

**Bilingual**

Someone who understands and speaks two or more languages.

**Monolingual**

Someone who understands and speaks one language only.

**Multilingual**

Someone who understands and speaks three or more languages.

**Home language**

The main language family members speak at home.

**Passive bilingual**

Someone who understands two languages but does not speak one of them.

**Dominant language(s)**

The main language(s) in a country.  
OR  
The language someone speaks most easily.

## Some advantages of speaking more than one language



### **This is what researchers say about bilingualism:**

1. A child who speaks their **home language** well is likely to do better at school than a child who has learnt a bit of the **home language** and a bit of English.
2. Being **bilingual** helps children to be intelligent.
3. **Bilingual** children often develop early reading skills.
4. **Bilingual** children do better in English tests than children who only speak English.\*
5. **Bilingualism** can help children to do better at other school subjects like maths.\*
6. **Bilingual** children are more likely to do better in general reasoning tests than children who only speak English.
7. **Bilingual** children understand how language works better than children who only speak one language. This is very important for school work.
8. **Bilingual** children are often more creative than children who only speak one language.
9. **Bilingual** children can find it easy to understand how someone is feeling by looking at them.
10. **Bilingual** children often understand concepts much earlier than monolingual children because they are able to explore them in at least two languages.
11. The earlier a child becomes **bilingual** the better.
12. It is very useful for parents to use their own **home language** when they help children to do their homework.
13. It is easier for a **bilingual** child who speaks their parents' language to be proud of their family's culture.
14. **Bilingual** people are better able to concentrate on difficult work.
15. **Bilingual** people react faster than monolingual people.
16. **Bilingual** people are more able to keep their brains working better when they are old than monolingual people.

\* If 1000 monolingual children and 1000 bilingual children are given the same maths or English tests, more bilingual children will get higher marks.

Unless otherwise indicated the information is taken from:

- Baker, C (1993) Foundation of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism Multilingual Matters; Baker, C (2000) A parents' and teachers' guide to bilingualism 2nd Edition. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters
- Cummins, J. (2000) Language, power, and pedagogy. Bilingual Children in the crossfire. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Edwards, V (1998) The Power of Babel Trentham Books
- \*York University Canada, from BBC News Being Bilingual 'protects brain' 15/06/04)