

Tips for Learning Spanish

1. Don't expect to be perfect!

Can you remember when learned to ride a bicycle? Did you ride perfectly from the first time you sat on the seat? When learning a new language, expect that you will make mistakes, and don't be embarrassed by them!

2. Work on developing an "ear" for Spanish.

Remember that language is first and foremost oral communication. A written alphabet is merely a collection of symbols used to represent the sounds of the language, and cannot be expected to capture every nuance of sound and intonation. Try to develop a "good ear" for Spanish. An easy and fun way to do this is by listening to Spanish music, watching Spanish movies, or watching Spanish cable TV.

3. Practice SPEAKING!

The only way to learn to speak a language is by actually SPEAKING. You can study for years, and master all of the grammar rules, but unless you actually practice speaking, you will never speak well. When you are practicing speaking, remember to do it out loud, at normal conversational volume.

4. Be consistent.

To really learn a language takes time and commitment. Consistency is by far the most important factor. If you can devote a solid twenty minutes a day, nearly every day, you will be far more successful than if you "cram" for an hour or two, but only sporadically.

5. Talk to yourself.

When learning a foreign language, it is common for listening skills to develop more rapidly than speaking skills, leaving the learner in the unfortunate situation of being able to understand, but unable to respond. A good way to surmount this problem is to talk to yourself as much as possible. Because there is no one else around, you won't be weighed down by the inhibition that so frequently burdens the beginning language student.

6. Use flashcards.

One of the best tips we can give you is to make and use flashcards. Make cards that are small enough to easily carry with you, and write the English on one side and Spanish on the other. Be sure to ALWAYS have some cards with you. This way, you can capture "wasted" time (standing in line, riding the bus, waiting for class to start, etc.) and turn it into productive study time. Even if you only have a couple of minutes, you can use it to study a few flashcards.

7. Label your surroundings.

Make labels for things all over your house. For example: la pared (wall), la puerta (door), el escritorio (desk) etc. Remove the labels only after you have mastered the vocabulary.

8. Be patient.

Progress in language learning does not follow a straight-line graph. You cannot expect to make the same amount of progress, day after day, week after week. You may find yourself struggling at times, seeming

to make no progress. Don't let this discourage you. It is normal to reach plateaus in your learning progress. If you find yourself "stuck" try spending time going back and reviewing things that you already know well. Often this will help prepare you to break through to the next level.

9. Find a partner.

Try to find a native speaker who can be your conversation partner. This can be your greatest asset and perhaps you can also provide assistance to your partner in your native language.

10. Read out loud.

Try reading out loud. You will get all of the benefits of reading, plus you'll get really good pronunciation practice. In fact, as a beginner, you should read aloud as much as possible.

11. Do not get behind.

See Sra.Smith to get help. I will dedicate time outside of class to help review or clarify a lesson.

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