

LEARNING LANGUAGES

HOW DO YOU LEARN BEST?

Think about your preferred learning strategies and habits and discuss them with your partner and report on his/her learning strategies. You may consider the following factors:

- planning (keeping to plans, dropping them, etc.)
- the time of the day/ night
- intensity (how many hours per day)
- the media used (notes, books, CDs, the Internet, etc.)
- school / home environment
- individual / group learning
- special diet? ☺

Speak about yourselves:

Why do you want to study English?

How may English help you in your later life?

What problems have you had learning English?

What are the advantages/disadvantages of learning English in Britain or another country where English is spoken, rather than learning English in your own country?

Which of these activities do you think have helped you to learn English:

- reading English
- looking up words in a dictionary
- speaking to other students in your class in English
- listening to your teacher speak English
- having a friend who speaks English as his or her native language

What do you think are your strong and weak points in study skills?

- present ideas
- ask questions
- write a CV
- pass exams
- speak out in a group
- state the main idea of a lecture
- be able to spell correctly
- take notes
- give simple instructions
- ...

READING – KEY WORDS

Read the text and note down the key words. Compare with your partner.

"The primary purpose of language is communication - grammar is important, but there's a bigger picture. Language is no longer seen as being learnt through mechanical exercises, it's developed through students interacting and engaging."

But there could be a danger in focusing too heavily on task-based methods of language teaching, according to Richard Hudson, emeritus professor of linguistics at University College London. He explains: "There was a strong reaction against grammar-translation. Instead, there was the idea that you could make languages available to less academic children by focusing on communication."

"But what happened is that they got rid of the grammar and the translation. It was a classic case of throwing out the baby with the bath water. It's not fair on children to leave them to work out the rules of language themselves."

"What we're moving towards now is teaching which still has the aim of producing fluent language speakers, and still has a lot of emphasis on realistic situations, but with a lot more emphasis on making children aware of how the language actually works."

Luca Lampariello, a hyperpolyglot and language consultant who speaks twelve languages, says: "The best method is the method you like."

"Languages cannot be taught, they can only be learnt. The best way is to tell students right away that they are responsible for their own learning process, and the teacher is just a guide who has to motivate them."

Do you agree with the ideas expressed in the article excerpt?

HIGHLIGHTING

Another method of working with a text is highlighting:

Highlighting makes important information stand out so that you can find it easily when you go back to the text to study for a test. Systematically using different-coloured marker can make the review process even easier. For example, you can use one colour for key terms, another for definitions, another for names and dates, etc.

BUILDING VOCABULARY

Although there may be many words in a text that you do not know, you do not want to continually stop and look them up in a dictionary. It is often possible to get a general idea of the meaning of a word or phrase by looking at its full context. This means that you go back to the sentences that come before or that follow.

Read the following passages from a text and use the context to work out what the words in bold probably mean:

Expand your vocabulary with mnemonics.

Rote repetition isn't enough.

And while it's true that repeated exposure sometimes burns a word into your memory, it can be frustrating to forget a word that you've already heard a dozen times.

For this, I suggest coming up with **mnemonics** about your target word, which helps **glue** the word to your memory **way more** effectively. Basically, you tell yourself a funny, silly, or otherwise memorable story to associate with a particular word. You can come up with the mnemonic yourself, but a wonderful (and *free*) resource that I highly recommend is [memrise.com](https://www.memrise.com).

For instance, let's say you are learning Spanish and can't seem to remember that "caber" means "to fit," no matter how many times you see it. Why not come up with a clever association like the following one I found on Memrise:



This [caber -> cab, bear -> fitting a bear in a cab] association makes remembering the word a **cinch**.

It may sound like a lengthy process, but try it a few times, and you'll quickly realize why it's so effective. And you'll only need to recall this **hook** a couple of times, and then you can **ditch** it when the word becomes a natural part of your ability to use the language quickly.

LISTENING

Listen to five people giving their opinions about learning languages and do the task.

Do you agree or disagree with the respective speakers?