



Do you
speak
english?

*"The best time to plant a tree is
20 years ago. The second best time is now."*
(Chinese Proverb)

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Business English

Folge 4: Tips and Tricks on How to Learn a Language

Vielen Office-Workern fällt es schwer, ihre Englisch-Kenntnisse up to date zu halten. Eine Auffrischung tut da oft Not. Im vierten Teil unserer Business-English-Serie gibt Sprachtrainer Gary Castle hilfreiche Tipps, wie Sie das Lernen ganz einfach in Ihren Alltag integrieren können.

I've been playing music for over 30 years, in different styles and with different instruments. It's always been a goal to learn to read music, and I've sat down many times and tried to learn this useful skill but I never succeeded. I joined a big band recently. This is the first time that I really have to read music and our first concert is in 3 days. After 30 years of having this task on my to-do list, I've finally learned how to read music during the last 6 months. So, how did I do this? What are the important compo-

nents to learning something? In this article we shall be looking into tips and tricks on how to improve learning skills, which is useful in all areas of life, not just learning languages.

First Steps

The biggest learn help is motivation. Motivation is one of the most important keys to success. Unless you're a very motivated person who can simply decide to do something and then do, you may need some extra help. A great motivating factor is a deadline; this task must be finished by next week, next holiday or next year. Another excellent motivator is sharing your goals with other people. In my big band I have a deadline and a team of people who are counting on me, which helped motivate me and gave me the power to do the second stage of learning. (To find out more about how to motivate yourself, google "Motivation zum Lernen" or "Ziele erreichen".)

Further Steps

The second stage of learning is action. To learn to read music I got information from many sources and I worked out ways for me to understand

it. I read, listened to the songs and used the internet, and I made time even when I was tired. I also practiced for hours! In only six months I have nearly reached the level of people with years of experience. It was hard work but now it's a great feeling!

7 Tips for Learning English

1.

Google "learn English" or "Englisch lernen". There are hundreds of web sites available, so finding the right ones for you may take time. Make a study plan, for example, Monday and Thursday from 7 to 8 o'clock. Don't do too much in one day; like sports training – **a little often is better than a lot at once.**

2.

Read more English. Make sure you read things that are interesting. It's not always important to understand every word or sentence. It's very good to read out loud, this really improves your spoken English. There's a list of links of English magazine and newspapers on our webpage www.city-english.de/news.htm. If you're interested in news, www.spiegel.de has the articles in English as well as German. It's easy to buy any English books on Amazon.

3.

Listen to English. The internet has lots to offer: Youtube, podcasts, radio stations, etc. If you have any special interests, try finding information in English about things you enjoy. Podcasts are a great way to fill traveling time. Download audio files or radio stations and hear them while you're going to work. If you don't know how to do this, find out! Use your computer, MP3 player and mobile phone as tools to have fun and learn with.

4.

Watching TV. Most people don't have much energy after work to learn. They would prefer just to watch television. **How about relaxing on the sofa and learning at the same time?** Here's the trick – watch the DVDs that you already have in English (or buy your favourite films/TV series). You can even make a regular evening where you watch together with friends. IMPORTANT: Don't put the German or

English sub-titles on, because your brain will read and not listen. If you have a problem understanding something you can put on the sub-titles to clarify it, but in general it's not important to understand every word. Set yourself a goal, for example, in three months' time you will understand the last episode of "Dr House" better than the first episode. Don't expect too much, you'll find that it's like a jigsaw puzzle – if you take your time, the picture will slowly come together.

5.

Speak more English. I often advise students to make a special time to speak English, for example, Sunday breakfast is English Time, where everyone has to speak English (great if you've got children). One company I worked with had English Fridays, when everyone tried to speak English. Find out if there are any groups of English-speakers where you live. Or maybe start a group. Make friends and have fun!

6.

Leo and co. We all use online translators. I often use more than one, but I can recommend www.linguee.de which uses the words in real sentences, so you can be sure it's the correct meaning, and it translates words other translators can't. If you want to know how to pronounce words, go to www.de.forvo.com, which has real people speaking, not just a computer simulation.

7.

Repeat, repeat and ... repeat! **Practice makes perfect** – our brain remembers things that are often repeated.

I hope you found some useful information to help you improve your English learning skills, and wish me luck for my Thursday concert!



Gary Castle,
Geschäftsführer und
English Trainer,
City English, Hamburg.

www.city-english.de