

Grammar skills

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What to expect?

During this session you will learn about:

- Useful ways of identifying your weaknesses
- Goal setting
- Activities for practising grammar
- Online/offline sources for learning grammar

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What is grammar & (why) is it important?

Task 1

In pairs - discuss the following questions:

1. How would you define grammar?
2. How important is it in learning a foreign language?
3. Can we do without it? Why? Why not?
4. Which parts of grammar are the most important, in our opinion?

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What is grammar & (why) is it important?

What is grammar?

“Grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. The more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use the language. It can foster precision, detect ambiguity and exploit the richness of expression. (Crystal 2004)

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Improving grammar

How to improve grammar?

- Identify your errors and weaknesses
- Set yourself a goal
- Find good grammar reference sources
- Develop a good system
- Practise, practise, practise

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Identifying your errors & weaknesses

Task 2

In pairs, discuss the following questions:

- How can you identify your problem areas in grammar?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses in grammar?
- Why do you think you have problems with those areas?

Identifying your errors & weaknesses

How can you identify your problem areas in grammar?

- Ask your teacher to give you feedback
- Ask a schoolmate/friend to review a text you've written and direct your attention to your mistakes
- Rewrite a reading text & identify your problem areas
- Take a test in a grammar reference book/online

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Identifying your errors & weaknesses

What exactly is your problem?

- **form** – how the structure is created (e.g. have + past participle)
- **function** – how the structure is used (e.g. to talk about experience)

How does the grammar compare to your mother tongue? Do you have the same structure? A different one? How does it work? How do you translate it?

Goal setting

How to set yourself goals correctly?

- identify the areas you want to work on (max. 5 items)
- set S.M.A.R.T. goals:
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Achievable
 - Realistic
 - Time bound
- find sources (books, websites, a tutor, courses)

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Find sources

In pairs, share some grammar reference books/websites/applications that you use for improving grammar.

What can you recommend?

- Books
- Websites
- Applications
- Dictionaries

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Find sources ctnd.

Books

- Murphy/Hewings – English Grammar in Use series
- Swan & Walter – Oxford English Grammar Course series Swan – Practical English Usage

Websites

- <https://www.englishgrammar.org>
- <https://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl>
- <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/english-grammar-reference>

Applications

- Quizlet, Anki

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Find sources ctnd.

Dictionaryes

- <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>
- <https://languages.oup.com/>
- <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
- <http://www.freecollocation.com/>



Activities to improve your grammar

Templating

Write example sentences with the grammatical structure you want to practise. Make sure the sentences are correct.

Then delete the ending and leave only the 'stem' (unfinished). For example, you want to practise the 2nd conditional.

Write down a sentence such as:

If I were you, I would travel more.

If I were you, I would...

Then try to finish the sentences in 5 different ways.

Then you can try a different structure with the 2nd conditional, such as:

What would you do if you...

If I were rich, I would...

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Activities to improve your grammar

Reading

When you're reading, pay attention to grammatical structures in the text. You can:

- focus on tenses (What are they used for? What do they express?)
- learn the grammar of new vocab (Is the noun C/U, Is the verb (in)transitive?)
- play with the grammar (e.g. try to rewrite the sentences in a different way, use alternative grammar patterns)
- keep a grammar log



Activities to improve your grammar

Listening

Similar activities can be done with listening activities:

- you can listen to a variety of programmes anywhere (raising awareness of how grammar is used to convey meaning)
- transcribe the text
- use alternative structures to change the transcription

Speaking

When you're learning a piece of new grammar, try to include it into your spoken language as soon and as much as possible.

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A few more tips...

- make the example sentences interesting and relevant (emotions, especially the positive ones, help memory retention)
- practise as often as you can (e.g. 10 minutes on the bus, while waiting in a line etc.)
- learn grammar in 'chunks'
- connect grammar with vocabulary, focus on patterns (learning in context is far more efficient)

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References

Crystal, D. 2004. "In Word and Deed," TES Teacher.

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Exit ticket?

Thank you for your attention!