

**HELP! Should we take our child out of French immersion?**

# 5 TIPS FOR ENGLISH SPEAKING PARENTS

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**This is a question we are so often asked when a child in a French immersion program is struggling to develop efficient reading skills.** Like most difficult questions there is no standard response and requires a lot of proactive inquiry and research on the part of a parent. Our mission is to support students and families achieve their goals, so if your goal is to succeed in French immersion, keep reading!

**Here is the good news, children have a natural capacity to acquire new languages and there are many strategies parents can use to support their child without giving up on French immersion all together.**

## **HERE ARE 5 TIPS TO KEEP YOUR CHILD ON THE PATH TO BILINGUALISM:**

### **1 Be enthusiastic and positive!**

Even though we said it, this goes without saying and we're here to remind you that you're doing a great job! Your encouragement is critically important to your child's success and how you react to challenge is more important than your prior knowledge in a subject area. We know it may seem daunting when you struggle to interpret your child's homework assignment, but if they see you model confidence, enthusiasm and joy in the learning process you're teaching them the most important skill of all, resiliency!

### **2 Put your first-language first.**

English speaking families are often concerned that spending time practicing English will confuse their child's work in French, but research shows the opposite to be true. Having a strong foundation in English is key to grasping additional languages. The sooner a child can feel confident in their first language, the sooner their brain can make space for a second.

If your child has a strong foundation in the English phonetic code, they are more likely to succeed in a French immersion classroom. Read our blog, "What is Phonics?" ([www.halifaxlearning.com/blog/what-is-phonics](http://www.halifaxlearning.com/blog/what-is-phonics)) to learn more about this code and why it's critical to reading success.

Did you know there are 37 speech sounds in French versus 44 in English. 10 French consonant sounds are directly transferable from French to English and vice versa and 4 consonants require some slight variation. Watch this short video ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=83sTgHd5lw0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83sTgHd5lw0)) from *Fluent Forever – Learn Any Language* to learn more about the French phonetic alphabet.

### **3 Compare and contrast vocabulary.**

Make vocabulary development a deliberate activity at home. Position your child as the teacher simply by asking them questions you know they can answer. Confidence is key! There is no more effective teaching strategy than having the student be the teacher. You don't have to be an expert in French (or calculus, or physics, or ancient history ...) to help your child succeed.

### **Quick tips for success at home:**

- Label objects in your home with sticky notes in English and French. Compare commonly used English and French words like "banana" versus "banane".
- Play the French and English version of classic board games like Scrabble, Taboo and Pictionary.
- Choose books that are slightly below your child's reading level.

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## 4 Make reading fun!

Another universally effective teaching strategy! Children learn best when they are having fun and feel confident. It's important to differentiate learning to read and reading for pleasure.

- Children spend hours at school developing their reading and writing skills and teachers do a fantastic job creating a safe, conducive learning environment where it's okay to make mistakes. To little people, school is their full-time job, their profession, their career. Reading at home should feel like vacation!
- If you're concerned with your child's progress, take mental notes during story time and record them as soon as possible. Reach out to your child's teachers in private for confirmation, support and recommendations. Be proactive and have your child's skills assessed by a professional.

## 5 Use tech support!

You know there's always an app for that. If you have an iPhone, download iSpeech, a text to speech app, or spend as few as 5 minutes a day practicing your French using Duolingo ([www.duolingo.com](http://www.duolingo.com)).

- Is there an app out there that you love? Share it with us! ■



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We have locations ([www.halifaxlearning.com/about-us/locations](http://www.halifaxlearning.com/about-us/locations)) in Halifax, Tantallon, Dartmouth, and Bedford. For more information on our programs please call 902-453-4113 or email: [reception@halifaxlearning.com](mailto:reception@halifaxlearning.com)

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