



Language

Non-German-or French speaking residents of Canton Bern are expected to learn German. Language skills are the essential requirement for successful integration into society and the job market.

Official Languages

Switzerland has four national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. Canton Bern has two official languages: German and French.

High German / Swiss German

There is a distinction made between High German (Hochdeutsch | l'allemand standard) and Swiss German (Schweizerdeutsch | le suisse allemand) in German-speaking Switzerland. High German is spoken at school and on certain radio and television programs. In everyday life people speak Swiss German. Swiss German is a German dialect that is not always easy to understand, even for people with good German skills. It is not expected that foreigners speak Swiss German, but it is expected that they are eventually able to understand Swiss German. It is always acceptable to ask the Swiss to speak High German.

Languages and Children

It is recommended that foreign language-speaking children meet German-speaking or French-speaking children as soon as possible. Ideal opportunities are playgroups or special programs for parents and their children. Parents can support their children in their learning by talking, listening, and telling them stories. They should do so in the parent's strongest and most natural language.

Translations

It cannot be expected that persons speak and understand German or French immediately upon their arrival. Nonetheless there are situations in which communication is essential. Many new arrivals ask family members or friends to interpret. In complicated, personal, or confidential conversations a professional interpreter may be called for. Intercultural interpreters specialize in taking cultural characteristics into consideration when interpreting. Various writing services (Schreibdienst | le service de correspondance) in the Canton Bern offer help with understanding and writing letters or completing forms.



Kanton Bern
Canton de Berne

hallo-bern.ch
salut-berne.ch

Additional information (links, addresses, information sheets, brochures)

www.hallo-bern.ch/en/language-and-integration/language

hallo-bern.ch

Information for a good start at the new place of residence
Language and Integration / Language