



Burning Questions

He Pātai



As you begin on your journey, you will probably find that you have lots of questions. Here are just a few that you may have.

WHEN SHOULD I BEGIN SPEAKING MĀORI TO MY BABY?

Begin at birth, or if you are really keen, begin before birth. There is no such thing as too early. Your baby will learn language sounds and tones even while they are still in the womb.



I DON'T SPEAK MĀORI, BUT IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP MY BABY BECOME A MĀORI LANGUAGE SPEAKER?

Use whatever Māori you do have and try to learn more. Make sure that the Māori you use is correct.

WHY DO I HAVE TO BE REALLY COMMITTED IF I WANT MY BABY TO SPEAK MĀORI FLUENTLY?

Māori is in a much weaker position than English, so you must be very committed and determined if you want your baby to become a Māori language speaker. For most children and parents, it is much easier to speak English. It requires a real commitment to go against that natural human instinct to take the easy road!



HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE MY BABY TO LEARN TO SPEAK MĀORI?

How quickly your baby learns Māori will depend on the amount they hear and are surrounded by. The more contact your baby has with the language the better. Remember also, that babies learn language in different ways so each baby will be different.

AS A PARENT, WHY IS MY ATTITUDE TOWARDS MĀORI LANGUAGE SO IMPORTANT?

If you only use Māori language as it takes your fancy, your baby will grow to treat the language in the same way. If you really want your baby to learn Māori, remember the following four important points:

- It is essential to have a positive and enthusiastic attitude towards the language at all times. Your baby will be influenced by the way you treat the language.
- No matter what level your Māori language is at, you need to make an effort to improve or extend your Māori language skills as a support to your baby.
- Learning a language is a long-term commitment. You need lots of patience, and you need to stick with it.
- Children pick up lots of messages about Māori language from the way we use it. Be aware of the messages that you might be sending: important things are talked about in English; to be grown up you have to speak English; it is rude to speak Māori in front of other people.



WHAT ABOUT MY BABY'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE?

There is clear evidence that your baby's English will not suffer from learning the Māori language. In fact, it is likely that their language skills will be better off for it.



In most parts of the world, having two or more languages is normal and an advantage. The mental agility and cultural flexibility that comes with speaking more than one language is a necessary skill in our world today.

Phrases for love and playing

- I love you dearly, my baby
- Nui te aroha mōu, taku pēpi
- What a beautiful baby you are! - Tō ātaahua!
- You rascal! - Ākene koe!
- Look at these chubby legs!
- Te mōmona hoki o ēnei waewae!
- Are you laughing?
- Kei te kata mai koe?

English is so strong in our society. It would be practically impossible to grow up in New Zealand without learning to speak English. The challenge is to make sure that your baby's Māori language is well developed before English becomes their preferred choice.

WHY NOT JUST LET MY BABY LEARN MĀORI LANGUAGE LATER IN LIFE, LIKE I DID?

One reason to teach your baby Māori language as early as possible is there is absolutely no guarantee your baby will want to learn Māori as a teenager or

adult! It is important that your baby has positive experiences with Māori language. This starts with you. By speaking Māori to your baby from an early age, you will be showing your baby that Māori language is natural and normal.

Most parents want things to be better for their children than what they had when growing up. If you have learnt Māori as an adult, you will know how hard it can be to learn another language.

Some people find that as they grow older, they become very passionate about wanting to learn Māori language. But as adults we often have lots of other commitments and obligations. Raising children, work and other priorities can make it very difficult to find the time needed to learn the language.



There is also a financial cost to consider. Learning Māori language as an adult can now cost a huge amount of money. Some people pay thousands of dollars to attend Māori language courses at different institutions, with some borrowing money and going into debt to do so. By giving your baby the gift of language from as early as possible, you will be giving your baby a headstart and an opportunity to avoid this financial burden later on in life.



-Tips-

- Consider taking holidays in areas where Māori is likely to be spoken or with other families that speak Māori.
- Be consistent!
- If you want your baby to speak Māori then start planning for it now.

