

# YOU CAN LEARN LANGUAGES, TOO!

## TIPS ON HOW YOU CAN LEARN LANGUAGES SUCCESSFULLY



# LEARNING NEW LANGUAGES TAKES TIME AND EFFORT.

## **BUT EVERYBODY CAN DO IT, AND IT'S WELL WORTH WHILE.**

Even if you only manage a few words, you'll get a warmer welcome when you travel on holiday or business. And if you persevere, you'll make progress and learn a skill which can help you in your career.

Millions of ordinary people speak foreign languages. But lots of people think they couldn't do it themselves.

## **"I NEVER HAD A CHANCE TO LEARN LANGUAGES AND I'M TOO OLD NOW"**

You're never too old to learn. People often say that only children can pick up languages quickly. Not true, adults also enjoy learning and are very successful.

## **"IT WOULD TAKE YEARS TO LEARN ALL THE WORDS AND GRAMMAR"**

You don't need to learn it all – you can start communicating in a language with just a little knowledge, learning a bit at a time.

## **"I WAS HOPELESS AT LANGUAGES WHEN I WAS AT SCHOOL"**

Lots of people who didn't do well at school learn languages later. Modern methods are enjoyable and help you communicate and enjoy using the language.

## **"I GET EMBARRASSED IF I MAKE A LOT OF MISTAKES "**

There's no need to be. Making mistakes is part of learning a language and people will make allowances, so don't worry, just try.

## **"ENGLISH IS ALL YOU NEED THESE DAYS"**

English can be helpful, but it's not enough. You'll understand people, and what is happening around you, much better if you know some of their own language.

# SO WHERE DO I START?

Read on for some good advice

## THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO DO

- Get by on a short visit abroad?
- Surf on the Internet?
- Watch films or TV?
- Understand a different culture?
- Communicate at work (on the phone, at meetings, welcoming visitors)?
- Get a better job?
- Speak with friends or family?
- Read newspapers?
- Or just learn for personal satisfaction?



## AND HOW YOU WANT TO LEARN

- Quickly and intensively OR over a longer period of time
- With friends / in a group OR on your own
- Self-study / distance learning OR with a teacher
- In your country of residence OR at home OR on a language stay abroad

## PLAN YOUR LANGUAGE LEARNING IN A WAY THAT SUITS YOU AND YOUR DAILY ROUTINE. THAT WAY, YOU'LL DO BETTER. ASK YOURSELF:

- How much time can I devote each week?
- Can I organise a regular study timetable?
- What resources have I already got - computer, smartphone, textbooks etc.?
- Where can I get hold of learning materials – , internet sites, smartphone app stores, libraries, bookshops, news-stands with foreign papers and magazines, television..?
- How can I make contact with people who speak the language I want to learn?

# AND WHAT SORT OF METHODS AND MATERIALS WOULD SUIT YOU?

- Concentrating on speaking practice or on listening
- Doing grammar exercises (online and/or in writing)

If you already have experience in language learning, think about the kind of learning activities that suit you best. This will help you choose a course or language learning resources that fit your needs.

## FOR EXAMPLE:

- Conversation lessons and/or tandem learning with a native speaker
- Listening to podcasts/audiobooks while travelling
- Using a textbook
- Reading newspapers and magazines
- Reading literature
- Using the smartphone applications for language learning
- Watching videos - television series and/or online channels and services such as Netflix and YouTube



# CHOOSE YOUR APPROACH TO LEARNING

There are plenty of different approaches to learning. Different options have different advantages and disadvantages and may suit you at different times.

## LEARNING IN THE COUNTRY WHERE YOU LIVE

### By yourself, independently?

With self-study courses, language learning apps, or radio and TV programmes, for example:

- Contents and rhythm are tailored to your own needs and aims.
- There is no fixed timetable, you learn as and when you can.
- You are on your own and need to motivate yourself.

Some self-study courses also provide support from tutors, either face-to-face or at distance.

### In a group?

Classes once or twice a week near home or work suit many people (though not everyone, of course):

- It can be fun learning in a group, and the members of the group can motivate each other.
- With a good teacher, there will be plenty of opportunities to practise the language.
- You can find partners to study with outside class.
- It usually means reserving time for a fixed timetable (though there is often a choice of lunchtime, evening, weekend etc.).

You can also find intensive and specialised courses if you need them.

# LEARNING ABROAD

## On a language course abroad:

- It's usually intensive, so you can learn a lot in a short time
- You're surrounded by the language and culture
- You make contact with local people and experience their way of life
- It may be expensive
- It may be difficult to find the time

You can also learn abroad through holidays – if you make an effort – or by working abroad.

## VIRTUAL LANGUAGE LEARNING

Nowadays, there are also more and more opportunities offered by using the Internet for contact with people from all over the world. You can use Skype/Snapchat or other social media platforms to have regular conversations or exchange e-mails or use Facebook and Twitter.

For more information on online tools and resources see [www.ecml.at/ict](http://www.ecml.at/ict).

# FINDING COURSES

You can find contact details for private language schools online. But there are many other possibilities, sometimes cheaper. Most urban centres have adult education institutions offering language courses. Some schools and universities provide courses of a few hours a week for local residents. Local authorities – ask at the town hall – and Chambers of Commerce often either run courses themselves or know who does. Information can often be found at public libraries. National or regional Education Ministries may be able to help, or give details of professional organisations that can advise you. Cultural institutes (such as the Goethe Institut, British Council, Institut Francais, etc) offer a wide range of possibilities at different levels.

For those who do not live near a good language school or prefer to work alone, distance learning opportunities are available, either online for example via MOOCs (massive open online courses), from a regional adult education institute or university, or (in some countries) from a national provider.

Most large bookshops have a good range of self-study courses.

## CHOOSING A GOOD COURSE

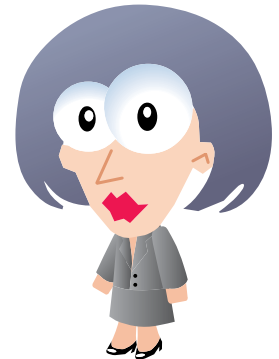
Here are some tips to help you choose:

- Always ask to be shown round the school: or if it's abroad, get as many details as you can, for example on accommodation and social activities.
- Does the school give you clear information about its programmes, the size of groups, the level you will be in?
- Is the staff suitably qualified?
- Has the school got good resources and facilities?
- Is the school approved by a recognised authority? Is it regularly inspected e.g. by the Education Ministry or an external association?
- Can it provide references from satisfied students?
- If it is an online course, can you find independent reviews, for example from current/former students?
- Can you prepare for examinations if you want to take one?

## ONCE YOU HAVE STARTED

Learning a language is enjoyable, but if you want to succeed you need to be motivated. The more active you are, the more successful you will be.

If you feel discouraged or frustrated – most people do sometimes – don't give up. But talk to a teacher or someone you are learning with. And take a break – this will help you to begin again with new energy. Watching a television series in the language you are learning and/or planning a trip to a country where the language is spoken can also provide fresh impetus.



# TIPS

- Don't try to learn everything at once. Set clear and realistic targets and go at your own pace.
- Be open to new ways of learning – new methods and new technology can help you.



- Use every opportunity to communicate in the language
- Don't be afraid of making mistakes. You can work gradually on reducing them. What matters is getting your meaning across
- Revise what you have learnt and review your progress regularly

## READING AND LISTENING

- Reading and listening a lot is very important. The more you listen, the better you'll speak. Reading will help you to write better
- Read and listen to texts where the language is used naturally (newspaper, TV, radio)
- Remember you don't have to understand every word to get the gist
- Check your progress. Go back to things you have worked on already. Do they seem easier?

## SPEAKING

- Practise speaking as much as you can (talk to your fellow students, to native speakers you meet, even to yourself!)
- If you go to a country where the language you are learning is spoken, but people speak to you in your language, or English, explain that you would prefer to speak their language
- Memorise the things you need to say most often – when meeting people, shopping, ordering in a restaurant etc.



- Most people never achieve a perfect accent in another language. That does not matter as long as people understand

## WRITING

- Try to find regular opportunities to communicate in writing – e-mails, postcards, letters, etc. You can write a diary in the language you're learning
- Read through what you have written: when you write there's more time to check and correct mistakes...

## VOCABULARY

Learning new words is easier if you group them according to their meaning – don't use random lists of words but try to associate them with a picture or an idea. Don't get blocked if you don't know a word – you can often guess the meaning from the context.

**Teachers teach, but only learners can learn. In the end, you are responsible for your own progress. So the best method is whatever works best for you!**

Slovenia is just across the border and we go there a lot more now we can understand the language a bit.

The children have just started French at school, so we're taking a course to help them with their homework.

I met this great guy when I was on holiday and I'd like to be able to write to him but he only speaks Portuguese.

I enjoy surfing the Internet. Now I can read Spanish as well as English, I get access to much more information.

Our company landed a really big contract in Russia; our receptionist speaks Russian and that helped a lot in the initial contacts.

# YOU MAY ALREADY KNOW MORE LANGUAGES THAN YOU IMAGINE

Over 50 per cent of the world's population function in two or more languages on a daily basis. In other words, multilingualism, not monolingualism, is the norm. There are many reasons why someone might be bi - or multilingual: having parents who speak two languages; moving abroad to work; political migration, where individuals and families need to learn the language of a new community while maintaining links to the home country; education, where children pick up foreign or second languages at school; bi - or multilingual communities, etc.

People sometimes say that they don't know any languages. In fact, very few of us are completely monolingual because we come into contact with other languages in many different ways; we all have

a plurilingual repertoire of things we recognise or understand or can say in several languages.

Here are some questions to help you think about your plurilingual repertoire:

- Did you ever listen to a friend or relative speaking a "foreign" language? Did you understand bits of it?
- In how many languages do you recognise the expressions for "Hello", "Goodbye" and "Thank you"?
- Can you think of words in your own language which are borrowed from another language?
- Are there transactions like shopping or ordering a meal or booking accommodation which you have managed successfully in another language?
- Do you sometimes recognise the rough meaning of newspaper headlines or things you hear in a new language.

**SO YOU SEE – YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT A COMPLETE BEGINNER!**

# ARE YOU READY TO TRY THE LANGUAGE CHALLENGE?

There's no better way of making progress in a language than trying it out. Here are some challenges you can make for yourself.

	It went OK	Better next time!
Offering to help a tourist to find his/her way in your town		
Making a phone/Skype call in a foreign language you are learning		
Writing a diary for a week in a new language		
Doing Internet searches (for a holiday, for example) in a language you're learning		
Exchanging e-mails with a friend in another country		

Or make your own challenges!

For more challenges, see <https://edl.ecml.at/languagechallenge>

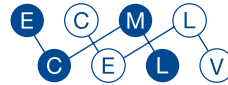


## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are very grateful to Frank Heyworth for his work in compiling the text for this brochure.



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# EUROPEAN DAY OF LANGUAGES

## 26 SEPTEMBER

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