



myenglishteacher

THE RIGHT WAY TO LEARN ENGLISH
(A guide for the student)



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ENGLISH IS EASY! ENGLISH IS DIFFICULT!



After teaching English for so many years and confronting myself with my students' many learning difficulties, I will not deceive anyone! English is both easy and difficult to learn. Without a doubt, compared to Latin languages, English grammar is much easier. Adjectives and nouns have no gender, there is no polite form and apart from a few 'irregular' verbs, verb endings are easy, and hardly change.

The difficulties start with **pronunciation**. English is not a pure language and many words come from different sources and are not pronounced as they are spelled. This is why much emphasis must be put on listening and speaking skills, right from the start.

The other major difficulty is represented by the hundreds of **phrasal verbs**, **idiomatic expressions** and **collocations** used in everyday language by native speakers. In these cases, either you know them or you don't!



WHY DO YOU WANT TO LEARN ENGLISH?

If you intend to study the English language, you must have a reason. There is always a specific reason or need to study a language. It can be just for fun but usually it's out of necessity.

You might have decided to migrate to an English speaking country.



Maybe you have applied for a job in an international or multinational company where you must speak an intermediate or advanced level of English. Maybe you have decided to attend an English-speaking university. In most cases, you'll need to pass a TOEFL or IELTS exam that certifies your level.

You could be a high school student and need to prepare for a PET ("Preliminary English Test") or FCE ("Preliminary English Test") exam. Many European organizations acknowledge these certifications.

Maybe you're a traveler and you want to be able to communicate adequately when you are abroad. Perhaps you would like to communicate better with a foreign friend or a foreign member of your family.

Finally, you might be a person without any academic or professional need to learn English but you simply want to navigate better on the Internet or you would like to study it for your own personal satisfaction.

It is important for you to be convinced about your intention and that your motivations and learning objectives are clear. This way, together with your teacher, you can outline a plan that is specific to your needs.

For example, if you want to prepare yourself for an exam, your course and your lessons will be based on a more structured preparation and focus on the development of all the language skills that are assessed at the exam. If instead you would like to improve your ability to speak, your lessons will concentrate more on conversation methods and strategies. Whatever your preparation will be, keep in mind that it is vital to have

consolidated the basics of English, that is, a basic practical knowledge of English for everyday use.

The common guidelines used in Europe to establish the language level in English are represented by the

“Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)”:

Level		CEFR	ESOL
5	Starter/Beginner		
1	Beginner/Elementary	A1	
2	Elementary/Lower-intermediate	A2	KET
3	Lower-intermediate	B1	PET
4	Intermediate	B1	PET
5	Upper-intermediate	B2	FCE
6	Advanced	C1	CAE

The six reference levels are becoming widely accepted as the European standard for grading an individual's language proficiency. Proficiency actually means a high degree of skill and expertise.

Each level establishes what a learner is supposed to be able to do in reading, listening, speaking and writing. Levels A1 and A2 represent basic users, levels B1 and B2 represent independent users and levels C1 and C2 represent proficient users.

ESOL stands for “**English for Speakers of Other Languages**”. The term normally describes courses and programs for young adult or adult learners who want to gain fluency in English and, starting from level 2, there are specific exams that can be taken for certification.

These guidelines give you a specific direction, help you to stay focused and clarify the different stages of the learning process.

YOU KNOW MORE ENGLISH THAN YOU THINK!

Many students are very influenced by their previous studies of the English language. In most cases, they have a mediocre or negative memory of the English they studied at school (middle and high school levels). Many people express their frustration about having studied English for many years but not being able to or being too embarrassed to speak it.

Let's face it, in the school system, where attendance averages between 20 and 30 students per class, it is impossible to efficiently work on listening and speaking skills for each student. That is why the study of English in the school system is based more on developing writing and reading skills, grammar and translation, all which can be done collectively and help keep the class under control.

This more academic approach does have a positive aspect! Expressing yourself well in English means you know the grammar! I have always admired Italian students of English for their preparation and knowledge of English grammar. With grammar already studied at school, you can keep your main focus on listening and speaking and brush up on grammar when needed.



Many students have attended group courses in private English schools. In my opinion, group courses with more than 3/4 students are not ideal, regardless of the language level. The more participants there are means the less you have the chance to speak English. Group dynamics can be useful in conversation

courses but the groups must be small. Furthermore, group dynamics can be difficult to manage. In every group there is always someone who wants to prevail, someone who wants to work faster and someone who has more difficulty and slows down the progress of the group. The students in a language group are never exactly at the same level.

Another important consideration is this: **English is everywhere!** That's undeniable! Words in English are found everywhere: on product names ("Fresh & Clean"), on TV ("share" & "audience"), on Internet and social media ("post", "chat", "messenger", "app"), in sports ("corner") and at work ("meeting", "forecast"), just to name a few. Many people are really not aware of it but through music, work and social media they actually know many words in English and they are already quite familiar with its sounds and pronunciation.

Your present knowledge of the English language (good or bad) is your initial asset and an incentive to start studying it again. Dr. Spock used to say: "Trust yourself. You know more than you think you do."

I always tell my students: "You know more English than you think!"



THE FOUR LANGUAGE SKILLS AND THEIR LEARNING ORDER



The four language skills to study and develop in any foreign language are **listening, speaking, reading and writing**. Reading and listening are receptive skills while writing and speaking are productive skills. These skills are interlocked and cannot exist without each other.

Knowing how to write and spell correctly in English is essential for any kind of correspondence (emails, letters, presentations, bookings etc.).

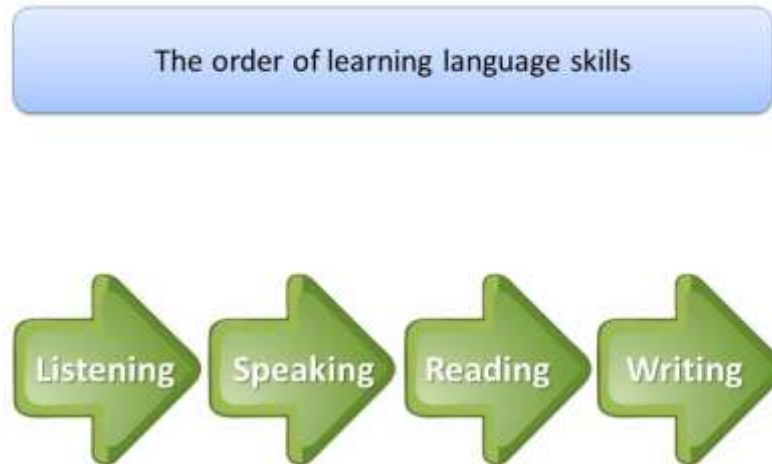
Reading activities are frequently underestimated but studies show that reading extensively in English is the best way to increase vocabulary and oral fluency.

Listening skills are key and probably the most difficult skills to master. Understanding native speakers of English requires a trained ear and familiarity with the sounds and idioms of the language. In fact, the listening test of English certifications, like a PET or FCE, usually represents the hardest part of the exam for many students.

Finally, speaking skills allow you to communicate actively in any situation (on the job, travelling, socializing, online etc.) and to be a dynamic part of the interaction and communication.

In conclusion, all 4 skills are important and are part of the language learning process. The question is: In what order should these skills be learned?

After years of teaching practice and experience, there is no doubt in my mind! All 4 language skills must be studied at the same time and in the following order:



First learn to listen and speak and then learn to read and write. The explanation to this is quite simple. Ask yourself "How did I learn my native language?" You learned it in this order and it's a natural order.

We were all exposed to our native language already in the womb. Our mothers and fathers spoke to us and we "listened" for months to the words and sounds of the language. This listening process continued after we were born. Then, one day, we decided to try to copy these sounds and words through "speaking". Our listening and speaking skills continued to develop for years (between 3 and 6), long before we started learning to read and write, skills we learned when going to school.

This order also explains why students who have studied English at school, (where primarily reading and writing skills are developed) are usually less skilled in listening and speaking.

MY TEACHING METHOD

When I earned my TEFL qualification (“Teaching English as a Foreign Language”) back in 2005, I was introduced to the “communicative method” in teaching. I was drawn to this approach immediately and have used it ever since.

As I explain on my website www.bmyenglishteacher.com, the communicative method in teaching is based on the idea that learning language successfully is possible through meaningful communication and interaction.

Therefore, this approach places less emphasis on learning specific grammatical rules and more on achieving fluency. This means that the entire lesson is focused on speaking and developing the skills you need to communicate in real situations. Grammar structures, vocabulary and pronunciation are taught through speaking.

The communicative method works!



Furthermore, my method is based on the progressive learning of “chunks” of language related to the different aspects of life. You will learn very useful language to be able to communicate in many situations of daily life and life in general, both personal and professional.

To urge speaking I use different methods and tools, such as, role plays, flashcards, videos, images and other effective contents, even interactive.

Your learning will be personalized, interesting and fun!

STRATEGIES AND USEFUL TIPS

Everyone has their own way of doing things, including study habits. So a part of your language learning process will always be personal and depend on how you apply yourself when studying.

If you already have studying strategies that worked for you in school, then, by all means, use them for English! If you don't have strategies, then get ready to find some. Having strategies is fundamental when learning a foreign language.

What follows is a list of very useful tips that, in my opinion, will help you to successfully take on you adventure with the English language!

Bmyenglishteacher's 10 useful tips to learn English



1) **Find your motivation** and stay focused and curious throughout the entire learning process. Be serious about your commitment and don't let anything or anyone discourage you!

2) **Be prepared to invest your time.** Learning English doesn't happen overnight. Depending on your initial level, your skills and other variables, in order to achieve a decent intermediate level (B1-B2), you must study between 1 and 3 years.



3) **Put your faith in the learning context** that suits you (teacher, group course, online lessons, etc.) and trust who is guiding you. If you're not happy with your learning context, change it!

4) **NEVER be afraid of making mistakes.**

Making mistakes is inevitable but it's a good thing! Finding the courage to speak English and making mistakes means you're speaking and producing language. The more mistakes you make, the more you learn. Plus, you will probably find encouragement and support from the people you are speaking to.



5) **Learn grammar!** Believe me, if you make grammatical errors in conversation, it sounds bad. You risk confusing people and making them misunderstand what you're saying.

This gives them a bad impression. Plus, bad grammar skills can mean missing out on job opportunities! Grammar is important!

6) **Use technology!** Today there are many valid tools to practise

English. Download **apps** to practise grammar and pronunciation and to learn phrasal verbs. Try out some really useful English learning **websites** where you can find quizzes and interactive exercises, mini-courses and extra material for exam preparation. You can find some great apps and websites listed on my website

www.bmyenglishteacher.com, on the "**Blog – Self Study Ideas**" page.

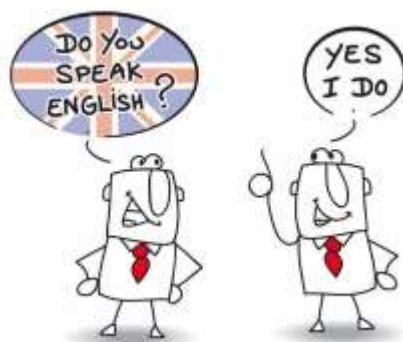


7) **Make learning English a lifestyle!** You should expose yourself to English every day, even for just 15 minutes, and there are many fun ways to do it. The important thing is to be steady. If you like listening to music, download the lyrics to your favourite songs and learn new words, idioms and expressions. Watch TV programs and movies in English. This is a

receptive activity. It is not possible to understand everything immediately but with steady listening you will become more and more familiar with English and you will acquire an “ear” for its sounds, the word linking and pronunciation. You will slowly start to understand more words and meanings. The more you listen to English today, the more you’ll understand it in the future. If you enjoy reading, read in English. At the **“Blog – Self Study Ideas”** page of my website www.bmyenglishteacher.com, you can find the links to graded readers. The important thing is to read aloud so you get used to your voice speaking in English. Finally, to practise conversation, find a conversation partner. There are many possibilities to do this online for free!



8) Dedicate more time to self-study! Self-study is fundamental. Your weekly or bi-weekly lessons must be complemented by and enriched with self-study. Besides reviewing and doing homework, remember that there are many fun ways to practise self-study. See point 7!



9) Speak in simple English! The key to learning how to speak well in English is based on three points: practice, repetition and simple structures. It's better to learn small chunks of language, repeat them and practice them. You don't need to memorize hundreds of verbs and words in order

to express yourself! Fewer but effective structures and lexis are enough to get you speaking efficiently. And remember, the best option when speaking is to use simple grammar.

10) **Get used to thinking in English!** Actually, this takes time to achieve. It is typical of foreign students of English to hold onto their native language and use it as a means to translate in



English what they are thinking. The problem, is it doesn't work. This mental process brings you to more complex structures that you are not yet able to express in English. Grammar, sentence structure, word order are all different and remember that English is rich in idioms and phrasal verbs that cannot be literally translated. In time, thinking in English will become more natural.

ENGLISH is the international language of commerce, finance, technology and social media. The globalized world and Internet have pushed the use of English even more as the worldwide "common language".

Whether you want to learn English for work, travel or pleasure, it's never too late to start! I can help you learn the English you need!

Contact me at:



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