


PARENTING & BABIES 

Teaching your toddler a second language

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Teaching your toddler a second language is possible. Genevieve Thiers, founder and CEO of sittercity.com, talks about a new child-care trend.

While young children have a unique instinct to learn a new language intuitively, toddlers do not learn very well when put in front of a computer or saddled to an audiotape of foreign phrases. Interacting with others is a crucial part of a toddler's learning process, so use your bilingual/trilingual sitter to interact with your toddler to help him absorb as much of a new language as possible.

Tips on how to utilize a bi/trilingual Sitter

1. Keep it basic
Since toddlers are still fine-tuning and grasping their own native language, don't let the sitter get too complex in her teaching. Simple phrases and greetings such as "hello," "goodbye," "yes," "no," "please" and "thank you" are perfect places to start, since toddlers are already familiar with these phrases and won't get overwhelmed or confused by shift in language.
2. Create a relaxed learning environment
Toddlers and young children learn best when it seems to happen organically. Setting the toddler and sitter up in a room with a timer and some flashcards isn't going to produce the results you want. Instead, ask the sitter to incorporate her language into playtime. For example, she can use colors while painting, numbers while playing with building blocks, animals during a walk outside or simple words while reading a book.
3. Remain relevant
Don't have your sitter try to teach your toddler words or phrases that are not relevant to his everyday life. Adding unfamiliar words or concepts will only confuse him, and make it much harder for him to ever create a foundation on which to build.
4. To avoid confusion, you should always have one sitter per language. OPOL - One Person, One Language
If your sitter is fluent in French, but speaks Spanish a little and is trying to teach your little one both languages at the same time, your child may end up speaking "Franish," which will defeat the purpose of him

mastering more than one language (however, he may be the coolest kid on the block with his own language!)

5. Stick to your native language when speaking to your toddler and let the sitter be the pro at her chosen language
Your children are like little parrots. Everything you say, they repeat. If your first language is English, only speak that language when talking with your children. Let them learn the other languages from a sitter who is fluent in it to avoid teaching your child the wrong usage
6. Be consistent and repetitive
Have your sitter always greet your child with her language. Have her say goodnight in the other language. Routine and repetition like this will help your child pick up the language much faster than if the sitter's teachings are sporadic and seem random.

Genevieve Thiers Bio:

What do you get when you cross a former babysitter and a former Big Bird with a professional opera singer, an award-winning entrepreneur and an iVillage babysitting expert? You get Sittercity founder and CEO, Genevieve Thiers, of course.

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As the oldest of seven children, including two sets of twins, babysitting is in Thiers' blood. While pursuing her undergraduate degree at Boston College, she worked her way through school by babysitting for more than 30 families. Endless diaper changes and bedtime stories later, Thiers pitched the idea for Sittercity.com to Boston investors in 2001. Their response? "We don't fund babysitting clubs."

Undaunted, Thiers turned to another "investor," her dad, and begged for \$120 to buy the domain name for Sittercity.com. Using part of her salary from her job at IBM, Thiers hired two friends to design the Sittercity website. While they put their

technical design skills to use, Thiers spent her days at IBM, her nights singing and getting her master's degree in opera, and all of her free time distributing 20,000 babysitter recruitment flyers across Boston on foot, including 20 local colleges.

Years later, Thiers' blisters from those recruitment days have healed and Sittercity, now based in Chicago, has more than half a million users nationwide. This babysitter-turned-entrepreneur has also brought her babysitting expertise to the national media, having appeared as a care expert in multiple television, radio and print outlets including the Today Show (where she even serenaded Mike Leonard!), The Ellen DeGeneres Show, The View, Good Morning America, The Big Idea with Donnie Deutsch, the CBS Early Show, CNN, Martha Stewart Living Radio, The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Redbook, Parents, Parenting, Real Simple, Better Homes and Gardens, and Working Mother.

In addition to appearing in the national media for her expertise on caregiving, Thiers has also been recognized for her innovative vision and unique business-savvy with several awards. In 2007, Thiers was listed as Forbes Junior Power League and in Crain's 40 under 40, recognized by President Bush at the White House as the Small Business Administration Young Entrepreneur Champion of the Year for 2006 and won the Women's Business Development Center Rising Star Award for 2005. Noted for her babysitting expertise and business acumen, Genevieve has spoken at hundreds of entrepreneurial forums, young executive forums, mothers' forums, colleges and conventions across America, and she is a popular keynote speaker. She currently serves as the iVillage babysitting expert, and her first book, Love at First Sit, was released in Summer of 2008.

Website: www.sittercity.com