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Learn a Language this Year: 3 Simple Tools



Learn a Language: 3 Simple Tools

[Tool #1 Phone](#)

[Tool #2 Notebook](#)

[Tool #3 Time](#)

[Input + Output](#)

[25 Ways to Learn Every Day](#)

[Time Tracker](#)

[Language Resource Guide](#)

[Bonus: Krashen's Theory of Second Language Language Acquisition](#)

Reap the many benefits of learning a language today

I will show you how to learn a language. I have taught languages for over 20 years on 3 different continents and speak 6 languages to various levels of fluency.

I have a BA in Theater Arts and Foreign Languages and an MA in the Teaching of Languages. I am certified to teach Spanish, English, drama, speech, language immersion and reading. I have led workshops for language teachers online, at the BETT Show in London, the annual ACTFL convention, Language Show Live in London, and at schools in Europe and the US. I have also contributed to *The Language Educator*, *Fluent in Three Months*, and have been featured on several podcasts, including NYT bestselling author Chris Guillebeau's [Side Hustle School](#) podcast and [Language Hacking](#) with Benny Lewis. I share resources for teachers and learners of languages [here](#).

Over the years, I figured out how to learn the language in five-week intervals with time I already have. Even me, the passionate language lover, only has so much time for my own studies every day.

Technology has completely transformed language teaching and learning. When I was a young teacher, I used to drag back slides, DVDs, books, music and magazines. You don't have to do that anymore. Everything's on the internet. Everything that you need right now is there for you to learn a language anywhere with a simple connection to the internet.

The research suggests that having another language in your life, whether or not it's even to fluency, can delay the onset of dementia by four to five years.

Children who grow up with more than one language have higher standardized test scores, improved executive function and short-term memory.

Imagine being able to order the wine and impressing your friends, and speaking to the locals.

Languages can net you an extra \$70,000 in retirement.

Languages can globalize your business and reach.

How would it be if you knew you could learn a new language without great expense, hours of tedious study, traveling to courses, or disrupting your life? Transform your downtime into skills in a new language. Turn the time that you have at home into a new language.

Tool #1 Phone

If you have a smartphone (or anything that can connect to the internet) you have the ultimate language learning lab.

Many years ago, language learning labs had to be stationary. They were in one place and there was no internet. You had to listen to cassettes and tapes. Now, with your phone, you can learn any language anywhere.

As much as I love Duolingo, that's not what I'm referring to. If you can connect to the internet, there are thousands upon thousands of podcasts that are going to allow you access to any language you want to learn. Some are specifically geared towards beginning learners, and others are more advanced.

[Google](#)

You can get free materials from the largest search engines. Pinterest is a huge search engine. If you want to learn Spanish, go ahead and type that. Want to learn French? They're going to take you to all these blogs and resources that are pinned to this amazing search engine.

YouTube is another example. You'll find a plethora of material on the three biggest search engines in the world: Google, YouTube, and Pinterest.

[Audible](#)

Audible is one of my very favorite apps to learn a language. There are tons of audio courses published for learners of many languages. They're easily found and readily available.

Some of my very favorite beginning courses are Pimsleur courses. I love Michel Thomas, and I love Earworms. You can listen to all levels to get started. You can also listen when you start becoming an intermediate.

I absolutely love Olly Richards' short stories. He publishes in lots of languages. Listen to them over and over again. It's an amazing way to build your vocabulary and hear some interesting stories at the same time.

When you become advanced or you start moving into the advanced levels, audio books can help you take that final step towards speaking Spanish like a native. I spent a 5-week period during the summer where I listened to novels and self-help books in Spanish over and over again and really focused on deep understanding. This is how you acquire language – engaging in interesting, meaningful content.

Audiobooks are probably one of the best resources out there for language learners of all levels. Again, you can do this anywhere. And the way technology has evolved, listen on your Alexa. You can listen on your laptop, your desktop – wherever you might be.

[iBooks](#)

iBooks or any app that you use to read books on a device will work. I'm going to share two of my very favorite resources.

1. Phrasebooks are the perfect eBook or resource for a beginner. They're easily available online. If you buy a phrasebook online, the great thing is, oftentimes, you can find ones that have audio apps with the audio built in. What's great about phrasebooks is that while they're meant for travelers, they're great for beginners.

Language for travel is all language that is completely in context. The whole idea is to help you survive, to order food, to be able to greet somebody, to understand a little bit about the culture. These are essentials for any beginning learner. Also, the language is served up in chunks. Once you have enough of these chunks, you'll start making your own sentences with what you've learned.

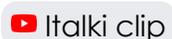
I'll provide some additional links to my podcasts to get you started with chunks.

[Readlang](#)

Sign up for this clever browser extension

One of my very favorite resources is [talki.com](https://www.talki.com). They've done something really brilliant. They bring together qualified language teachers living all over the world offering lessons by video chat. You can connect in the next hour with a teacher who speaks your language, the language you want to learn, and you could be having a lesson on Skype or FaceTime or Google Meet or Google Hangouts.

Check out this short video:



Here is my [refer a friend link](#).

Brazilian Portuguese *Portuguese* **for Travel**

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/brazilian-portuguese-for-travel-beginners-real-life/id1070984296>

Cantonese for Travel and Beginners

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/cantonese-for-travel-and-beginners-real-life-language/id1070996690>

French for Travel and Beginners

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/french-for-travel-and-beginners-real-life-language/id1028813183>

German for Travel and Beginners

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/german-for-travel-and-beginners-real-life-language/id1070984413>

Greek for Travel and Beginners

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/greek-for-travel-and-beginners-real-life-language/id1104451400>

Italian for Travel and Beginners

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/italian-for-travel-and-beginners-real-life-language/id1062522994>

Japanese for Travel and Beginners

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/japanese-for-travel-and-beginners-real-life-language/id1070735672>

Korean for Travel and Beginners

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/korean-for-travel-and-beginners-real-life-language/id1070746944>

Mandarin Chinese for Travel and Beginners

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/mandarin-for-travel-and-beginners-real-life-language/id1070994920>

Spanish for Travel and Beginners

<https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/spanish-for-travel-and-beginners-real-life-language/id1018736682>

Create your own playlists to learn each task.

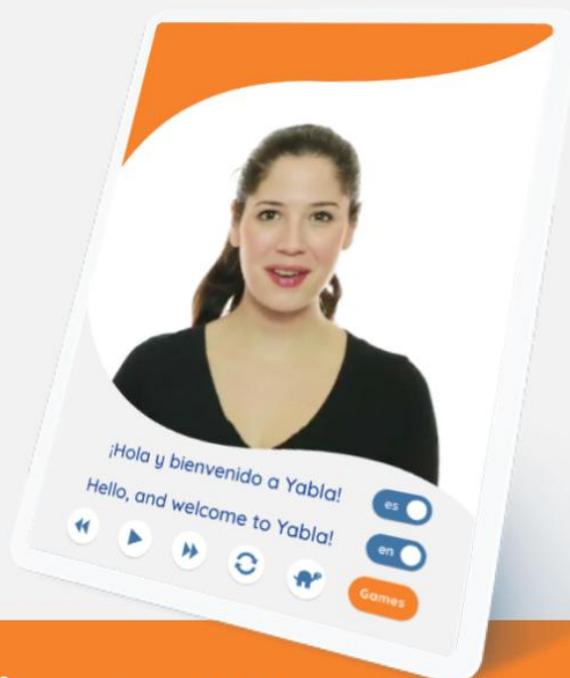
Binge Watching

It has never been easier to watch content from all over the world. It is an immensely enjoyable way to learn a language.

My friends at Yabla created a subscription site that specializes in videos for language learners. It is AMAZING!



Watch a
show,
have fun,
learn a
language...



Try Free
for 15 days

Available on:



web | iOS | android

For full disclosure, I am a proud affiliate. Check it out via the links below.

<http://chinese.yabla.com/?a=2369>

<http://english.yabla.com/?a=2369>

<http://french.yabla.com/?a=2369>

<http://german.yabla.com/?a=2369>

<http://italian.yabla.com/?a=2369>

<http://spanish.yabla.com/?a=2369>

Yabla is EXCELLENT for learners as it is specifically created for that purpose. In addition to the videos, there are tons of activities and games to learn all of the languages presented in the videos.

There are some other great resources out there as well. [Language Learning with Netflix](#) turns your Netflix subscription into a great way to learn a language while you enjoy great content.

[Youtube](#) is one of the largest search engines in the world. There is authentic content from all over the world. Learning Spanish? Consider [salsa](#) lessons in Spanish, or learning [French cooking](#) and language at the same time.

Love music? Try [Lyrics Training](#).

I have to mention [Duolingo](#). It's great, and getting better all the time. Here are some others to check out:

[Fluent Forever](#)

[HelloTalk - Talk to the World](#)

[Mondly](#)

[uTalk: The Language Learning Specialists](#)

Tool #2 Notebook

This very simple low tech tool will become one of your very best friends throughout your language learning journey. Spend some time with a notebook every day.

I'm going to give you a couple of really specific activities to do in a notebook. The very first one is to create your own phrasebook.

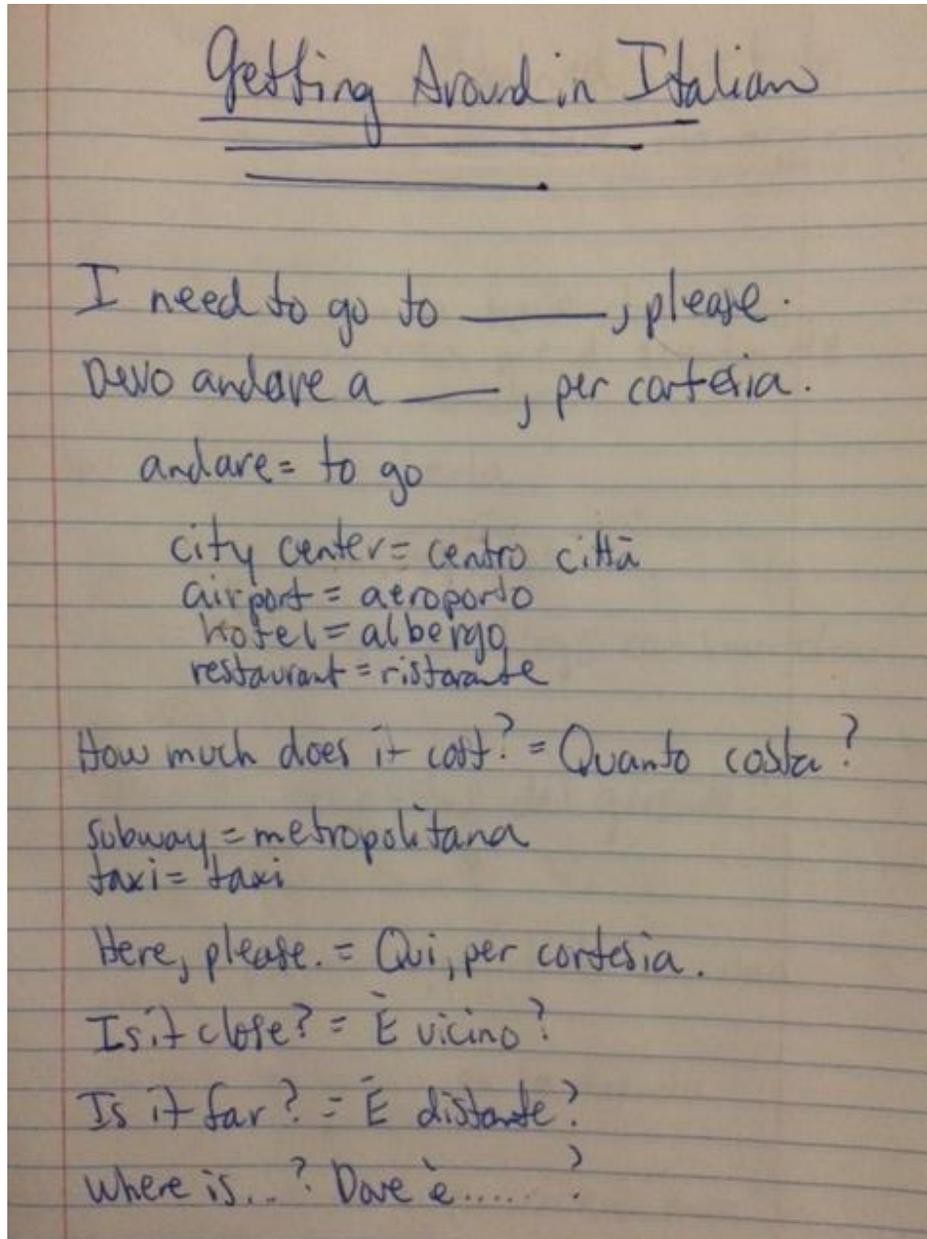
Phrasebooks are powerful because they focus completely on communication. They don't get into the grammar. If they do, it's not much. They just get into telling you what you need to be able to communicate with people, and you can make your own based on any topic if you have a notebook.

Google Translate is not perfect, by any means. What's great about Google Translate is that it is constantly analyzing documents that are known to have been translated by human beings, so it's always improving.

What is powerful about this is that it presents language in meaningful *chunks*—words and phrases designed to get you communicating right away.

French	English
Combien de bagages avez-vous ?	How many bags do you have ?
Vous devez enregistrer ce bagage	You need to check this bag.
Des frais sont appliqués.	There is a fee for this.
Passeport, s'il vous plaît.	Passport, please.
Je voudrais un siège côté fenêtre.	I would like a window seat.
Je voudrais un siège côté couloir.	I would like an aisle seat.
Franchissez la barrière.	Pass through.
Veillez lever les bras, s'il vous plaît.	Hands up, please.
Veillez poser votre ordinateur et vos clés ici, s'il vous plaît.	Place laptop and keys here, please.
Avez-vous un sac en plastique transparent ?	Do you have a clear plastic bag?
Bon voyage.	Have a good trip.
Où est/sonL?	Where is/are... ?
Le bar	the bar
La boutique duty-free	duty-free
Le magasin de souvenirs	gift shop
Les toilettes	the toilets
Le kiosque à journaux	the news stand
La librairie	the book store
Ce siège est-il libre ?	Is this seat free ?
Veillez vous asseoir	Please sit down.

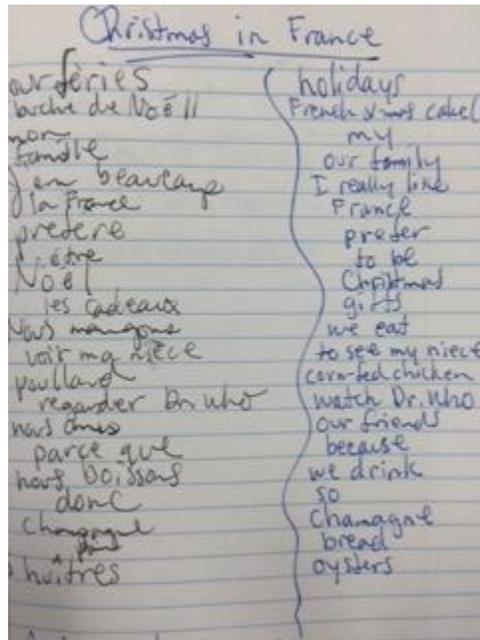
You can take a notebook and you can create a phrasebook for any task you want. It doesn't have to just be survival communication. It can be asking someone to do something with you socially, for example. Take a section of your notebook and write down all the words and phrases that you need to do that.



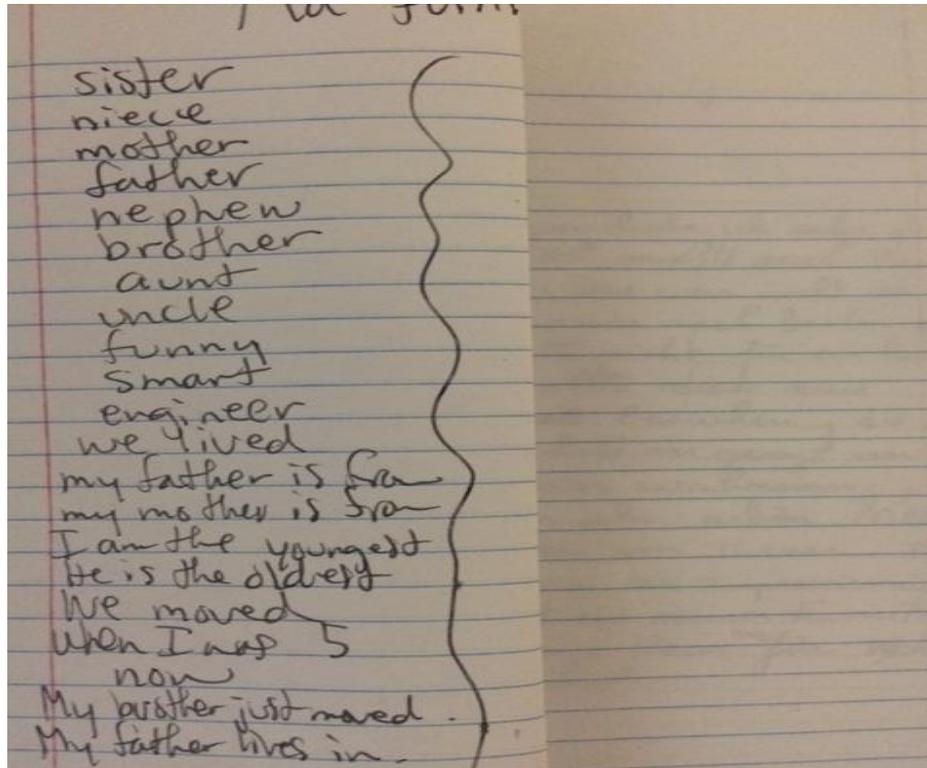
This next example is called *Vocabulary Columns*.

What you'll see is from when I was learning French. If you speak French, you'll see I made a mistake there in my spelling (earlier in my journey). I wrote down all the words that I wanted to know in one column. You'll see they're all in chunks.

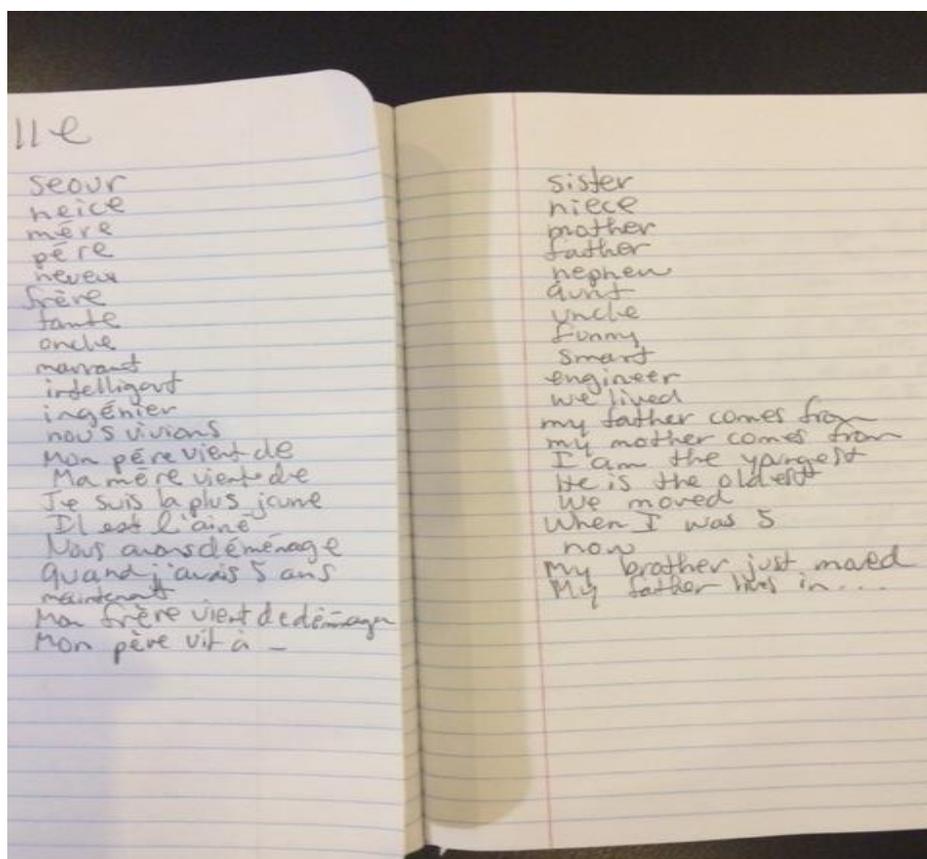
Step 1. Recognize the French.



You go back and study again. The next step is to recall the French. Write in another column.



Fold it over, and write down another column to English to see that I understood and then I would go check for any if I missed any.



Fold it over again or on the other side, and start recalling. Fold this French over, and write down the words again in French. Unfold the paper to study the column to learn what you missed.

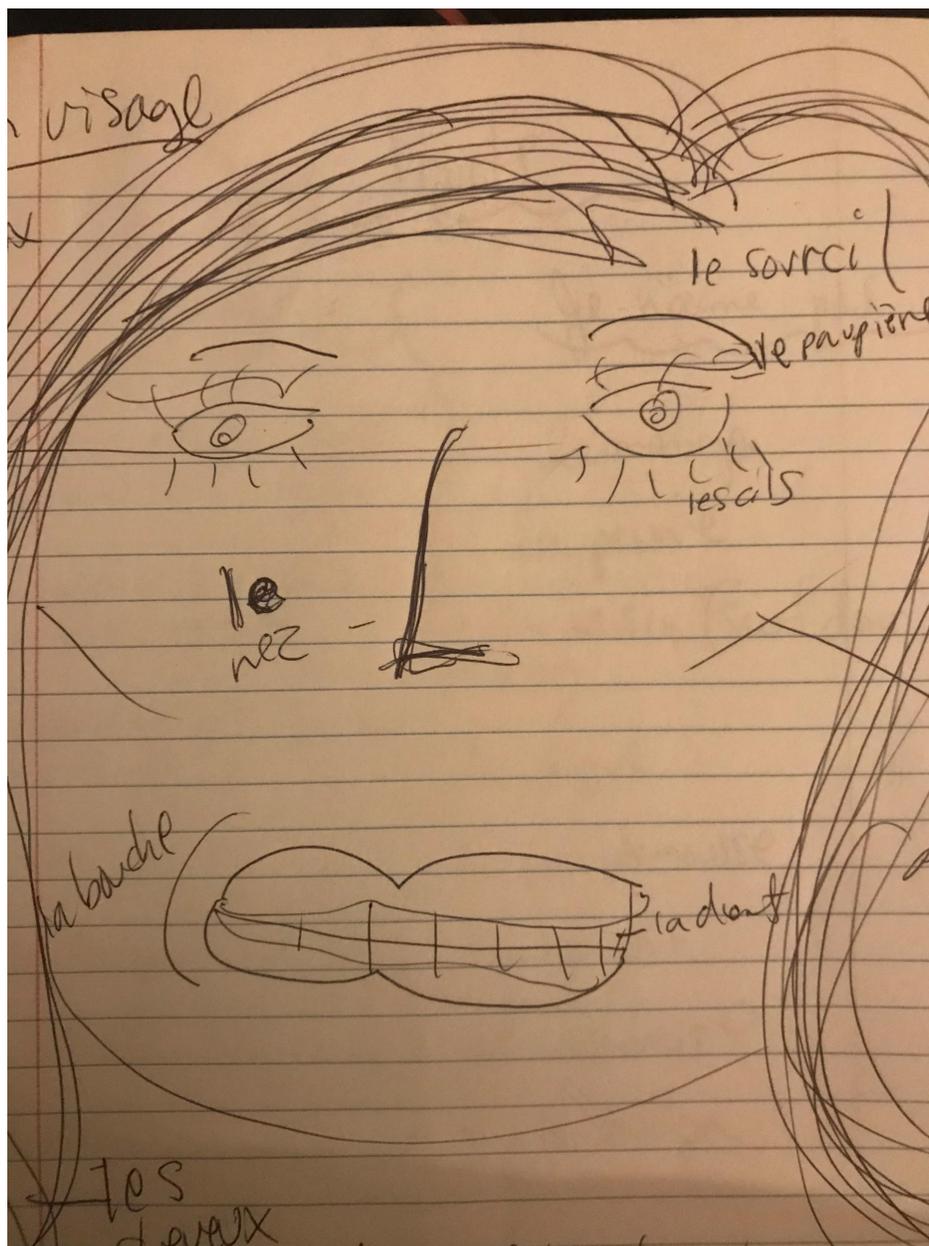
A list of about 15 to 20 words can easily be mastered in about an hour with one piece of paper like this. It's pretty intense.

Gold List Method

This great video by Lydia Machova

[Gold List Method](#)

Doodles



I love doodles to learn languages. It's great. You draw a picture and you label all the words. It's a great way to learn languages on your own. As you see, I am certainly not talented as an artist. However, it gets the job done.

Some doodling for languages ideas:

A salad: Draw a salad. Using a themed vocabulary list, label all of the fruits and vegetables you included. Next, use the visual to write about your salad in as much detail as possible.

My Body/My Face: Sketch out a person. Label everything that you can. Use the illustration as a prompt to write about yourself.

A Person Made of Food: This is a fun one that requires some thought and engagement in vocabulary. Basically, you create a person made of drawings (or clipart) of foods. You then create a key using the names of the body and face parts and the food vocabulary you used to represent the face and body. You then use your creation as a prompt to write as detailed a description as possible. This also gives you an opportunity to learn about different types of foods from the target culture.

Portrait: Draw a picture of yourself, or another person. Label everything you can. Next, write as much as you can about the person.

Where I Live: This is quite self-explanatory. Sketch out where you live. Label everything you can. Write about where you live.

Variation: Do the same, but for your dream house or where someone else lives.

Likes and Dislikes: I love this for basic lists of vocabulary. You can categorize activities, classes, places in the world, foods, drinks, artists, music genres, books- anything you can imagine.

Schedules: Write out your daily schedule, a school schedule, a train schedule, or a

movie schedule.

Dates: Write out important dates. These can be holidays, important dates in your life, important dates in the culture of the target language, or birthdays of family and friends.

An Alien (or Monster): Design your alien or monster. Describe this creation in as much detail as possible.

My Garden: Take a photo, or sketch your yard or garden. Label all of the items that you included. Write about what you see, talk about what you do there, and anything you would like to do there in the future.

My Family: I particularly like this one as one can keep this short and simple by only including immediate family, or it can be turned into an informative, extended project. Using photos or drawings, create a family tree. Write about each person, as well as their relationship to you. Including extended family can serve as a cause to learn advanced vocabulary to talk about family, as well as a context to work in the past tense.

Nature: Draw or get photos of beautiful scenes of nature. These can become great stimuli for learning and using descriptive words and vocabulary for talking about nature and geography. It can become a cultural experience when the photos come from the target culture.

My School: This topic has so many possibilities. You can talk about any school that you have attended. The classes you took, liked and disliked make for rich stimuli for writing and vocabulary development. The people you interact with, or have interacted with in the past, can be writing topics.

This list is in no way exhaustive. The purpose is to get you thinking about how students can get working with the written word in your target language easily and in an enjoyable way.

Recording for Fluency

There are a lot of challenges in learning a foreign language. It can be easy to forget vocabulary and make mistakes, which can make it very difficult to communicate. However, you need to make those mistakes to reach fluency. One activity I like to do is recording for fluency.

You can record for fluency in a group setting and/or on your own. The group setting has the obvious benefit of creating access to people to speak to in the target language. Recording on your own offers another opportunity to speak and get through those inevitable mistakes without feeling embarrassed in front of others. It also gives you more practice, since you would be the only one speaking.

In either case, I like to set a topic and time. This is short when I am getting started and longer as proficiency levels increase. The only three critical things to do is to record on a regular basis, be sure to say the date and speak only in the target language.

There are many tools out there. I like to use voice memos on my phone when I am out. When I am in one place, I like [Vocaroo](#) and my own recorder. On Vocaroo, you can record and embed messages made on their service, but they tend to expire after a few months. There are new apps and services released all the time as well to make recording easy and accessible. Whatever tool you use, just be sure to record regularly. You will be amazed at the progress you note.

As a beginner, I tend to use some aids to help get me started. Textbooks, phrases, phrasebooks and dialogues all help. As I become more confident and proficient, I tend

to bullet point out the topics I want to talk about to help guide me through the intermediate level.

Do the same in a written journal. Lately, I am loving using Google docs to journal. I use the built-in dictionaries to find words I don't know.

[Google Translate](#) is getting better and better all the time because it scans documents translated by humans. It takes feedback from users as well, so it is always getting better. Use this tool to find words and phrases.

Recently, my niece and I were checking out the new features. We discovered that you can use it to help have a conversation using the "both" option. I don't tend to do this as a learner, but I think it is great to know that you can use this to quickly learn how to say something in a pinch.

Survival Tasks

Below is a list of tasks to master as a beginner. Get a phrasebook, a podcast or an app, and start learning.

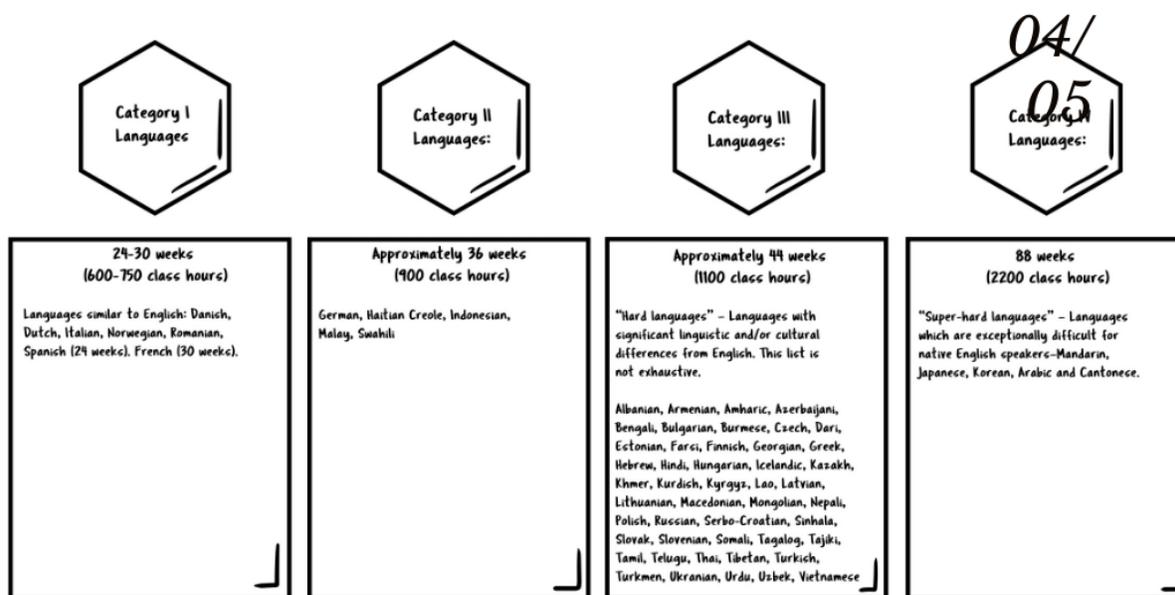
I've got this!	Notes/Words and Phrases	Task
<input type="checkbox"/>		Greet: <i>good morning, good afternoon, good evening, hello</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>		Take leave: <i>goodbye, see you later</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>		Say please
<input type="checkbox"/>		Say thank you
<input type="checkbox"/>		Say you're welcome
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask "Where is...?"
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask "How do I get to...?"
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask "How much does it cost?"
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask "How many (nights, days, etc.)?"
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask "When...?"
<input type="checkbox"/>		Numbers
<input type="checkbox"/>		Currency
<input type="checkbox"/>		Days
<input type="checkbox"/>		Months
<input type="checkbox"/>		Years
<input type="checkbox"/>		Order food
<input type="checkbox"/>		Order drinks
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask for the bill
<input type="checkbox"/>		Say the time
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask "At what time...?"
<input type="checkbox"/>		Check into a hotel
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask for things to be brought to your room
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask where things are at a hotel
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask when things happen at a hotel
<input type="checkbox"/>		Complain at a hotel
<input type="checkbox"/>		Say basic places in the community (market, church, hotel, store, pharmacy, hospital, shopping mall)
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask for medications at a pharmacy
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask about basic medical treatment
<input type="checkbox"/>		Check into a flight
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask and answer questions about security
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask and answer about seats on an airplane
<input type="checkbox"/>		Ask and answer about where things are in an airport
<input type="checkbox"/>		Talk about emergencies (fire, police, embassy, hospital, etc.)

Tool #3 Time

Our third tool is time. We all have the same 24 hours in a day. Like so many of us, I'm always very busy with life in general. I don't have as much time as I would like when I'm in the school year to be able to study languages. My commute allows me that time for languages.

I wanted to share with you a little bit about how long it takes to learn a language to a professional level of fluency. In the United States, there is something called The Foreign Service Institute. Essentially, they train people to work in embassies and consular offices all over the world, and they've done a lot of research in order to set up their courses effectively over many, many years. As a result, they've categorized different languages. If you do this research yourself, you might see them quoted differently, but this is the latest research that they've put out.

Learning Languages: How Long Does It Take?



How long does it take?

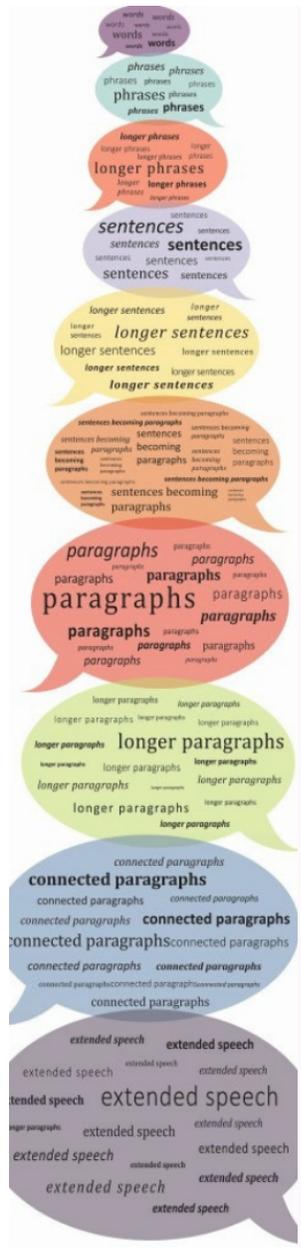
reallifelanguage.com/reallifelanguageblog



For more info visit [Foreign Service Institute - United States Department of State](https://www.foreignserviceinstitute.gov/)

Did you see those references to class hours to hit fluency? Don't be overwhelmed. These numbers are based on people being able to dedicate all of their time to reaching these goals. Don't compare yourself to them. With that said, they are helpful to setting realistic and attainable goals.

There are different levels of fluency. While we are in the Novice/A range, we are learning words and phrases. As we go to the Intermediate/B range, we can take those words and phrases and create with language. When we hit the Advanced/C level, we can speak in paragraphs into extended speech. ACTFL measures language beyond this level (Superior and Distinguished).



03/
05

Fluency is a continuum

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You can reap the amazing benefits with just a few minutes every day. Dr. Thomas Bak, a professor, MD and multilingual cognitive neuroscientist shared with me a project called Lingo Flamingo, where care homes in Scotland work with Lingo Flamingo to do some cognitive training with people who already have dementia. As a brain exercise, a few minutes of language is sort of like flexing that muscle. The older you are, the better it is for you. Even if you're not even thinking about dementia (which I can understand as it's not pleasant) you can reap all these benefits of being able to communicate with people all over the world, improve your cognitive function, improve that cognitive reserve and get the social benefits with just a few minutes every day.

It's very easy to turn the time we already have in a day into language learning time.

Learn a language on your commute.

Learn a language while you're exercising and doing something else that's great for your health.

Learn a language while you're cleaning.

Learn a language while you're doing errands.

Think back to those language categories that we talked about. Most of us don't fit that profile of that Foreign Service Institute student, right? We're not going to have a block of time to dedicate every day, 8 to 10 hours a day, simply to language learning with highly skilled instructors. We've got jobs, families, things to do, and we want to have a life. If you want to spend all your time studying languages, please do so. But to be honest,

after I do my half an hour or my hour a day, I'm fine with that. I know I can get good results from more intense periods of time with my five weeks during the summer, but it's only realistic for me personally during the summer because I don't have my classes to teach. I'm too busy during school to do anything other than an hour a day, maximum. All of those little bits of time you can get do add up. For example, if you want to learn Mandarin, it's going to take you longer than if you want to learn Spanish. You're going to have to carve out more time to hit those same levels of fluency for languages in different categories.

Start learning a language in the next hour with those three simple tools that we talked about. You probably have a phone, a notebook and time. Ward off the onset of dementia later in life by four to five years with a small investment of time each day now. Learn a language in a place you've always dreamed of, speak to people in the next hour, and learn how to turn activities you already need to do into language learning activities.

As you plan your time, keep in mind that your periods of study should be shorter while you are in the Novice/A range. It is easy to become exhausted as a beginner. If it is a terrible experience, you'll quit. I believe that the ideal time is about 30 minutes at a time for beginners. Keep those periods about that length until you can create with language. Block out time in your daily routine for language learning and commit to it. You will be astounded at your progress in the next 5 weeks. Repeat the cycle every 5 weeks with activities that fit into your life, are enjoyable and appropriate to your skill level. You'll communicate confidently before you know it.

Input + Output

The roles and effectiveness of input versus output are important to consider. We acquire and learn by understanding first. This comes from what we read and what we hear (input). We assimilate, problem-solve and build fluency through what we say and write (output). Many natural situations require both. For example, we might listen to the news (input) and discuss it with a family member (output). They then comment back, providing us with more input.

I like to keep things simple. We have 2 ears and 1 mouth. We have 2 eyes and 1 brain. I try to listen and read twice as much as I speak and write as I am learning. This has countless advantages. I am able to learn languages without relying solely on time abroad or with teachers. I can carve out time to work on languages in ways that fit into my life with interesting content independently.

In the bonus section, I provided a crash course on Dr. Stephen Krashen's research on second language acquisition. He has published many papers on his studies. One study he did was on hyperpolyglots. In the study, he focuses on 2 people who learned languages through focusing on input. One of the subjects learned about a dozen languages through doing his pleasure reading in his target languages.

Regardless of whether you have aspirations to be a polyglot or not, there are great takeaways from Krashen's study on hyperpolyglots. Read in your target language to acquire vocabulary and grammar in context. Check out the resources in the Resource Guide to find interesting reading in your target language.

25 Ways to Learn Every Day

We all have the same 24 hours in a day. Here are some ideas to turn some time every day into language learning time. Select an activity or two that realistically fits into your life, carve out some time each day and track it over the next five weeks. You will be amazed at the progress you can make with investing some time in interesting language learning activities. Consider these ideas:

1. Listen to audio courses on your commute. I love [Pimsleur](#)!
2. Listen to audio courses in your car while you're doing errands. [Mark Frobose](#) produces some great courses for beginners.
3. Listen to audio courses while you're exercising or walking. [Earworms](#) has created some fun short courses.
4. Listen to short stories in the target language. I love Olly Richards' [short stories](#).
5. Listen to audio courses while you're cleaning. I love Michel Thomas' [COURSES](#).
6. Listen to a course during your rideshare time or while you're doing errands.
7. Read. Think pleasure reading-magazines, blogs, recipes, etc.
8. Meet online with a tutor on italki. I love to record my sessions and listen to them later.

9. Watch movies and TV shows in the target language. Streaming apps make that very easy and accessible.
10. Spend time with realia. Watching cooking tutorials from the target language is a great example of realia.
11. Journal every day for five weeks.
12. Binge-watch target language content every day for five weeks. Youtube is one of the largest search engines in the world. Learn a few key words in your target language to find interesting content.
13. Take a five-week language course at a private language school abroad. Consider getting a reward card from your airline and credit card company. I love my Chase United card. I get miles for purchases that can be used for a free flight.
14. Hit the streets and talk to people in your community.
15. Attend immersion programs, to include online immersion. Learn some key words to learn something new in your target language.
16. Attend language classes.
17. Language exchange.
18. Do exercise classes in the target language, like yoga or Batuka.
19. Phrase books-take those and travel to the target language country. Speak to people.
20. Create your own language club. Meet regularly and practice your target language. Serve food and drink from the target language culture.
21. Talk to yourself every day. Read words and dialogues, or test yourself for fluency when you reach the top of the novice level. Do the same thing with a journal. I love those beginning task journals we talked about, where

you write out all of the words and phrases you need to talk about a specific task. Move into fluency journals as your fluency grows.

22. Doodle, draw scenes and label the page. This is a fun and enjoyable way for the artist in us to build some language skills.

23. Spend time with apps. If you're driving, that might not be realistic, but you can do it in your free time. Duolingo, Drops, and Flash Academy are fun and effective.

24. Listen to music. It is a great way to get exposure to sounds and new language.

25. Do language exchange online.

Time Tracker

Track your time regularly and watch your progress accelerate.

Month	Time spent learning
Estimated time already invested	
January	
February	
March	
April	
May	
June	
July	
August	
September	
October	
November	
December	
Total	

Language Resource Guide

We live in the most amazing time in history to be language learners. The internet has connected us with people from all over the world. Technology has made it possible to learn a language anywhere.

This resource guide is quick and divided up into three different ranges. First is the [ACTFL](#) proficiency scale, novice through advanced. I am not including resources for Distinguished or Superior, though many of the resources you will find in the advanced range can easily be adapted and used to build those levels of proficiency. You will also find resources listed for multiple levels, because they have materials that cover those ranges. These levels are also the [CEFR](#) or Common European Framework for Reference, a measure of functional language ability. They categorize their levels, A, B, and C.

You will also find it helpful to do a fast review of much lower level materials and courses. This is a great way to reactivate knowledge, solidify knowledge and build confidence. Just don't spend too much time if it feels too easy. For example, I love to double up on Pimsleur lessons when I spend a bit of time out of a language.

Just as I like to review lower level courses and materials, I suggest spending some time exploring materials at higher levels. This can help you find materials that are not too easy, as you won't make progress. Materials that are too hard will not be useful either as you won't understand. Comprehensible Input (Krashen) is the key to acquiring languages. This can help you find your sweet spot. Review *The Path to Fluency* to start.

Novice A. When you begin this level, you will know nothing. When you end this level, you will be able to create your own phrases, and you will be able to create stronger phrases that look like sentences.

[Babbel](#)

[Duolingo](#)

[Drops](#)

[Hello Talk](#)

[Memrise](#)

[Mondly](#)

[Pimsleur](#)

[Paul Noble](#)

[Michel Thomas](#)

FSI– These are courses in the public domain. Google *Foreign Service Institute*. Many bloggers offer these for free.

[Phrasebooks](#)

Yabla– I am a proud affiliate because it is AWESOME! Here are my links:

<http://chinese.yabla.com/?a=2369>

<http://english.yabla.com/?a=2369>

<http://french.yabla.com/?a=2369>

<http://german.yabla.com/?a=2369>

<http://italian.yabla.com/?a=2369>

<http://spanish.yabla.com/?a=2369>

iTalki– Here is my Refer a Friend link <https://www.italki.com/i/CcCHcA?hl=en-us>

Private Language Schools Many language schools around the world offer classes starting at one or two weeks. They tend to offer classes in the AM and you have the PM to explore and practice what you learned. Check out this [episode to find out how languages can help you earn money to study abroad](#).

[Goldlist Method](#)

[Vocab Columns](#)

[Gabriel Wyner](#) He created an app and wrote a bestselling book based on learning with Anki cards.

[Task/Journals/Notebooks](#)

[Google Sheets](#) Create your own phrasebooks by using [Google Translate](#) (which gets better all the time) and adding what you want to learn to a themed sheet.

[Quizlet](#) Mainly for schools, but there are loads of games and activities specifically for language learning.

[Netflix](#)– Growing library of amazing content from all over the world. Try the [Language Learning with Netflix](#) browser extension.

Podcasts: try [Spotify](#) or [itunes](#) for a huge selection in numerous languages.

[Recording for Fluency](#) Instead of writing, use the prompts to practice speaking. Record once a week and be blown away at your progress.

[Add 1 Challenge](#) Group from Benny Lewis.

[Language Immersion: Learn](#) anything, but in a new language.

[LingQ](#)

[Earworms](#)

Reading–This is one of the best ways to learn a language. It is all input, processing and content. Everything you learn will be in context. You can do this on your own, too. Try the [Readlang](#) browser extension for support and great content.

Alexa–The best tool for learning a language at home. Listen while you're working around the house to your other apps, or just ask it how to say something in your target language.

[Brazilian Portuguese for Travel and Beginners](#)

[Cantonese for Travel and Beginners](#)

[French for Travel and Beginners](#)

[German for Travel and Beginners](#)

[Greek for Travel and Beginners](#)

[Italian for Travel and Beginners](#)

[Japanese for Travel and Beginners](#)

[Korean for Travel and Beginners](#)

[Mandarin Chinese for Travel and Beginners](#)

[Spanish for Travel and Beginners](#)

Create your own playlists to learn each task.

Check out more resources on the blog:

<http://reallifelanguage.com/reallifelanguageblog/>

Intermediate

Intermediate B. You will begin this range by being able to create your own sentences with your target language. You will end at this level with language production that is more into the paragraph level. The upper range of this, intermediate/B level, is Intermediate-high on the ACTFL scale and B2 on the CEFR scale. This is a level of skill that is considered fluent by many to include being a benchmark for beginning language teachers or college graduates. This is where many non-native speakers end their studies, so don't let the name fool you. It's actually a strong level of proficiency.

[Babbel](#)

[Duolingo](#)

[Drops](#)

[Hello Talk](#)

[Memrise](#)

[Mondly](#)

[Pimsleur](#)

[Paul Noble](#)

Michel Thomas

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Goldlist Method

uTalk

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Alexa—The best tool for learning a language at home. Listen while you're working around the house to your other apps, or just ask it how to say something in your target language.

[Short Stories Olly Richards](#) has tons of great stories specifically for language learners here.

[LingQ](#)

Private Language Schools Many language schools around the world offer classes starting at one or two weeks. They tend to offer classes in the AM and you have the PM to explore and practice what you learned. Check out this [episode to find out how languages can help you earn money to study abroad](#).

Advanced

At the advanced level, you will begin by being able to produce paragraphs. You will move through this range and be able to produce strong, connected paragraphs and extended speech. It is a very strong level. The novice level is really quite easy to move through. The intermediate level takes about twice as long and that advanced level takes about three times as long to move through as it does to move through the novice level.

Please note that not all the resources listed are available in every language. They're to give you an idea of where to go for resources that are close that serve your language.

FSI—These are courses in the public domain. *Google Foreign Service Institute*. Many bloggers offer these for free.

[Recording for Fluency](#) Instead of writing, use the prompts to practice speaking.

[Language Immersion: Learn](#) anything, but in a new language.

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Private Language Schools— Many language schools around the world offer classes starting at one or two weeks. They tend to offer classes in the AM and you have the PM to explore and practice what you learned. Consider getting a rewards card and saving for your next trip abroad.

[Goldlist Method](#)

[Task/Journals/Notebooks](#)

[Google Sheets](#) Create your own task/phrasebooks by using [Google Translate](#) (which gets better all the time) and adding what you want to learn to a themed sheet.

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[Language Immersion](#) Learn anything, but in a new language

[LingQ](#)

Reading—This is one of the best ways to learn a language. It is all input, processing and content. Everything you learn will be in context. You can do this on your own, too. Try the [Readlang](#) browser extension for support and great content. Read books, novels, plays, self-help books—anything. If you like it, read it.

Alexa—The best tool for learning a language at home. Listen while you're working around the house to your other apps, or just ask it how to say something in your target language.

[Olly Richards](#) has tons of great stories specifically for language learners here.

[LingQ](#)

[Language Immersion: Learn](#) anything, but in a new language.

[Vocab Columns](#)

[Gabriel Wyner](#) He created an app and wrote a bestselling book based on learning with Anki cards.

[Audible](#) This is one of my favorite apps. Courses for beginners, and

[Voice Memos](#) or [Vocaroo.com](#) Simple recording app. Talk to yourself on a regular basis. Document once a week by recording yourself. You'll be astounded at your progress and increasing confidence.

[Amazon Prime](#)—Content offerings with programs and films in other languages

News—Target Language news is a great resource to learn languages. [Newspapers from Around the World](#)

Private Language Schools—Many language schools around the world offer classes starting at one or two weeks. They tend to offer classes in the AM and you have the PM to explore and practice what you learned. Many cities have places where you can study a couple of nights in the evening.

Alexa—The best tool for learning a language at home. Listen while you're working around the house to your other apps, or just ask it how to say something in your target language.

Textbooks—Used language textbooks are often sold on Amazon. These are great for a sequenced approach and grammatical explanations. Best part? They're often very cheap and ready to be soaked up by someone who wants to learn.

Please note that more exciting things are coming out all the time. Change it up every 5 weeks to keep it fresh, new and exciting. Even a half an hour a day adds up over time.

Bonus: Krashen's Theory of Second Language Language Acquisition

Here's my cheat sheet on Krashen's theories:

Acquisition-Learning

Acquisition is natural. Learning is intentional and more artificial. Think about the way you learned your own language as a child. You were immersed in messages. You were read to. You watched television. You listened to songs. You read.

With learning, think about some of the formal instruction you had in school. For example, what a noun is or what an adverb is. Instruction on parts of speech and grammar exercises are examples of formal language instruction that many of us have experienced.

Monitor

This is the practical result of the language learned. It discusses how learners monitor what they have learned and acquired in the new language. For example, some over-monitor and as a result, are overly measured in their language use, ultimately at the expense of communication. Some under-monitor, at the expense of accuracy. Optimal learners remain aware enough to monitor their use enough to allow for continued progress yet don't let mistakes halt their progress.

Natural Order

As Krashen says, "For a given language, some grammatical structures tend to be acquired early, while others late." I like to use the example of children again. Think about some of the simple things they say when they're first learning to speak. They're choppy and rough. Think about by the time someone graduates from college how sophisticated and polished their language is relative to a small child, and the ease of expression they have. While this natural order seems to be similar among languages and learner profiles, grammar does not need to be learned in a specific sequence.

Input

In order to keep your skills growing in a language, you need comprehensible input. This is language that you can understand, with some new things in there that let you problem solve, think and acquire new structures. They allow you to work on language that is slightly more difficult-just slightly above your level of language- into what you already know.

Affective Filter

This can have a huge impact on how quickly you learn languages. Learning languages can be pretty scary. Do you have an outgoing personality? Are you an extrovert? Are you willing to put yourself out there, or are you a perfectionist, measured with your communication?

In order to really bring these theories to life, I'd like to share with you the story of Benny Lewis from *Fluent in 3 Months*. Benny's better known as the Irish Polyglot.

Benny's a smart guy. He studied engineering at university. He really wanted to learn new languages. But despite his intellect and his strong work ethic, he

wasn't successful in traditional classes. Fast forward about 15 years, and Benny is fluent in more and more languages all the time.

Without having any background in languages, he perfectly executed Krashen's theory of SLA. Visit his website, *Fluent in 3 Months*, as well as his YouTube channel, where he's documented his journey of language learning missions over the years. See what he can do for yourself if you don't already know, and then read below on how he executes Krashen's theories.

<https://www.fluentin3months.com/>

1. **Acquisition-learning.** Benny ditched the textbooks and traditional grammar instruction, and went right for meaningful interaction and communication with people. He talks about speaking from day one. This can be very scary. However, it's absolutely necessary. Benny starts with some traditional learning at the very beginning of embarking on a new language by memorizing some words and phrases.

Early on, Benny gets speaking to native speakers. This can truly accelerate your progress very quickly because something wonderful happens. All of the language that you worked on in your traditional learning segment you then use with a native speaker. Don't worry if it's perfect or not. When that native (or near native) speaker speaks back to you, they're providing you with input. It's communicative. All of the words, phrases and grammar that you're using are completely in context. When you speak to a person to try to communicate with them, you quickly learn what the gaps are in your knowledge. You can go back and fix them, or ask questions right then and there, to someone who can provide you with more input.

This is the key to quick progress. If you don't have access to a native speaker, or a highly proficient non-native speaker of that language, there are lots of ways for you to do this. You can go on a site like [Italki](#).

Does the thought of speaking to a native speaker terrify you? You can start with speaking to yourself. Perhaps set a few minutes aside every day to talk. I suggest recording the sessions. If that gets you to a point where you can feel more comfortable speaking to native speakers, it's well worth the time invested.

2. Monitor. Benny focuses on communication. Do you think he speaks perfectly? Ask him that. I think he would tell you that he makes lots of mistakes. But he's talking, and each time he talks, he's problem solving with all the things that he's acquiring and learning. When the person speaks back to him, he's getting more input and using that to refine his skills. In short, he pays enough attention to keep improving, but does not let a lack of knowledge of grammatical structures hinder his progress.

3. Natural order. We all go through the same stages as we develop our languages. For example, our grammar early on might be rough and choppy and difficult to understand. Do we all move through all these stages perfectly, like a textbook? Do we master the present tense early on? No. It's constant growth that happens through engaging in communication and keeping it the main focus. All that refinement comes later. Benny moves through these phases by keeping the focus on communication and naturally polishing as he continues to practice.

4. Input. The input Benny gets is where he's acquiring all of his new language. He focuses on getting into meaningful communication in context. The more you engage in speaking to others, the more language you will acquire.

5. Affective Filter. I think Benny will tell you that he's an extrovert. He likes talking to people.

What this means for you: **Acquisition**. Speak with native speakers early on. It's ideal. It can also be perfectly tailored and personalized just for you. Get input, and produce output. This helps you test yourself and refine constantly as you go.

Some ways to practice that output and test yourself:

*Talk to yourself. Record yourself and document your progress.

*Journal and write. Again, a great way to build skills and document your progress.

*Audio courses are an ideal way to turn your phone into the ultimate language learning lab. You can do courses while you're cleaning, doing errands, walking, or commuting.

Do you commute on a train? Get your headphones and spend some time on Duolingo. Some languages even have chat bots that will allow you to have many "conversations" with what you've learned.

Learning: don't worry about all the rules. Invest your time in one of the three modes of communication ([interpretive, interpersonal or presentational](#)). When you start understanding the rules and seeing patterns without explanations, that's the perfect time to learn the rules. That's how you learned your first language. You didn't learn nouns in your language by understanding that they were a person, place, thing or idea. You learned the word first, then you learned what part of speech they were.

Monitor: your refinement of grammar and structures will come with time. Just worry about communicating. I don't think it's a bad thing to invest time in the study of grammar, and it's a great thing to do on your own. With that said, use the time that you're with other people to communicate. You'll learn a lot of grammar and structure and context, saving you hours and hours of time on difficult exercises that won't make you a better speaker. Listening to people,

reading and then having some context to use that language is the greatest way to master language and structures- not explanations.

Natural order: We all tend to go through the same phases. For example, intermediate/B-level speakers create with language by speaking in sentences. Their grammar is understandable, yet a bit choppy. With time comes refinement. The more time you invest in input and practice-that natural communicative input- the more your skills will improve.

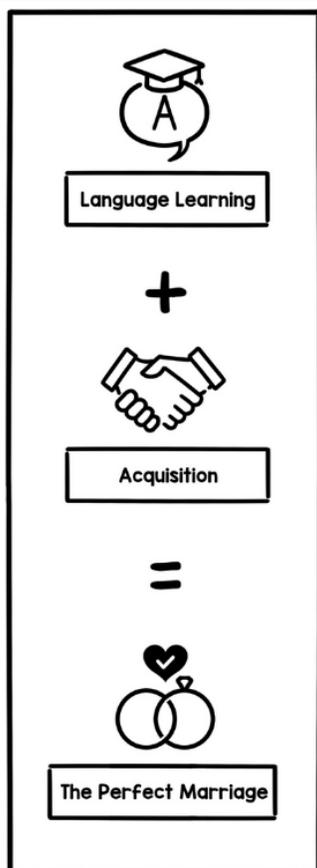
Affective Filter. We're all not extroverts. With that said, remember that the more you put yourself out there, the better your skills will become more quickly.

Don't worry about perfection. Get talking. If that means talking to yourself for a long time before you feel comfortable talking to somebody else, do it.

Most importantly- be kind to yourself. Treat yourself with the kind of compassion you would a child learning a language. It can be difficult to put yourself out there, but **you're** doing it. Remember that!

<https://www.sk.com.br/sk-crash-english.html>

Krashen, Stephen. "Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition." *Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition*, Stephen Krashen, 3 July 2019, www.sk.com.br/sk-crash-english.html.



**Krashen's
SLA Theory
(#1). Apply
for fast
progress**