

HOW TO LEARN ENGLISH & OTHER FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Main Points Video 1. The Psychological Factor

You have to believe you can learn English in order to be successful. That's the first step.

1. If you are serious about learning English, then you have to **make the decision to change** a few things in your daily routine to include daily English practice.
2. **Change your approach to learning** English, if what you have done in the past hasn't worked very well.
3. You use **your mind** to learn a language, and if your own mind is saying that you can't, then you probably won't be able to.
4. **You have to believe**, and the first step is watching what you're saying to yourself about your learning abilities; stop thinking negative thoughts about your English abilities.
5. Be very careful with your thoughts related to your English-learning abilities. **Watch your self-talk.**
6. Write a short, honest, **affirmation** and repeat it over and over in your mind, and aloud.
7. Eventually **your mind will accept the ideas** and it will make the learning process a lot easier.

Forget about the past. You can start over and be very successful, but you need to change your perspective and your attitude about learning English.

Take your own notes while watching the video (below or in a notebook)



Main Points Video 2. The Contact-Time Factor

It's a simple concept. If you want to improve your English, you have to increase the amount of contact that you have with the language.

Remember:

- The total contact time of a perfectly attended 120-hour English course is about one week.
- Imagine that someone does 120-hour courses every year for 10 years. That's still only about 10 weeks of contact time.
- On average, you only get 15-minutes of practice for each hour of class in a traditional academy.

We can look at that statistic from the opposite perspective.

- If you do 15 minutes of self-study, that is the equivalent of one hour of class in an academy; and it's free.
- If you do 30 minutes of English practice per day, 300 days out of 365 days of the year, you will do 150 hours of practice during the year.
- 150 hours of practice is the equivalent of the practice that 600 hours of class in a traditional academy gives you.
- So, in only one year, you would get the same amount of practice that you get from 600 hours of class in an academy; that is, 5 years of 120-hour English courses.

That's not just theoretical. This is how polyglots learn a new language every two years. They do something with the language every day.

Take your own notes while watching the video (below or in a notebook)

Main Points Video 3. The Oral-Comprehension Factor

The power of improving your listening skills when learning a language.

- English students usually have more ability to communicate what they want to say compared to what they understand.
- Most English students don't develop their listening skills very quickly.
- If you improve your listening skills, it will make every other aspect of learning easier. You will be more relaxed; your accent will improve and it will be easier to have conversations.

There are so many resources you can use to practice your English listening skills, following are just a few suggestions from the video:

- www.TED.com
- www.Newsly.com
- www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish
- https://www.ziggurat.es/recursos-aprender-ingles/#anchor_dailyvitamin
- www.shortoftheweek.com
- www.lyricstraining.com

And you might get some inspiration from the Polyglot, Lýdia Machová:

https://www.ted.com/talks/lydia_machova_the_secrets_of_learning_a_new_language

Three realities related to learning a language:

- No one can teach you a language, you have to learn it.
- You are the only one who can guarantee your success. No one can do that for you. Learning is a personal non-transferable activity.
- When you're learning a language, one of the most important activities is maintaining what you've already learned.

If you really want to learn English, or any other foreign language, you have to do something with the language every day, or almost every day. You have to take control of the learning process; when you take control, learning will happen much quicker!

Take your own notes while watching the video (below or in a notebook)

WORKSHEET

1. What do you like doing in your mother tongue?

- ✓ Make a list of your TOP 10 personal or professional interests.
- ✓ Put them in order.
- ✓ Start with the first two.

2. Take a calendar, agenda or excel document. You are going to set a plan following this structure:

Week 1	Timetable	Linguistic area	Activity
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			

- ✓ Each month of the year, focus on improving 2 or 3 of these 7 areas (speaking, writing, listening, reading, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation)
- ✓ Decide which productive activities you will start doing in English (take them from the list you made above).

3. Think of non-productive activities in your daily routine that you can eliminate, reduce, or do in English.

4. In order to keep your motivation alive, track your actions:

Date	Activity	Time
15/02/21	TED Talk https://www.ted.com/talks/haaziq_kazi_a_13_year_old_s_plan_for_removing_plastic_from_the_oceans?language=en Vocabulary to review: <i>Come apart</i> (to break into pieces)	15'

BIBLIOGRAPHY / RESOURCES

- **El modelo 70-20-10 aplicado a los idiomas** (Matthew Ray): <https://blog.ziggurat.es/el-modelo-70-20-10-aplicado-a-los-idiomas>
- **¿Cuánto tiempo se tarda en aprender inglés?** (Matthew Ray): <https://blog.ziggurat.es/cuanto-tiempo-se-tarda-en-aprender-ingles>
- **Activity Book sobre 6 charlas TED:** <https://info.ziggurat.es/6-charlas-inspiradoras-ted-para-aprender-ingles?hsCtaTracking=898c9c97-962f-44c5-bd75-2a01e2c8ef4a%7Ce55fd5ae-68af-4521-8c38-c9c298a13c9b>

TRANSCRIPTIONS (ENGLISH)

VIDEO-1: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR

Hello everybody. My name is Matthew Ray and this is the first in a series of three videos about how to be a more successful learner of English. However, almost everything I speak about in these videos is relevant to the learning of any foreign language, not just English.

I have been teaching languages for over 30 years, and I have met hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people who are trying to learn a foreign language but have not been very successful; in other words, they have not reached their desired level despite years, perhaps decades, of study. In these 3 videos, I'm going to give you some powerful information that could completely change your perspective and allow you to learn English faster than ever.

In this first video, I will talk about the **psychological factor** of learning a foreign language. If you don't believe you can acquire a high level of English, then you probably won't; so, you have to work on that first. As Henry Ford once said, "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't – you're right."

In the second video, we're going to talk about the **time factor**; you can't improve your English if you don't have contact time with the language; I think you'll be surprised at how little daily time you have to invest to improve your English very quickly; but you have to systematize the contact time.

In the third video, we'll talk about the importance of developing your **oral comprehension** skills. And we'll give you a few ideas of some resources that you can use.

I want to start by encouraging you to keep an open mind to what I will explain in these videos. If you are serious about learning English, then you have to make the decision to change a few things in your daily routine to include daily English practice. You've probably heard of that famous definition of insanity. "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result." That's exactly what most English students around the world are doing. I encourage you to change your approach to learning English, if what you have done in the past hasn't worked very well.

Here in Barcelona, I am a partner and the managing director of a B2B language-training company. Over the years potential clients and new students have said some strange things about learning English or another foreign language. For example, "I'm never going to learn English," or "I'm a complete disaster when it comes to learning languages;" or one woman said, "I'm going to die before learning English." Or a head of human resources who said, "I would prefer to work in a rock mine than learn English." And finally, a very common one, "It's impossible to learn a language without going abroad."

If these people who said these statements really believe them, then it will be very difficult for them to learn English. These are what we call self-limiting beliefs. You use your mind to learn a language, and if your own mind is saying that you can't, then you probably won't be able to. Remember Henry Ford's quote. "Whether you think you can, or you think you can't – you're right." The first step is to believe that you can.

Most people are influenced by the results that they have had in the past. But what you do with your English learning starting today, does not have to be influenced by what you did in the past. I don't care how bad you think you are at learning English; you can change that. And it starts in the mind. You have to believe, and the first step is watching what you're saying to yourself about your learning

abilities; stop thinking negative thoughts about your English abilities. I will show you, in video 2, that you are probably a much better learner than you think.

We are often very negatively influenced by what comes out in the news, what people around us say and think... but when it comes to learning English, it's irrelevant. What you think and do is much more important than what comes out in the news or what other people are saying.

In these images, I'm showing, we see some examples of articles that have come out in the press over the years, and this is precisely the type of thing that convinces people to give up when it comes to learning English.

Be very careful with your thoughts related to your English-learning abilities. Watch your self-talk. I'm referring to thoughts such as, "I'm not very good learning languages" or "it takes a lot of years to learn English" or "learning English is difficult." Instead, write a short, honest, affirmation and repeat it over and over in your mind and aloud. For example, "I know that if I stay focused, I can learn English very quickly. I believe I can develop a very high level of English." Or, "I know that I am capable of learning English if I stay focused and positive." At first, when you think or say these phrases, it may feel strange. But don't worry... eventually your mind will accept the ideas and it will make the learning process a lot easier.

If you need inspiration, do a little research into what polyglots do when they learn languages. For example, I recommend watching Lýdia Machová's TED video; she's a polyglot from Slovakia. Many polyglots, like Lýdia, used to think they were bad at languages when they were young; but they found their own methodologies and were able to become "expert" language learners very quickly. Lýdia speaks 9 languages, I believe, and she often mentions a friend of hers in Slovakia that speaks 15 languages, and he has a formal Advanced-level C1 certificate in 9 of the 15 languages. This friend of hers used to think he had a problem learning languages. He doesn't think that now. What changed? His perception... he took the learning process into his own hands and stopped depending on others to learn; now, he has fun learning languages.

I don't care how bad you think you are with languages or how little success you have had in the past... forget about the past. You can start over and be very successful, but you need to change your perspective and your attitude about learning English.

It's easy to think that this psychological factor of learning isn't that important. But I start with this topic precisely because it is THE most important! You have to believe you can learn English in order to be successful. That's the first step.

In the next video I'm going to talk about the factor of contact time and show you just how powerful doing a little bit every day can be. I'll see you in the next video, this is Matthew Ray.

VIDEO-2: THE TIME FACTOR

Hello everybody. My name is Matthew Ray and this is the second in a series of three videos about how to be a more successful learner of English. But remember, almost everything I speak about in these videos is relevant to the learning of any foreign language, not just English.

In the first video, we spoke about the psychological factor of learning a language, which is very important. In this video, I want to speak about the contact-time factor. It's a simple concept. If you want to improve your English, you have to increase the amount of contact that you have with the language.

I have met so many individuals who think they have a problem with learning English. But every single time I sit down with these frustrated individuals and analyse what they have actually done to learn English, I always come to the same conclusion... they are much better language learners than they think. In fact, often I don't understand how they have been able to reach the level that they have... because in reality they haven't had that much contact with English.

Let me show you what I mean. Imagine you do an English course of 120 hours in an academic year, from September to June or July, more or less. That is, you do two 90-minute classes per week and your attendance is 100%. This calendar is an example of what that academic year would look like.

Again, we're assuming that you have perfect attendance for a total of 120 hours.

Just to put things into perspective, let's convert these 120 hours into days. And to make the conversion more honest, we'll subtract 8 hours per day for sleep. So, instead of dividing by 24 hours per day, which would give us very few days, we'll divide by 16 hours (since, as far as we know, you can't learn English while you sleep).

Even then, the total contact time of a perfectly attended 120-hour English course is about one week.

Now, most people don't do 120-hour courses with 100% attendance. But imagine that someone does do this, every year for 10 years. That's still only about 10 weeks of contact time. If you go to England for 10 weeks you would learn a lot, but you wouldn't come back with a super high level of English. It's not that much contact time.

And remember, in an academy setting, where you might be sharing the class-time with 10, 15, 20 or even more students, your actual practice per hour of class is an average of 15 minutes. That is, for every hour of class, you get about 15 minutes of practice speaking, listening, writing or reading English. So that week of contact is only giving us about two days of real practice.

The conclusion is, you're not a bad learner, you probably just haven't had enough contact with English.

So, this brings up the question, how much time do you need to learn English? Well, thanks to studies carried out by the US Foreign Service Institute, and other academic institutions, we know approximately how many hours of instruction, or class, you need to reach your desired level. In this table we can see the data from the studies.

For example, if I'm a beginner, I will need approximately 625 hours of class to reach the upper intermediate, or First Certificate, B2+ level. Remember, however, that this table does not include the time that you will have to dedicate to homework to complement the formal instruction, so you have to include those hours too; and it doesn't include the extra hours that would be caused by breaks

from your English learning. Many people study English for a year or two, then take a break, then they start again...so progress is sporadic and inconsistent; students often take two steps forward, and one step back. Also, I should point out, that these numbers only work with certain languages, in this case between English and Romance languages (such as Catalan, Spanish, French, etc.) and Afrikaans, Dutch, Creole, Swahili and Swedish, among others. But it wouldn't be the same for a German speaker or a speaker of Chinese.

Remember, that I said that you only get about one-quarter hour of practice for each hour of class in an academy. That's not very efficient.

But we can look at that statistic from the opposite perspective. If you do 15 minutes of self-study, that is the equivalent of one hour of class in an academy, and it's free. I've put the word "study" between quotation marks, because really just about any contact with English is valid, such as watching series and films in English, reading a novel, travelling to an English-speaking country, writing in a journal in English, etc.

Now, I want to look at what would happen if I set aside 30 minutes every day to practice English. A year has 365 days, but we'll subtract 65 days that we can use to take a break (about 5 or 6 free days per month). If we do this, that means that over the course of a year, by just doing 30 minutes per day, we would accumulate 150 hours of practice.

Remember, we said that 15 minutes of self-contact was the equivalent of the contact during an hour of class in an academy. So, 30 minutes would be the equivalent of 2 hours of class, etc. And 150 hours of practice would be the equivalent of the contact that 600 hours of class gives you.

So, if you did this, in only one year, you would get the same amount of practice that you get from 600 hours of class in an academy. Even if you do 120-hour courses, that would normally take at least 5 years. In one year, a low-level English student could reach the Upper Intermediate, or First Certificate, level.

That's not just theoretical; I have seen students do this. And remember that I mentioned polyglots in the first video? This is how polyglots learn a new language every two years. They do something with the language every day. So, I encourage you to make the decision to do something every single day with English and watch yourself progress exponentially. Take control of your learning and stop depending on others to guarantee your success... only you can do that.

In the third and final video, I'm going to talk about the oral comprehension factor when learning a language. What I have to say might surprise you. I'll see you then; this is Matthew Ray.

VIDEO-3: THE ORAL-COMPREHENSION FACTOR

Hello everybody. My name is Matthew Ray and this is the third and final video in a series of three about how to be a more successful learner of English. But remember, almost everything I speak about in these videos is relevant to the learning of any foreign language, not just English.

In the first video, we spoke about the psychological factor of learning a language, which is very important, and in the second video we spoke about the contact-time factor. In this final video, we'll look at the power of improving your listening skills when learning a language.

Over the last 30 years, a lot of English students have said something like this to me: "I more or less understand English, but don't ask me to speak because I'm a disaster." In reality, except for one or two cases, English students usually have more ability to communicate what they want to say compared to what they understand. They may not have a great accent or perfect grammar, but if they really want to, they can communicate their message. The problem comes when they have to understand the native speaker they are communicating with, especially on the telephone.

Most English students don't develop their listening skills very quickly. This graph shows what normally happens in an academic year of study... there is very little progress. Students get accustomed to their teacher's accent, but can't understand other speakers. And if you can't understand, you're more nervous and tense, which makes learning more difficult.

Second, you can't learn new words when you converse with other people, because you don't hear them. If English sounds like this to you, wuau wuau wuau wuau, then you can't hear the individual words, so there's no way you can learn them.

And third, pronunciation skills are very related to listening skills. That's right. That might sound surprising, but think about it. Before I can pronounce these words correctly, I need to be able to clearly hear the differences between them. If I say "Sheet"- "Shit", "Sheet"- "Shit" and you can't hear the difference between the pronunciation of the two words, how are you going to pronounce that difference? Be careful because "sheet" means "sábana" in Spanish, or "llençol" in Catalán and "Shit" means "mierda" (or "merda" in Catalan).

If you improve your listening skills, it will make every other aspect of learning easier. You will be more relaxed; your accent will improve and it will be easier to have conversations. Because remember, a conversation involves speaking and listening.

Most students don't practice their listening skills that often, well... because they don't have very good listening skills; we generally don't like doing things that we're not very good at. Students get frustrated when they watch a video and only understand 10% or 15%. But to be able to understand 100% of the English we hear, first we have to pass through the stages of understanding 10%, 20%, 30%, 50%, etc. And the more listening activities we do, the faster we will develop our listening skills. So even if you only understand 20%, don't get frustrated... it's part of the process.

There are so many resources you can use to practice your English listening skills; I'm just going to mention a few. Most of you probably know www.TED.com. You can watch thousands of very interesting presentations between 2 minutes and 18 minutes long about all kinds of topics. You can watch with subtitles in English, in Spanish and often dozens of other languages, or download a transcript of the presentations. There's a great TED app for your mobile phone or tablet too, which facilitates being able to watch from just about anywhere in the world.

Newsy dot com (www.Newsly.com) is a US platform that provides summaries of the news throughout the day. Most of the videos are 1 or 2 minutes long. There are subtitles in English and you have access to a transcript, while you watch. The great thing about these short videos is that you can watch them 3 or 4 times in just 10 minutes. When you watch a video multiple times, each time you understand a little more, which is very motivating.

Another option is the BBC learning English (that's www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish). There are hundreds of options here. You have podcasts, such as 6-minute English or 6-Minute Grammar, Words in the News, etc. And many of these sound files can be downloaded to your mobile, and you can easily listen when you are working around the house, exercising or taking a walk.

Or you can try the Daily Vitamin at www.ziggurat.es. You can sign up to receive a daily English lesson by email, with a sound file.

Another option is the website Short of the week dot com (www.shortoftheweek.com). Here you can find hundreds of short films in English. Or films in other languages, with subtitles in English.

And of course, you can watch series and films on different platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, which give you subtitle options and sometimes the ability to slow down the velocity of the film or series, which makes it easier to understand. You have to find the resources that you most like. Once you start looking, you'll begin to discover some very interesting websites, podcasts, etc. For example, recently I stumbled across the website Lyrics Training dot com (www.lyricstraining.com), which is a lot of fun.

You may remember that in video 2 I recommended taking control of your learning and stop depending on others to guarantee your success... only you can guarantee your success. I want to finish up this video with three realities related to learning a language that I've been repeating for years: First, no one can teach you a language, you have to learn it. There is a difference between training and learning. You control the learning. You might receive an excellent English training and not learn, while others don't even have access to English training and they learn on their own (like the polyglots).

Number 2, as I said a minute ago, you are the only one who can guarantee your success. No one can do that for you. Learning is a personal non-transferable activity.

And finally, number three, I'll introduce with this comic. The person on the left says, "I forgot to make a back-up copy of my brain, so everything I learned last semester was lost." I think this is a feeling that a lot of students of English have. That's why I always say, "When you're learning a language, one of the most important activities is maintaining what you've already learned."

These three realities, or statements, lead to a very simple conclusion. If you really want to learn English, or any other foreign language, you have to do something with the language every day, or almost every day. You have to take control of the learning process; when you take control, learning will happen much quicker!

I hope you found these videos useful, and I hope that you make the decision to follow my advice and improve your English faster than ever. Thank you very much for your attention. This is Matthew Ray.