

What Would a Bilingual Do?

Think you know all there is to know about bilinguals?

Take our quiz and find out if you are right!

A big thank you to Madalena Cruz-Ferreira for creating this fabulous quiz for us.

Decide whether the statements below are correct:

- (1) Bilinguals always mix their languages.
- (2) Bilinguals can be better at speaking, understanding, reading or writing one of their languages than the other.
- (3) Bilinguals can express themselves equally well in both their languages.
- (4) Bilinguals can have one single dominant language.
- (5) Bilinguals think in one language and then translate to their other language.
- (6) Bilinguals can think in two languages at the same time.
- (7) Bilinguals can dream in both their languages.
- (8) Bilinguals can do math in one language only.
- (9) Bilinguals can turn off one or the other of their languages at will.
- (10) Bilinguals necessarily are, or become, gifted language learners.



Answers to the statements above:

- (1) **NO.** Bilinguals may produce mixed speech in exchanges with other bilinguals in the same languages. Bilinguals know that they must speak one single language with monolinguals. But only bilinguals and multilinguals can produce mixed speech.
- (2) **YES.** The four language skills are independent from one another. Reading and writing, in particular, will depend on schooling in each language.
- (3) **NO.** Being bilingual means having different languages for different purposes, and therefore to express different things.
- (4) **This depends** on the uses to which each language is put. One language may be dominant to talk about school matters, for example, and another language dominant to talk about what goes on at home. Only monolinguals have one single dominant language for everything they need.
- (5) **Possibly,** if, for example, they have to describe in one of their languages one experience which took place in the other language. Bilinguals, like monolinguals, normally think in the language they are using at one particular moment.
- (6) **YES.** This is exactly what professional interpreters have to do when they're working. And also what children have to do when for example their parents use two different languages with them at home.
- (7) **YES.** Dreams reflect our experiences, our worries and our wishes, which may be associated with particular languages.
- (8) **NO.** Math doesn't come naturally to anyone. It is a school subject, and it is therefore bound to the language in which it is learned.
- (9) **NO.** Both languages are always on, although one or the other may be momentarily pushed to the background if the bilingual is engaged communicating with monolinguals.
- (10) **NO.** Learning and using languages is not a gift, it's a necessity of everyday life.