

Why learn a foreign language? Benefits of bilingualism



Learning a foreign language is more than just a boost to your CV or handy for travelling. It will make you smarter.

The brains of bilingual people operate differently than single language speakers, and these differences offer several mental benefits. People who begin language study in their adult lives can still achieve the same levels of fluency as a young learner, and still reap the same mental benefits, too.

You become smarter

Speaking a foreign language improves the functionality of your brain.

Students who study foreign languages tend to score better on standardised tests than their monolingual peers, particularly in the categories of maths, reading, and vocabulary.

You build multitasking skills

Multilingual people, especially children, are skilled at switching between two systems of speech, writing, and structure. According to a study from the Pennsylvania State University, this “juggling” skill makes them good multitaskers, because they can easily switch between different structures.

You stave off Alzheimer’s and dementia

Several studies have been conducted on this topic, and the results are consistent. For monolingual adults, the mean age for the first signs of dementia is 71.4. For adults who speak two or more languages, the mean age for those first signs is 75.5.

Your memory improves

Learning a language involves memorising rules and vocabulary, which helps strengthen that mental “muscle.” This exercise improves overall memory, which means that

multiple language speakers are better at remembering lists or sequences. Studies show that bilinguals are better at retaining shopping lists, names, and directions.

You become more perceptive

Multilingual people are better at observing their surroundings. They are more adept at focusing on relevant information and editing out the irrelevant. They're also better at spotting misleading information.

Your decision-making skills improve

According to a study from the University of Chicago, bilinguals tend to make more rational decisions. Bilinguals are more confident with their choices after thinking it over in the second language and seeing whether their initial conclusions still stand up.

