Orthophonie
VoxLingue
Speech and Language

Printable sheet

For grandparents: when your grandchild understands you but answers in English, what to do during the visit

Understanding a language without speaking it is common in bilingual children. Your grandchild is still bilingual, even if they answer you in English or French. And your language matters: for them, it's often the language of affection.

What helps

- **Speak your language,** the one you know best.
- **Answer their idea,** even if they answer in English or French.
- **Say their idea again in your language,** without asking them to repeat.
- **Let them answer however they can:** a gesture, a smile, a mixed word.

An example

They say: **"I want cake!"** You answer, in your language: **"You want cake? Here's your cake, it's still warm."** They hear the words they needed, with no test.

During the visit, in a small group

1. **A recipe**
   cook together, name what you're doing
2. **A game**
   cards, a puzzle, side by side
3. **A song**
   a nursery rhyme from your childhood
4. **Photos**
   the family album, people named

After the visit

- Video calls that converse: a drawing, the song, the next recipe
- Books and songs in your language, to share
- Keep the hurt to yourself, and talk about it with their parents

What to avoid

- "Say it in our language"
- Pretending not to understand English
- Correcting them in front of everyone or comparing them with cousins

And if their parents are worried about their language?

A language difficulty shows in all their languages, including English or French. In Québec: **contact the CLSC or ask the doctor** (Agir tôt, free, under 7) and, at the same time, a private consultation. In Ontario: the Preschool Speech and Language Program, no doctor's referral needed.

Sources: CIUSSS de la Capitale-Nationale (2022, in French); Naître et grandir (2021, in French); Montreal Children's Hospital; Place and Hoff (2011); Québec.ca, Agir tôt. **General information: this sheet does not replace an assessment.**