children who already have some reading ability in the minority language. In my case, I write one page every other day or so (with a “cliffhanger” ending) for a running storyline that features my own children as the main characters. I then post them, page by page, on the inside of the bathroom door. (The older pages are transferred to the wall.) The roughly ten-part stories are very silly—I'm basically just typing out what pops into my head—but my kids find them funny and are continually pestering me to produce the next installment. (For helpful instructions and downloads, see [Turn Your Kids into Eager Readers with This Fun, Simple Strategy](#) and [My Favorite Way to Get a Bilingual Child Reading More in the Minority Language](#).)

## 27. Use background music

Making use of music in the minority language is an easy and effective way to consistently add to the language exposure your child receives. This is no substitute for your active involvement, of course, but background music can be one more beneficial component of your overall efforts. Just put a CD player and suitable CDs in the child's main play space and play this music regularly. If your kids are anything like mine, they'll probably soon start singing along! (See [How the Power of Music Nurtures Bilingual Ability](#) for more on this idea. And for recommended children's music, in English, see [Recommended Resources: Great Music for Kids \(and Parents, too!\)](#).)

## 28. Play games together

Games in the minority language—like board games, card games, [word games](#), and [storytelling games](#)—are another resource to gather for your home. Children love to play games, and there are no doubt good games available in your target language that would be fun to play and effective in promoting language exposure. (You can also consider games published in other languages, yet don't rely on reading, since these can be played in any language as long as you know the rules!) For a more harmonious home, I would recommend balancing the usual “competitive games” (which can leave kids in tears) with [cooperative games](#) (where the players work as a team).

## 29. Enrich your home with exposure

Beyond books, music, and games, make your home as rich in exposure to the minority language as you can. At the same time, try to inhibit, to whatever degree makes sense for your family, the prevailing influence of the majority language. For example, when it comes to electronic toys and apps, resources in the minority language would probably be a more productive choice than those in the majority language. In the same way, emphasize TV shows and DVDs in the minority language, too. (For more on obtaining suitable resources, see [Are You Accidentally Hindering Your Child's Bilingual Progress?](#) and [There Are More Resources in Your Minority Language Than You Think.](#))

## 30. Fuel natural passions

Make an effort to fuel your child's passions via resources and opportunities in the minority language. If your son loves super heroes, or your daughter loves horses, seek out suitable books or DVDs on these subjects in the target language. In this way you'll be nurturing their natural passions and language ability at the same time. Depending on where you live, you might also have access to opportunities in the minority language—like classes, clubs, or other activities—that connect to a child's special interests. (For more on this topic, see [Fuel Your Child's Passions and Proficiency in the Minority Language](#) and [POW! How Super Heroes Strengthened My Son's Bilingual Ability.](#))

## 31. Engage in storytelling

Tell your children true stories from your childhood—kids love to hear about the (mis)adventures of their parents when they were young. You can also invent fantastical “made-up memories” from your past or your children's early years. (Kids like telling “made-up memories,” too.) The point is, storytelling—whether fact or fiction—can help expand and enrich the conversations you have with your children, and are especially suited for mealtimes. (See [Strange-But-True Tales: Baby Chicks in the Bathtub](#) and [Using Made-Up Memories to Engage Bilingual Kids.](#))

## 32. Make use of "mystery"

What if I knocked on your door unannounced and you found me with a big box in my arms? “It's for you!” I say. On one hand, yes, you might be terrified, but wouldn't you also be curious to know what's inside? Human beings, by nature, are curious creatures, and the keen curiosity of children can be used to your advantage in promoting the minority language. Be sneaky and look for opportunities where “mystery” can be made a part of your efforts: encourage use of the minority language by taking “mystery trips” and exploring the potential of boxes, bags, and envelopes. (For more details, see [A Sneaky Way to Get Bilingual Kids to Use the Minority Language](#) and [WARNING: Do Not, Under Any Circumstances, Read This Blog Post About Raising Bilingual Children.](#))

## 33. Take advantage of images

Images are all around us—photos and illustrations from the Internet, books, magazines, newspapers, posters, billboards, art exhibitions, etc.—and such images can be consciously used to stimulate, and stretch, the minority language each day. Make a regular habit of asking your children this simple, open-ended question when you come across an interesting image: **What do you see?** Then follow up with other questions that will naturally follow. These interactions can add up over time and contribute very positively to language development. (For more on this subject, and a lot of fun

links to images online, see [How Images Will Stimulate Your Child's Bilingual Development and Recommended Resources: The Extraordinary BoredPanda.com.](#))

### 34. Give written homework

If fostering good reading and writing ability in the minority language is important to you, it's best to establish a habit of homework early. If you begin giving small daily doses of homework at the age of 3 or 4—starting, for example, with simple dot-to-dot books or other light activity books—this can set a positive pattern for the rest of their childhood. Make daily homework like teeth-brushing—an expected habit—and it can be maintained far more easily than if you try to impose it later on. As with children's literature, you must make efforts to seek out suitable materials on a regular basis. (See [Secrets of a Successful Homework Routine, Part 1](#) and [Secrets of a Successful Homework Routine, Part 2](#) for a detailed look at the activities and resources I use at home.)

### 35. Reach out to grandparents

Many families with bilingual children live far away from grandparents. In my case, I try to bridge this distance and strengthen ties between my kids and my parents in these three ways: 1) I share photos and video clips online to bring the two generations closer; 2) I arrange video chats so they can communicate with one another; and 3) I facilitate a letter exchange by post. These efforts not only help nurture the loving bond between them, they give a regular boost to my children's language ability. (For much more, see [3 Good Ways to Boost a Bilingual Child's Language Ability and Loving Bond with Grandparents](#) and [A Powerful Twist on the Use of Skype to Promote the Minority Language.](#))

### 36. Find a pen-pal

In addition to grandparents, maintain pen-pal relationships with other children. Over the past several years my daughter has been exchanging letters with a girl in the United States. They write to each other (with some prodding from the parents) about every other month and send gifts for birthdays and for Christmas. Hopefully, we can maintain this connection for some time to come, but even so, the experience has already benefited her growing writing ability and her grasp of the value of her language skill. (See [Are Your Bilingual Kids Writing Letters in the Minority Language?](#) for more on our experience and helpful tips.)

### 37. Deepen that feeling of value

To deepen a child's feeling for the value of his minority language—thus positively impacting his attitude and motivation—that value must be experienced directly through interactions with other speakers of the language. Locally, you could pursue play dates with other children, get-togethers with family or friends (in person or via online chats), babysitters and au pairs, and homestay guests who speak the target language. Of course, time abroad could be ideal, both for grasping the value of the minority language and gaining stronger overall proficiency. (See [Getting a Bilingual Child to Feel the Value of the Minority Language.](#))

### 38. Use the language to help others

As important as it is to deepen the child's feeling for the value of his language skill through interactions with other speakers of the language, I have found an additional way of promoting this sense of value that may be even more powerful: create opportunities where the child can help

others by using his minority language ability. For instance, my kids and I sometimes volunteer to help people who are learners of the minority language. Through these experiences, they've come to realize that their language ability is not only useful to themselves, it's helpful to others, and this seems to be an even deeper, richer source of motivation. (For the full story, see [A Powerful Way to Inspire a Positive Attitude in Your Bilingual Child](#) and [The Power of Using the Minority Language to Help Others](#).)

### 39. Travel when you can

Trips to places where the minority language is spoken widely can be one of the most powerful ways of promoting language development and cultural understanding. Some parents even report a profound shift in their children's progress as a result of such experiences. Although costs and other considerations might prevent frequent travel, even occasional trips can be a big boost to your usual efforts. (For ideas and inspiration, see the series of guest posts titled "Bilingual Travelers": [Spring in Hungary Brings Blooming Language Ability](#); [Smooth Sailing to Language and Culture in Ireland](#); [Sweet Exposure to Language and Culture in Germany](#); and [Blue Skies and Bilingual Success in France](#).)

### 40. Use "carrots" and "sticks"

There are various views when it comes to giving rewards, but I've found that a reasonable use of "carrots" has provided an effective framework for nudging my children to read books and do daily homework. In our case, when they finish reading a book, they earn a little prize—something that genuinely excites them. My son, for instance, likes plastic Pokemon characters and this small reward has heightened his enthusiasm for reading. As for daily homework, it may sound funny, but they're quite content with a piece of (sugarless) gum after their tasks are complete. And the only "stick" I seem to need (at least so far) is the reminder that they can watch no TV until all their work is finished. (See [Why I'm Like This Rumbling Volcano \(And Why You Should Be, Too\)](#) for more on maintaining firm expectations.)

### 41. Make a "to-do list"

To give my kids structure, and keep them on task, I make a "to-do list" (with check boxes!) for them to follow on weekends and during breaks from school. Without this list, it's much easier for us to "forget" the tasks for their homework routine that day, and the other chores we expect of them. It takes a bit of time for me to write up these lists each morning (one per child), but it makes the day far more productive and helps minimize the need to continually remind them about the things we'd like them to do. The lists, written in the minority language, even provide some input for literacy development! (And when they're older, maybe I'll try having them write the lists themselves.) (See [How to Get Your Kids to Do Exactly What You Want](#).)

### 42. Get creative

Our mission, essentially, is to match our efforts to the ever-evolving needs of our circumstances. As our children grow, and our circumstances change, we must respond to those changes with new solutions so that our children's bilingual development can continue its strong, steady course. To meet this challenge effectively each time, creative thinking is vital. The wider our minds can imagine and create—seeking unconventional solutions, too—the better we'll be at providing suitable, ongoing support. (For more on this subject—and a surprising story from my own child-

hood—see [Creative Solutions to Challenges Raising Bilingual Children](#). You'll also find a range of creative ways to promote the minority language on the [Creative Ideas](#) page.)

### 43. Watch out for the “second stage”

It's not unusual for parents to be surprised, and dismayed, by the sharp evolution that takes place in their children's bilingual development when starting school in the majority language. This sudden spike in exposure to the majority language in the “second stage”—after the early years of the “first stage” were relatively smooth and successful—can produce new challenges in the bilingual journey. Parents may need to address this change in circumstance, and growing dominance of the majority language, by finding ways to deliver greater support for the minority language. (See [Do Your Bilingual Children Go to School in the Majority Language?](#) and [Watch Out for the Tough “Second Stage” of Bilingual Development](#).)

### 44. Sustain a strong spirit

The challenge of raising a bilingual child is a marathon, not a sprint, and reaching the farther goal requires all the desire and determination, all the energy and endurance, demanded of long-distance running. And, like running, where getting from start to finish involves putting one foot after the other, over and over again, supporting the long-term language development of a bilingual child is a process that can only be addressed in small, persistent steps, day after day. When it comes to raising bilingual children, make no mistake: As important as suitable strategies and techniques are to this quest, they're ultimately secondary to your desire and determination, your energy and endurance. All the good ideas in the world will be for naught if they're not firmly grounded in these underlying qualities of spirit. (To lift your spirit, and boost your success, get my free eBook [Instant Inspiration for Parents Raising Bilingual Kids](#).)

### 45. Avoid regrets

Quickly let go of whatever regrets you may have about “missed opportunities” in the past and recommit to making proactive efforts, starting today, to support your children's minority side. No matter how old they are, there's still so much you can do to fuel their progress and their interest in the target language. Daily persistence is far more productive than wishful thinking. And if your children are still quite small, you can avoid regrets entirely by making a strong commitment to this aim from the very start. (See [The Top 5 Regrets of Parents Who Have Had Difficulty Raising Bilingual Kids](#).)

### 46. Persevere, no matter what

If raising a bilingual child is truly important to you, you must address the difficulties as they arise and press on—you must persevere. This is a long, tough journey for us all—and for parents with especially challenging circumstances, it's very tough indeed—but the only way to realize your greater aim is to keep going, step by step, day after day. Not only is it vital to fix your goal in mind, you should also be keenly aware of the fact that **your child wants to be bilingual, too**. Oh, he may not consciously hold this wish yet, but you can bet that when he's older, he'll be very glad that you didn't give up. (See [The One Thing You Absolutely, Positively Must Have to Raise a Bilingual Child](#) and [Your Child Wants to Be Bilingual!](#))

## 47. Give time and attention

Our children will be little only once, and even then, for barely a blink. Whatever your circumstances, do all that you can to give time and attention to your kids while they're small. Not only do they need the language support that you can provide, they need, above all, your love. It isn't always easy to stop in the middle of something when your child interrupts, or answer yet another curious question without irritation, but it's worth making the effort—every time—in order to promote your child's bilingual ability and deepen the bond between you as parent and child. Remember this quote from Crystal DeLarm Clymer: "When your child is talking, turn off the world." (See [Are You Making the Moments with Your Kids Count?](#) and [My Son Disappears, I Lose My Mind, and the World is Beautiful.](#))

## 48. Rest and recharge

The bilingual aim demands daily persistence, but your efforts are only as effective as your level of energy. So make sure that you also take the time you need to rest and recharge in order to maintain good health, both mental and physical. Our well-being is vital not only to our success in raising bilingual kids, but to our personal happiness, too! (See [Parents of Bilingual Kids, Take Time to Relax and Recharge Your Energy!](#))

## 49. Recognize the greater good

Children with ability in more than one language bring benefit not only to their own lives, but to the world as well. Because bilingual minds tend to lean toward greater tolerance, bilingual children may in fact play an important role in building a more tolerant world. This could well be the larger legacy of our bilingual journey. (See [Why Raising a Bilingual Child Matters in a World Gone Mad](#) and [Why Your Bilingual Child is Tied, Profoundly, to Hiroshima and Peace.](#))

## 50. Keep a journal

This last tip isn't strictly about bilingual development, but I think it's worth sharing. If you aren't keeping a journal on your kids, you might want to start. It's a small investment of your time, really—just make a short entry in a notebook or text file every few weeks—but for your children, these observations of their language milestones, their early traits and interests, and their notable activities and experiences will one day be a priceless peek into the childhood that they will have largely forgotten. (See [Why Keeping a Journal on Your Kids is So Valuable.](#))

## BONUS TIP: Subscribe to my free newsletter

My free weekly newsletter includes links to my latest articles as well as additional content not found on my blog. Emailed every Sunday, the newsletter provides further tips and encouragement to help you make the most of your week when it comes to nurturing your children's language ability. Like a personal coach, I'll check in with you regularly to help keep your commitment firmly in mind and motivate you to continue trying your best for the sake of your children's bilingual future. [Click to subscribe to my newsletter.](#)

*For much more, read my book [Maximize Your Child's Bilingual Ability](#) (<http://amzn.to/24kCeSY>), and visit [Bilingual Monkeys](#) (<http://bilingualmonkeys.com>), [The Bilingual Zoo](#) (<http://bilingualzoo.com>), and my Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/bilingualmonkeys>).*