

My Child's Learning: A Parent Resource

Learning English as a New Language



Who are English language learners?

- Many families living in Alberta do not speak English at home. Their children learn English at school.
- Children (and adults) who are learning English as a new language are English language learners.

Where should I send my child to school?

Any school will be able to help your child learn English. If you want your child to learn French as well as English, some schools offer a Francophone program (French as a first language), French Immersion program or French as a Second Language courses (FSL).

The school board or the principal at your local school will be able to help you find the information you need to make a good decision about which school to send your child to. (See the [Choosing a School in Alberta](#) parent information sheet.)

Children can learn English in different ways.

Children learn English from:

- their teachers
- each other (their peers or classmates)
- people in the community
- books, television, movies, and the Internet.



Children learn English in many ways.

Listen and Learn

- Children listen to other people speak English.
- They listen to learn the sounds of English and to learn new words.
- Some children might not feel confident speaking English for a while and will prefer learning English at first by just listening.
- They will often repeat what they have heard.

Speak and Improve

- Children start to speak, write, and read in English as they learn more new words.
- They recognize patterns and begin to understand basic grammar.
- They begin to use everyday expressions.

Use English Every Day

- Children use English in everyday life.
- They talk with friends, watch television, read books and magazines, and find information on the Internet in English.

Use English to Study and Learn

- Children learn English at the same time that they are learning their school subjects.
- They take notes in school, write stories, give oral presentations, and read books in English.

How will my child learn English at school?

Assessing Your Child's English Language

- Your child's teacher will evaluate how well your child uses English at the beginning of the school year. Assessing your child's English language level is important. It helps your child's teachers know the best way to teach your child English.
- Teachers may use one or more tests when your child arrives at school to help them know your child's language level.
- Many schools use the *Alberta K-12 English as a Second Language (ESL) Proficiency Benchmarks* to help determine a child's English language level. More information about the benchmarks is available at <http://www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/index.html>.



How will my child get extra help in English?

- Sometimes your child may get additional help with English from another teacher in the school.
- English language learners in junior and senior high school may take additional courses to help them learn concepts and English vocabulary. These courses help them better understand their subjects.

How long will it take for my child to learn English?

- Children may be in school for a few years before they are fluent in English. A child who is fluent will speak, read, and write correctly in English in most situations in school and outside of school.
- Children typically do not learn English at the same speed. Some children will learn English quickly while some children will take longer. This is normal.
- Also, it is important to understand that language used for talking informally develops quickly. Language used for explaining and discussing topics in school subjects takes longer.

Did You Know?

By helping your child maintain his or her home language while learning English, your child learns both languages better. The two languages will strengthen each other. It is okay to speak to your child in your home language.

How can I help my child learn English?

- Participate in events or activities to make learning another language fun.
- Encourage your child to share activities with English-speaking children.
- Children learn best when their schooling is uninterrupted. Long absences from school will increase the time it takes for your child to learn English. If your child is going to be absent due to an illness or family travel, talk to the teacher for ways to help your child keep up with school work while he or she is away from school.

Learn more about your child's education by visiting
My Child's Learning: A Parent Resource
<http://www.mychildslearning.alberta.ca>