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English-Language Kid Zones Pack a Wallop of Fun

By Diana Kondrashin

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In addition to play time, tots at the Gymboree Play & Music Center are getting various English-language classes.

The worldwide children's brand Gymboree will host the official opening of its play centers in Moscow this week. In anticipation of this event, The Moscow Times has turned its attention to English and multilingual classes that infants and toddlers can enjoy in the city.

Gymboree

The worldwide brand Gymboree came to Moscow recently, with two local centers joining its network.

Gymboree offers various classes including music, arts and Play & Learn sessions for children 6 years old and younger. All of them are held in English. Juniors are allowed to enter the play gym free of charge during the breaks.

Classes for infants under 3 are held with the parents in attendance, and the space of the center is comfortably equipped with feeding highchairs and changing tables for babies. Classes for preschoolers are based on learning through play, and a set of English songs always accompanies their activities.

Since Gymboree opened its doors only a couple of months ago, it still offers one free lesson for newcomers. Enrollment in eight music and art classes, which stretch over two months and are 45 to 60 minutes each, would cost about 10,000 rubles ($324) per course, and 8,000 rubles for those registered in the 45-minute Play & Learn sessions.

Gymboree Khamovniki is located at 23/1 Maly Savvinsky Pereulok. Phone: +7 499-678-2301. The Gymboree Dynamo branch is at 31A/1 Leningradsky Prospekt. Phone: +7 499-750-0156. www.gymboreeclasses.ru.

P'tit Cref

The first private trilingual center for children is not only a kindergarten but a place where original classes are held.

First of all, these are language classes, either French or English, taught by native speakers, for kids from 2 to 7 years old. Groups of children meet either twice a week or once on the weekend without their parents for classes of different length. Tuition fees start at 36,700 rubles per trimester, which is about 24 lessons.

Language classes for younger kids are arranged based on the idea that activities need to change every 15 minutes so that juniors are not bored from the routine.

P'tit Cref also hosts cooking classes for children led by a charming French cook, in French with a Russian and English speaking assistant. Kids explore new cooking materials, then make a simple dish that they all enjoy tasting afterward.

Another original class is based on Russian folklore. All pupils are offered to dress in Russian costumes and take part in dancing and making traditional crafts. Younger attendants are asked to join a circus class where a family of artists introduce them to the circus wonderland. Other classes include yoga, theater, dance, karate, music and arts. One class costs 13,600 rubles, and there are about 12 of them per trimester.

The Nursery Center is located at 22 Bolshoi Afanasyevsky Pereulok. Phone: +7 495-609-9057. The Early Development Center is at 41 Bolshoi Afanasyevsky Pereulok. Phone: +7 495-697-2006. www.ptitcref.com.

Shardam

Although Shardam is not specifically an English center, your bilingual child might enjoy the special activities held by a young team of professional illustrators, musicians, actors and teachers.

Shardam has two English groups, and one is for kids from 2 1/2 to 5 years old. Children are welcomed into a friendly play atmosphere while learning English by pretending that they are robots or cartoon heroes, and making arts and crafts. A chess class for children can also be

held in English by request.

Masterclasses in Russian for preschoolers and elder kids include drum lessons, wool paintings, ceramics, a cinema studio and much more, all for arguably the lowest price in town: 400 to 500 rubles per lesson.

Shardam, in the Neskuchny Garden in Gorky Park, has an entrance from 30A Leninsky Prospekt. Phone: +7 926-197-2024. www.shardam.ru.

English Nursery School

The English Nursery School has a prep program for infants between 18 and 28 months of age, aimed at developing their communication skills before kindergarten. Classes attended with parents include education and play activities, reading, exercises and music. They take place two days per week for 1 1/2 hours in the early evenings and cost 20,000 rubles per month, about eight classes in total.

The English Nursery School Obrucheva is located at 4/3 Ulitsa Obrucheva. Phone: +7 495-933-2893. The Dobrynya branch is located at 8 4th Dobryninsky Pereulok. Phone: +7 495-987-1552. www.englishnursery.ru.

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