

# Develop language support and multilingual strategies

## How does it work?

In this activity, museum professionals use strategies to help multilingual children and their families understand the museum visit. By using these strategies, children and families can take part more and feel welcome. You notice it works when they ask questions, join activities, and use their home languages.

## Translanguaging forms



Combining languages



Using all the senses



Translating



Using language brokers

## What is the goal of the activity?

By using language-support strategies, multilingual children (and their families):

- ◇ Understand museum topics better.
- ◇ Ask questions and share ideas in their home languages and Dutch.
- ◇ Feel welcome and included during the museum visit.



## In short

Age group: All ages

Subject:  Mathematics  Science & Technology  Both

How long it takes: Depends on the length of museum visit

Who can lead this?:  Teacher  Museum guide & museum educator  Parents & caregivers



## What do you need?

- ◇ Suggestions for language-oriented strategies (see below)
  - ◇ Materials to make labels or written signs (optional)
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## Preparation

### Before the visit

1. Look at **Suggestions for language-oriented strategies** (see below).  
Choose strategies that feel natural to you, or that fit the upcoming visit.

2. **Think about the visit or program**

Ask yourself:

- ◇ What objects or museum elements will I use?
- ◇ Which strategies would help the children or families understand better?
- ◇ Do I want to create simple signs or labels to support my explanations?
- ◇ Can I ask family members/children to translate for each other?
- ◇ Do I want to model simple phrases they can use?

Example for a science demonstration:

You might label parts of an object and point to each label while explaining how the object works.

3. **Choose 1-2 strategies to try**

Start small. For example:

- ◇ **Paraphrase:** say the same idea in simpler words.  
*"This is a compass. It shows direction. It tells you where to go."*
- ◇ **Speak more slowly and pause often.**
- ◇ **Model language:** give simple examples of phrases children can use.  
*"You can say: I see a wheel here."*

4. **Prepare materials (optional)**

Make simple labels, cards, or signs if they support your explanations.

5. **Talk with the team (if working with other guides)**

Explain:

- ◇ The strategies you chose
- ◇ When to use them
- ◇ What to do if communication becomes difficult



## Step-by-step instructions

### Introduction

Museum guides use simple language-support strategies while talking to multilingual children and families. These strategies make conversations easier and more fun. Children and adults feel welcome to use any language they know, and can join the conversation by talking, pointing, or gesturing. This helps everyone take part in the museum visit.

### At the start of the visit

- ◇ Take a moment to review your chosen strategies.
- ◇ Set up any labels or signs you will use.
- ◇ Remind yourself to take your time and speak clearly.

### During the visit

- ◇ Use the strategies you prepared.
- ◇ Encourage children and families to use any language they feel comfortable with.
- ◇ If someone does not understand, try:
  - Pointing
  - Gesturing
  - Drawing
  - Showing a label
  - Paraphrasing
  - Asking if someone can help explain

### After the visit

Reflect on your own or with the other guides:

- ◇ What worked well?
- ◇ What felt difficult?
- ◇ What strategy should I try again?
- ◇ What can I change or add next time?

### Important

- ◇ Do not forbid visitors from using their home language. This can make them feel uncomfortable and excluded.
- ◇ Encourage participation in any language. Pointing and gesturing count too!



## Tips & Variations

### **Start small**

Just try one or two strategies at first. You can add more over time.

### **Keep an open mind**

Every group is different. What works for one group may not work for another.

### **Adjust strategies for different groups**

You can change the strategies for families, tourists, teenagers, or adults.

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## Who made this

- ◇ At Teylers museum, we co-designed language support and multilingual strategies for the museum visits of newcomer children.
  - ◇ Developed by Multi-STEM, based on our research and the current literature on multilingualism in museums.
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# Materials

## 1

## Suggestions for language-oriented strategies

Language-oriented strategies museum guides can use in visits of multilingual children and families

### Strategies involving Dutch

- ◇ repeat what you say
- ◇ paraphrase: repeat what you said in other words
- ◇ speak more slowly, pause more often, emphasize articulation
- ◇ offer word definitions and synonyms
- ◇ spell words out aloud
- ◇ offer sentence or word starters
- ◇ reformulate what visitors say in other words
- ◇ encourage visitors to continue speaking in Dutch

### Strategies involving gestures, body parts, objects

- ◇ use objects, signs, pointing or gestures as aids while you are talking
- ◇ demonstrate with your body (voice, hands) while you talk
- ◇ encourage visitors to use objects, pointing or with gestures

### Strategies involving children's and families' languages

- ◇ ask children and families to name objects and concepts in other languages
- ◇ (including children's home languages)
- ◇ ask children or family members to translate for each other
- ◇ offer children and families to translate words to their languages (using an app)

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