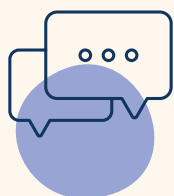




Autism and speaking multiple languages

This information sheet provides tips on supporting Autistic children who are learning and using more than one language.

People who can understand and speak two languages are described as bilingual, while those who use three or more languages are multilingual. Speaking more than one language is common in many communities around the world, including among Autistic individuals who grow up in bilingual or multilingual families. These experiences provide valuable opportunities for communication, learning and cultural connection.



What the research tells us

Language development in Autistic children

- Language skills vary greatly among Autistic children.
- Research shows that learning more than one language does not negatively affect language or communication development.
- Autistic children who are bilingual generally develop language skills similar to those of Autistic children who speak only one language.

Benefits of speaking more than one language

- Growing up in a bilingual or multilingual environment may support some social and thinking skills, such as using gestures to communicate.
- Speaking more than one language can help strengthen family relationships, support cultural connections and promote emotional well-being.

Our purpose a different brilliant®

Understanding, engaging
and celebrating the strengths,
interests and aspirations of people
on the autism spectrum.



Challenges and misconceptions

- Some people worry that learning more than one language may confuse Autistic children or delay their language development. However, research does not support these concerns.
- In the past, some educators and health professionals advised families to use only one language with Autistic children. As research has grown, this advice has changed, and bilingualism/multilingualism is now increasingly recognised as a positive option.



Practical tips for families

Support more than one language

- If your family uses more than one language, it is usually helpful for your Autistic child to hear and use those languages.
- Using family or cultural languages can support family relationships and cultural identity.

Get the right advice

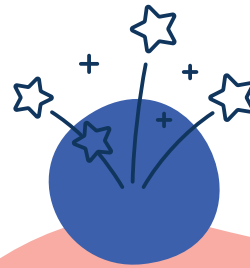
- Speak with professionals who understand current research about autism and speaking multiple languages.
- Make sure language support respects your child's culture, family background and preferences.

Use languages naturally at home

- Create a supportive home environment where your child can hear and use all family languages.
- Every child develops differently. Some children may use gestures, mix languages or prefer one language in certain situations.

Find helpful resources

- Look for easy-to-access information about autism and bilingualism, such as websites, support groups or multilingual learning tools.
- Ask for support at school or in therapy if your child needs it.



Language as a special interest

Some Autistic people have a special interest in languages and enjoy learning how languages work. They may be highly motivated to learn new languages, explore grammar and language patterns and develop skills in multiple languages. For some, learning languages is not only a useful skill but also a source of enjoyment, confidence and cultural connection.

Additional resources

University of Edinburgh (Scotland) and Queen Margaret University (Scotland) autism and bilingualism video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPctNHggQJI

University of Edinburgh (Scotland) and Queen Margaret University (Scotland) autism and bilingualism resources: <https://autism-bilingualism.github.io/resources>

Based on the idea of a different brilliant®, Aspect's approach:

- Respects difference and diversity
- Builds a person's skills based on their strengths, interests, aspirations and support needs
- Develops autism-friendly environments
- Supports others to understand and embrace autism and to develop respectful supportive interactions.