

Knowledge/Growth Support



Tips on Learning a New Language

A Guide from www.kgsupport.com

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Introduction

Most people are capable of successfully learning a new language. Most can accomplish this process within a reasonable period of time, especially when learning with an effective method. Although it is true that a few people may not be as skilled as they wish when learning a new idiom, a good method and a strong commitment can generally result in the successful acquisition of a new language. It is important to note that successful methods differ from person to person. What works well for one particular individual may not work as well for another. Students must experiment with alternate approaches until they discover what works best personally.

The goal of this booklet is to suggest ideas and methods that will put you, as a student of any new language, on the road to success. Good luck!

Tip 1. Increase your interest in learning the language.

Positive interest is the most effective motivation when learning a new language. Reflect back on your first time learning to ride a bike, swimming, or playing a new computer game. You learned these skills because they were interesting to you. You believed you would have fun engaging in them, and you were interested in the results and benefits of acquiring these new skills. Even though you may have met difficulties, skinned your knees, or swallowed a bit of water from the swimming pool (yuck!), you continued to practice, trying your best to conquer any difficulties. When something holds the promise of being interesting and enjoyable, you devote yourself to overcome any obstacles in your way. You might have fallen off your bicycle and scraped your knees, but you still got back on the bike and kept on pedaling. Perhaps, the most important aspect of learning a new language is sustaining your interest and keeping the experience enjoyable. The following tips will assist you in discovering techniques to ensure that learning a new language will be an agreeable and successful process for you.

Embrace the culture of the language

If you simply attempt to memorize the vocabulary of a new language without understanding its context, the learning experience will soon prove to be a dry and boring undertaking. Most who simply study the new language's vocabulary fail to reach their goal.

You gain an understanding of a new language and the people who speak it by incorporating anecdotes from their culture and manner of speaking. This understanding not only retains your interest but also provides a deeper level of appreciation of the people who use the new language.

Incorporating culture into language studies heightens your interest along with expanding your own cultural knowledge.

Music

Everybody loves music, despite its many different classifications. Find the type of music you like in the new language you are trying to learn. Take one song you really like, listen to it, and then study it until you understand it thoroughly. Going over a list of words is boring, but we all love to sing our favorite songs. Learn to sing your new song. When accompanied by people of most cultures, it is amazing how many opportunities there are to sing. People will be impressed that you took the time and the interest to learn some songs in their language. Being able to sing a song or two in another language is a great way to make friends. And isn't making friends and getting to know people a large part of what learning a new language is all about? If a new friend compliments you on your new song, you will be encouraged to learn another. Your language skills will thus continue to progress.

Movies

What types of movies do you like? Action? Romance? Comedy? Pick a DVD you like and watch it. Consider the body language and the facial expressions you see while you are watching. What happens in a movie is usually never based on reality, but the body language, the expressions, and the way the characters talk represent the language's typical culture. The movie "Terminator" was all fiction, but its catch phrase, "I'll be back," is certainly part



of everyday life.

Television

Many people also find television (TV) programs entertaining. Watching a foreign program may prove a better fit for some people when learning a new language. There is a wide variety of shows available in many languages. Often, the serial nature of some programs makes the experience more interesting because you can become involved and immersed in the characters and ongoing story lines. TV shows usually mirror real life situations. Certainly, TV shows can provide excellent examples of daily life in a culture and can thus become accurate tools for studying and understanding a new language. With many TV series now available on DVD, you can watch any episode repeatedly until you understand it thoroughly.

Internet Chat Rooms

The Internet is a great instrument towards improving new language skills. Take something you are truly interested in – movies, music, stamp collecting, science fiction books – whatever it may be. Then look for a chat room in your new language populated by people with similar interests. Tell the members you are learning their language and that if you “say” something linguistically incorrect, they should let you know. Then, start chatting.

Books for Young Readers

This idea may be a bit different but has worked for some people. Find books for young readers in your new language and practice reading. These books have the benefit of being fairly simple in their language level, yet interesting in story lines. They are often written with the aim of improving the reading skills of their young audience in mind.

Comic Books

Similar to books for young readers, comic books provide alternative methods towards increasing your knowledge of the new language. They usually have a language level targeted for learners, pictures to help explain the story line, and a story that helps retain your interest.

Summary

There are numerous alternate methods to assist in learning retention. The key is finding activities that appeal to you and integrating your learning of the new language into these activities.

Tip 2. Accept that you will make mistakes.

It is natural to make mistakes during the course of learning. In a language course, it is the mode of communication itself that is the focus of instruction. For this reason, a language course differs from other courses. Not understanding and committing mistakes – things that are negative learning indicators in other courses – are a very natural part of the language-learning process. Accept the fact that you will not understand everything. In fact, at the very beginning, prepare not to understand much at all.

Remember that during the initial period of adaptation, your ear and your mind are adjusting to the sounds and the rhythm of the language. Although you will not understand all of what is being said, you will be amazed at your increasing ability to make sense of the language. The only way to learn the language is through practice, practice, and more practice. Again, during the course of practicing, you will commit many errors – and you will learn from them. Just correct them and keep going.

Watch young children learning to speak correctly. They make many mistakes. Ideally, an adult corrects these mistakes, and the children learn the correct pattern of speaking. The same pattern holds true for the adult person learning a new language – committing mistakes and being corrected are simply part of the natural learning process.

Tip 3. Improve your listening and speaking abilities.

Of course, the purpose of learning a language is to communicate. Frequently, many students do better in reading and writing than in listening and speaking. They can read and write, but they can hardly communicate face to face. Expressing themselves with their own words is more difficult. This is true for

many reasons. When reading and writing, you can go at your own speed. However, there is considerably more pressure when speaking and listening. In addition, there is the time factor. When reading, if anything takes longer to understand, then it is usually alright. On the other hand, when listening, you are almost always expected to understand everything that is said, and your reaction should be immediate. This pressure makes most people nervous and thus complicates the process, often degrading performance and comprehension. Speaking is even more demanding. When speaking, we are often replying to what has been said, so there is the worry of not fully understanding what the native speaker had said. The pressure of formulating a correct response, combined with proper grammar, and the need to pronounce the reply in an understandable accent are all factors that make speaking difficult.

It is very important to practice all your skills. This requires listening as well as reading and speaking out loud. Start with simple materials. Do not overload yourself at the beginning. This way, you can absorb the meaning of every word, gain more knowledge, and increase your confidence. Later, you will need some practice listening at faster speeds, so incorporate some TV, DVD movies, or even some native language radio station into your practice sessions. You will begin to hear words you already know, but maybe at a pace much quicker than you have been used to. You do not know where to find a radio station for your new language? Search the Internet for Internet radio stations in this language.

Do not expect to understand everything at once. Pick out words and phrases you know. Through frequent use of natural sources of material, you will gradually become more accustomed to hearing and understanding your new language. After improving your listening skills, it will be much easier to speak the new language. This is because the pressure of wondering whether or not you understood what was said to you will have been lessened after your exposure, and you can now imitate the speech patterns and accents of what you have been listening to. After the regular practice of imitating and then correcting, you will see yourself on the road to success.



Tip 4. Tools to learn the vocabulary effectively.

The vocabulary is the most essential element of communication. The more words you know, the more you can say and understand.

Flash Cards

One effective method of learning the vocabulary of a new language is through the use of flash cards. You can make these tools yourself. If you have seen these for children, the ones for adults are the same. On the front, write the new vocabulary word or phrase in the new language. On the back, write down its meaning and correct pronunciation. It is good practice to carry some with you wherever you go. When you have a few minutes to spare, you can always practice your new words.

In some instances, you may find yourself uncertain about a particular word's pronunciation; a good dictionary will provide a guide to resolve this problem.

Learning Cards

Similar to flash cards, learning cards are used to acquire and then understand new words or phrases you encounter in your daily activities. Take a blank card and fold the card in half lengthwise. You will then have a card with two columns, a card which can easily be kept in your pocket.

Later, when reading, studying, or talking to others in your new language, as you discover new words or phrases, you would like to gain mastery of or do not understand, write the word or phrases down in the left column. When you have the time, look up the words in your dictionary. Use the second column to record the word's definition. Leave some space between each new word, and go down the card adding new words and definitions. When it is filled up, flip the card over and start on the other side. By the time the card is full, it will be packed with words and phrases you did not know before, together with their translations, all on a single index card.

Use this card to study the new words. Fold over the right hand column to hide the answers, and you will have created one of the smallest, and most useful, flashcards you have ever seen. Using an index card like this will create about



20 flashcards on a single card. You can then carry these with you wherever you go. Once you have filled up one card with words, get another one and begin the process all over again. Use these "flash cards" to study for a couple of minutes several times every day. Once you know all the words and phrases on a card, you can simply throw or file it away. Standing in line at the store, in a taxi or a car, waiting for your teacher to arrive, waiting for your friends to join you; all of these minutes can add up to an excellent opportunity to increase your language skills. You will be surprised how those few extra minutes a day of review will help you expand your vocabulary very quickly.

This intermittent method of additional study, using just a few minutes at a time, will help you learn the vocabulary more quickly and remember it long into the future simply by productively investing what would have been otherwise idle minutes.

Audio Flash Cards

If you have a computer, you may take advantage of the Internet. Audio Flash Cards not only help in remembering new words, but when you click on them, the word is said, giving you practice in both remembering the word and hearing it being properly pronounced. A quick search of the Internet will give you numerous links to Audio Flash Cards, and what is good is that many of them are free.

PDAs

Personal digital assistants (PDAs) are excellent tools for learning a new language. Similar to flash cards, you can use the Notepad function to make Flash Cards and Learning Cards. When you are out and about and find yourself with a few extra minutes, you can put that time to use by reviewing the new words in your PDA flash cards.

There are numerous programs available for PDAs in the market that can assist you in your quest to learn a new language. There are Dictionaries, Flash Cards, and Talking Dictionaries, among many others.



Noteworthy

Flash Cards, PDAs, and the like are remarkable tools that can assist you in learning your new language. They are essential components for the overall successful language learning machine. They are important and useful tools, but they are not all you need.

Tip 5. When learning less means more.

A trap many people fall into is attempting to learn too many new words too quickly. Why? The reason for this is they learn and then forget them anyway. Taking on too many new words without absorbing what is already on the board simply results in non-assimilation of the new vocabulary. This quickly leads to frustration in which the student's interest level takes a dip. Too much of this therefore makes learning a new language a dull and fruitless chore.

Your goal is to keep learning a new language fun and entertaining. To do this, you need to build on successes, not failures. Students will be naturally encouraged to learn more when they are successful in learning, understanding, and using a manageable number of new vocabulary words.

Understand each new word.

Approach each new vocabulary word individually. Before moving on to another new word, ensure the last one is understood thoroughly. Use it in sentences and try it out in questions. Be ready during the next conversation with a native speaker, and have at least one sentence ready with the new word and try it out. Own the new word before moving on.

Learn sentences, not just words.

As said earlier, a common practice technique in understanding a new language is to learn new vocabulary words individually. In this manner, however, all that is learned is a "dead" word. The word has no context, no life, and you do not learn how to actually employ the word in normal everyday use, be it in conversation or written communication. Learning words through lists is also dull work, devoid of passion and interest. Always try to learn words as they are



used and as they are lived. In this manner, the word becomes a picture, an image for you to retain in thought, enabling fluent use, and a deeper understanding.

Never overreach.

Do not rush. Trying to do much is counterproductive. A student cramming too many new words will not learn and is only defeating one's own triumph. A learning process that is fun and interesting will continue to grow on its own successes. When new words are understood, you will take pride in what you have acquired, whether it is just one new word per day or 20. Even the first steps of saying "Hello" or "Good Evening," if said properly, are a source of pride when starting with a new language. Possessing a vague understanding of many words does not further the cause of learning the new language. Doing small, reasonable steps well drives the desire to learn more.

Tip 6. Practice language actively.

Although learning a language is a time-intensive program, it is ultimately an investment in your future communication abilities. Do not hesitate to speak the language in public and preferably with native speakers. Practice is the only way to master a new language. Practice listening, exercise reading, and rehearse speaking.

Where to practice?

Read, listen, and practice. This is especially true with the capabilities offered by the Internet and electronic devices. It is quite simple to find materials for reading and listening. Speaking practice is equally important, but it can be much more challenging to discover these opportunities. For this, you have to be more creative and diligent, especially when seeking inexpensive or even free methods.

Language clubs

Many universities, schools, libraries, community centers, and even some businesses like cafes and coffee shops have language clubs. These are



places where people gather to practice and learn their desired language. Of course, the trick is in finding them. Contact local schools, language schools, local tutors, and libraries for information on the possible locations of language clubs. Practicing with people who share your goals is an invaluable opportunity to improve and expand your skills. Many of these clubs have native attendees. Take every chance you get to practice speaking and listening in your new language.

Gathering spots

Most major cities have clusters of people from all backgrounds. Frequently, people from similar cultures tend to gravitate together. If you live near one of these cultural centers, seek out places where native speakers of your new language gather. Visit them. Politely chat with native speakers. Of course, some people will be busy and will not have time to chat, but you may be amazed at how many native speakers are happy to chat and make friends with a local person.

Employment

Similar to gathering spots, seek out parts of the city where native speakers gravitate. Perhaps you should consider part-time employment in this neighborhood. Working in a coffee shop, book store, or even a convenience store that native speakers frequent; all present opportunities for direct conversation – all while earning a bit of extra money.

Tutoring

One method of improving your new language skills is helping native speakers of your new language speak your own native language. Post signs or advertisements in the new language, for inexpensive tutoring in your own native language. This is a great way to improve and practice your language while helping somebody else learn a new language, too!

Noteworthy

In one aspect, language knowledge is NOT like riding a bike. You have to work to keep up your ability. Unused vocabulary will disappear from your skill set if

you do not use it. Do not let this happen to you! Try to practice your new language everyday, even if it is just for a couple of minutes, by listening to the radio or reading a book. Talk to others in the new language.

Take classes in your new language, but not necessarily language classes. Are you interested in ballroom dancing? Perhaps there is a dance class in your area where the teacher speaks your new language. The key is in doing things that interest you. If you maintain your interest level because you are having fun, you may forget that you are learning a new language as well.

Do all you can to use and expand your newly acquired knowledge, and it will stay with you all your life. Consider your native language. We are all students for life in our own native language. We constantly learn new words, new meanings, and new phrases that we incorporate into our vocabulary. Always consider yourself a student of your new language. Do not stop using it, and your hard-earned ability will never disappear.

Tip 7. Find suitable learning methods that fit you.

Not every learning method works for every person. We all have our own unique ways of assimilating new knowledge. Try not to become frustrated if someone else seems to be progressing more quickly than you do. You might find that you have a gift for grammar but you have difficulty with speaking. Conversely, you can speak fluently but have difficulty with grammar. Therefore, never let difficulties overcome you because everyone is confronted by challenges. In fact, most people tend to hide their problems from others. Just think of it this way: other people face problems too; these are just usually hidden from view.

Strive to identify your own personal strengths, and let these strengths support you in your learning process. If you are visually oriented, use flash cards and pictures with captions, write things down, or associate words with images. At the same time, strive to identify your own personal learning barriers and work at overcoming them. If you are not good at speaking or you are embarrassed to speak the new language, find methods to force yourself. Look for situations where you have no choice but to speak the new language and jump in. Study yourself to see what works, especially the areas where you need improvement, and use that knowledge to put together a language course for you.

Tip 8. Travel.

Nothing will excite you as much about learning a new language as spending time in the native country. The experience will also allow you to be immersed in your new language. You will have no choice but to learn. Everything you read will build your vocabulary. Everything you hear will provide practice for your listening comprehension. Finally, everything you need to say will have to be in your new language. Nothing will improve your learning more than immersion. It is also fun to see new places, meet new people, and experience the culture you are beginning to connect with linguistically.

Tip 9. What about professional education?

If you have the extra money, there are numerous venues for paid education. There are universities that offer language classes. Personal one-on-one tutors are also very popular. The Internet has made it possible to have native-speaking teachers and tutors from within their native country available almost 24 hours a day.

What is the problem then?

The question frequently asked is why most attempts to learn via these costly, professional measures fail. The answer is simple. If a person has the money, these are all excellent parts of an overall language program. However, again, these are never enough. Professional language courses must be viewed as just parts of a successful strategy. It is not enough to attend a language class once a week and believe you will succeed in acquiring the skills needed for the new language. The successful linguist must employ measures such as those described in this booklet, and any other method that works well for the person learning the language.

Tip 10. Relax and enjoy the language.

Observing any young child is an excellent lesson in learning a new language.

Children repeat new words over and over. They try new combinations of words and phrases, and bounce them off anyone nearby to see what is understood and what is not. They repeat anything and everything that is said around them. If they do not understand something, they ask. If what they said is not understood, they repeat it in a different way. They practice what they know, they study what they hear, and they experiment to see what works and what does not.

Most importantly, they are not afraid to make mistakes. They are not worried if they say something wrong. Their goal is simply to be understood. Even a young child understands that to get what they want in their young lives, they first have to be able to communicate. The goal of communicating, for them, is much more important than the concern of committing mistakes. Committing mistakes is in fact an important part of the language-learning process.

Do not waste time worrying about what you cannot remember, what you do not yet understand, or what you are still unable to say. Learning a language is a process. Above all, make sure you are learning and improving a little bit every day. The language will gradually become clearer, but this will happen on a schedule that you cannot control. Relax and enjoy the ride. Make your experience fun! Find methods and activities that you like, and at the same time, challenge your new language abilities. Remember, it is really enjoyable to speak with others in a new language. There are numerous reasons to learn a new language — experience culture, travel, enjoy music, entertainment, business, employment, higher education, and even simple communication with new friends. If you do not think of it as a chore, you will surely enjoy the process more. When you enjoy the process, you will find it is much easier to master the language.

Tip 11. What is most important?

We have now outlined the best practices for familiarizing, learning, and eventually speaking a new language. Above all, however, the most important element of this gradual learning process is practice.

Practice! Practice! Practice!

Does it sound boring? If your answer to this is yes, read this booklet again. We

have demonstrated numerous methods through which learning a new language can positively impact your life. You can make new friends, discover new hobbies, and acquire self-discipline. Learning will require diligence. However, it can be fun if your attitude is pointed in the right direction.

Focus primarily on several small sessions a day. You will have far more patience, enjoy yourself more, and it will seem less boring than long, drawn out sessions. Small periods of study are also easier to fit into a busy schedule.

Almost everything can be used as an opportunity to learn your new language. Keep in mind that in today's crowded, fast-paced world, countless minutes are lost standing in lines, riding in cars, or on public transportation. Keep your vocabulary index cards handy, and study them when you have those extra minutes. Before you know it, you will have one of your lessons completed.

Make the learning process an enjoyable one, and the journey will continue up the road to success.

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