

# The Gift of Language

## For Families

*Language is one of the most important gifts you give your child. But how do you give it?*

**The answer is simple.**

*Speak your language with your child at home every day!*

### ■ Why is home language important?

The language you speak with your children is the first language they will learn. It is their first connection to you, to the rest of their family, and to their culture and community. It is the language they first use to learn about the world around them. It is the language that helps them get “set for life”—and you are a central part of that process! This is one of the many ways parents are their children’s first teachers.

### ■ What are the benefits of using your home language?

Using your home language connects your children to your family. It also provides a connection to your important cultural traditions, and to friends and neighbors who speak the same language. Using your home language allows you to teach your children, and to learn new things together. You can talk about new experiences and words; you can practice letters and numbers. All of these things are an important part of your children’s early learning—and it will be easier and more fun for you if you do it in your most comfortable language.

### ■ But what about English?

Children living in the United States need English to succeed in school and in life. Fortunately, young children can easily become bilingual. A person who speaks more than one language well has more opportunities to study, travel, and work—both in the United States and around the world. Being bilingual also helps children build stronger thinking skills.

### ■ If I speak some English, should I use it at home?

You should speak the language you are most comfortable using. If your home language is stronger than your English, then you should use your home language with your children to build strong language skills.



