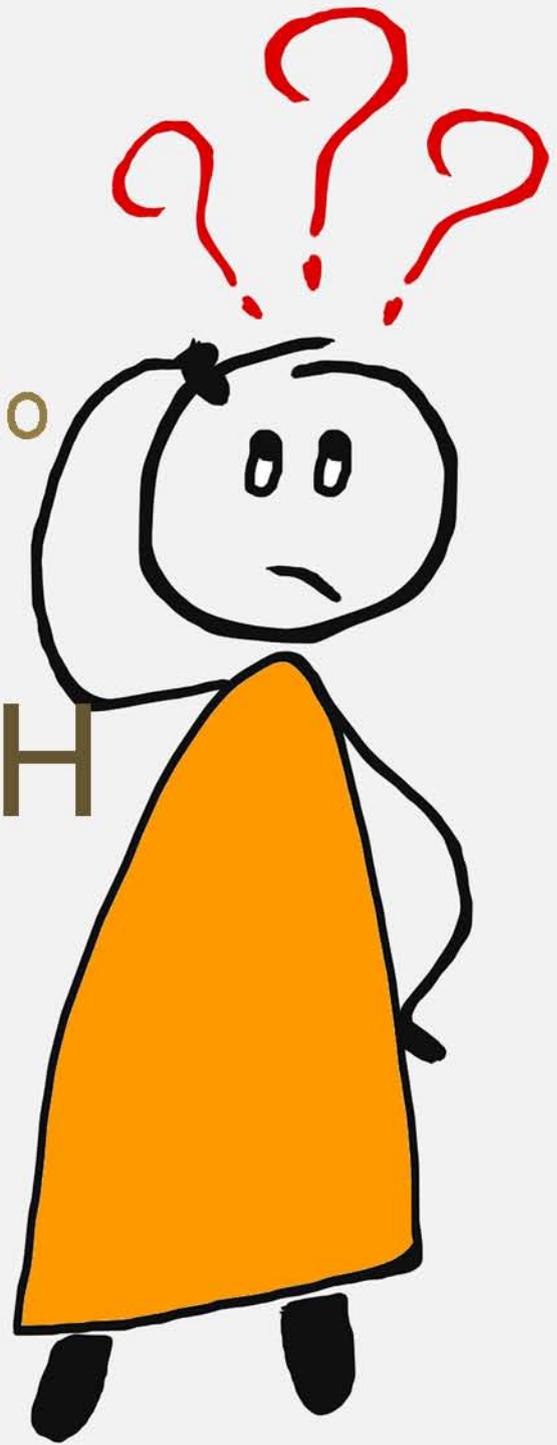


Learning how to
**LEARN
ENGLISH**

MARIA FERNANDEZ



TAP TO SHARE IT WITH YOUR FRIENDS



Learning How to Learn English

Learning How to Learn English. The best tips & tricks to learn English fast.

By Maria Fernandez

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To my sister, Matilde, who believed in this project all along.

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How to become fluent in English fast

My mission is to help you speak and understand English. Not some day in the distant future, but as soon as possible, and without pain.

I want you to enjoy your English lessons and look forward to them. That's why I've put together this little guide.

In it, I'm going to show you how to go through an English lesson, step by step. We're going to see how you can develop your speaking and listening skills fast. I'm going to give you the secret of how to learn words and remember them, how to develop a great English accent, and how to stay motivated.

But let me start by introducing myself.

“Thanks to words, we have been able to rise above the brutes; and thanks to words, we have often sunk to the level of the demons.” – Aldous Huxley

About Maria Fernandez, your English teacher

Teaching and learning languages is my passion, career and favourite pastime. I believe you can learn a foreign language at any age, if you set your mind to it. That's what my students have proved to me in my over twenty years of teaching.

My passion for languages goes back to my teenage years. Before I started teaching others, I taught myself several languages, including English. At first, I learned super slowly. Eventually, I developed a learning technique which I've been perfecting ever since. Teaching myself has given me firsthand experience of the difficulties every learner has, the ups and downs, and the frustrations.

Drawing from my teaching and learning experience, I'm now the author of several language courses. You can find my English lessons and classes on [**learnenglishwithmaria.com**](https://www.learnenglishwithmaria.com) and [**my Spanish courses are here**](#).

My English learning journey has been long and often maddening, but also hugely rewarding. I always knew it'd change my life, and it did.

After I got my History degree from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, I moved to Scotland to do a Masters in English Literature. Within a couple of months of graduating I set up as a translator and language teacher in Edinburgh. My original idea was to eventually do full time translation, but I soon realised that what I liked most was teaching. I loved taking my students through their journey to fluency.

To become the best possible teacher, I made sure I never forgot what it takes to learn a language. That's why I've continued studying ever since.

As I write this, I'm in Japan for two months, partly to travel, partly to work, and partly to study Japanese. All the work I put into learning English has allowed me to live an exciting and wonderful life. I want the same for you. Let me help you achieve your dream of becoming fluent in English.

To find out more about me, go to [**learnenglishwithmaria.com/about**](https://www.learnenglishwithmaria.com/about)

“If language had been the creation not of poetry but of logic, we should only have one.” – Friedrich Hebbel

Chapter 1: What you'll discover when you're learning English

Being able to speak a foreign language is one of the most rewarding achievements in life, but it requires patience and practice. Along the way, you're bound to find obstacles. Throughout this guide, I'll show you how to overcome them. Here are the nine main obstacles you'll find:

Obstacle #1: you'll forget most of the words you come across in your lessons, at least once, even if you have an excellent memory. That's why revising your lessons is essential.

Obstacle #2: you'll find some days more difficult than others. Some grammar lessons will be impenetrable, some pronunciation rules confusing, and some basic numbers impossible to understand. Patience and perseverance will make things a lot easier.

Obstacle #3: the irregular English verbs can be confusing. For a while, you're bound to get them wrong. Carry on, and you'll master them the way natives do.

Obstacle #4: every so often, you'll be tempted to give up. Follow my tips on how to boost your motivation, and you're guaranteed to become fluent.

Obstacle #5: often you'll come across words that you'll find difficult to pronounce, even if you know the rules well. With practice, you'll be able to say them with a great accent.

Obstacle #6: some phrases and sentences will make little sense, even if you know their translation. To really understand them, you need to develop a "feeling" for the language. That'll come with practice. Guaranteed!

Obstacle #7: the recordings in your lessons will sound fast, very fast, and not just the first time you listen to them. That's how English speakers talk. Play the recordings in your course as often as you can, and you'll soon get used to the speed.

Obstacle #8: you can have big ups and downs. Some days, you'll feel you've forgotten half of what you've learned. Other days, your course recordings will sound easy, and you'll have little difficulty with the drills. Be kind to yourself. Whenever you have a bad day, focus on tasks you find easier and leave the more difficult ones for the next day.

Obstacle #9: often you'll find your motivation's gone, for no particular reason. That's why creating the habit of learning some English every day is so important. In this guide, I show you how to do just that.

"A different language is a different vision of life."

– Federico Fellini

Chapter 2: Why studying with an English course is essential

No English course is perfect, but without a course you'll never become fluent in English within a reasonable amount of time.

There's a wide variety of good and affordable English courses that you can buy or subscribe to. They teach you in different ways, emphasising different aspects of the language, and with a choice of formats and platforms.

The best way to choose the right course for you is to first ask yourself these six questions:

- Do you want to learn British English or American English?
- What's your budget?
- Which level are you starting from?
- What are your main objectives: speaking, understanding, reading, and/or writing?
- Which format or formats do you prefer: book, audiobook, online course, video, app?
- Are you planning to learn on your own or will you have a teacher?

How to choose the best course for you

All good English courses have these seven features:

Feature #1: recordings by native English speakers. Without recordings, you won't be able to develop your listening skills. You also won't be able to practise speaking, and you'll develop a poor accent.

Feature #2: the English transcript of all the course recordings.

Feature #3: vocabulary flashcards, preferably audio flashcards. That is, flashcards where you can read and hear an English word, and see a whole sentence with

that word on the back. Vocabulary audio flashcards are the fastest, easiest and most fun way to learn words.

Feature #4: grammar lessons that blend in with the rest of the material. Bad English courses bring up grammar topics randomly, leaving you lost and frustrated. Good courses introduce you to the main topics gradually and in order.

Feature #5: speaking drills where you can practise putting words together in English, step by step.

Feature #6: listening drills, so you can quickly understand English without trouble.

Feature #7: pronunciation lessons and drills to develop a great accent.

Before buying them, all good English courses give you a detailed description of their features, and offer you free samples. They also come with a full money-back guarantee. Courses without free samples and a full money-back guarantee are a risky choice.

The biggest advantage of getting a good English course is that it allows you to focus on learning the language, rather than having to create your own course as you go along.

Having to create your own English course is a sure path to failure, because it's too difficult and time-consuming. Let a good course guide you all the way, and you'll learn English fast.

When choosing an English course, if you're unsure about any of the basics, get a course for beginners. You should definitely do that if you've studied English in the past, but haven't used it recently. In general, always get a course that's slightly below your current level. Far from being a waste of time, studying at a lower level helps you build a solid base with no gaps. That, in turn, will allow you to learn English a lot faster.

Important note: once you've chosen an English course, stick to it, and go through it from beginning to end. Don't be tempted to follow more than one course at a time. Instead, trust your course, and you're guaranteed to become fluent fast.

Are you looking for a good English course? Go to [**learnenglishwithmaria.com/courses**](https://learnenglishwithmaria.com/courses)

Why choosing a free English course is a bad idea

Over the years, I've reviewed dozens of free English courses. Sadly, I've never come across one I could happily recommend to my students. Free courses cost you a lot of time and unnecessary pain. The five reasons for this are:

- Free courses are often created by amateurs with little knowledge of how to teach English.
- Free courses are plagued with errors, often basic and serious errors such as: irregular verbs, usage of everyday words, pronunciation rules, spelling, wrong drill solutions, etc.
- The recordings in free courses, when they have them, are usually made by non-native speakers. That'll give you bad pronunciation habits, which you'll find difficult to get rid of.
- Free courses are incomplete. They cover little vocabulary, and have frustrating gaps.
- Free courses throw the material at you randomly, so you have to figure out for yourself what to study next. That's not an easy task when you're learning a language.

Studying with an English teacher

Nothing will help you learn faster than an experienced English teacher that encourages you to speak. It's a more expensive option than learning on your own, but the boost to your motivation will be huge.

If you want to learn English with me, I offer some very affordable lessons. You can join my live online classes, and practise speaking and listening.

To join my live classes, go to learnenglishwithmaria.com/class

My thoughts on total immersion

Landing in a foreign country with little or no knowledge of the language, and with the intention of learning it "the way children do", is likely to be a disastrous waste of your time and money.

The main reason for it is that what you get from total immersion mostly depends on how much you know when you embark on it. Basically, when you immerse yourself in a foreign language, the higher your level is when you start the more you'll learn. If you're a beginner, the experience will be frustrating. You'll soon find yourself avoiding people who cannot communicate with you in your native language.

Also, learning English grammar just from talking to native speakers will take you years. With a good course you can master the grammar in only a few months.

To make the most of total immersion, learn as much English as you can before travelling abroad.

"Language is the dress of thought." – Samuel Johnson

Chapter 3: How to love your English course

Once you've chosen the course you're going to study with, it's a good idea to familiarise yourself with it before you start Lesson 1. Familiarising yourself with your course will help you:

- See how it's structured.
- Find out which topics are covered.
- Get a feeling for how long the lessons are.
- See how many exercises and drills each lesson has.
- Get an idea of how much vocabulary you'll be learning.
- Know how much grammar you're expected to learn.
- See what you can do in just five or ten minutes here and there.
- Get a rough idea of how long it'll take you to finish the course.

The better you know what your English course brings you, the less overwhelming it'll be.

How to familiarise yourself with your English course

It'll only take you ten or fifteen minutes to see what your new English course looks like. Whether it's a book, online course, audio course, app or set of video lessons, your course will have a table of contents. Go to that table of contents and look at how many lessons there are. Then look at how many pages, videos or mp3s each lesson has. On the table of contents, read the headings for each lesson to find out which topics are covered.

Next, flip through the pages in your course, or navigate through it, to get a feeling for what the course looks like, how long each section is, how many questions the drills have, how many sections are recorded, etc. By now, your English course will look a lot more attractive and less threatening.

Once you start your course, browsing through the lessons to come should also be part of your routine. After you finish a lesson, have a quick glance at the next one before you plunge into it. This will help you look forward to learning and avoid procrastination.

"The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."
– Ludwig Wittgenstein

Chapter 4: How to go through the lessons in your English course

The simplest way to teach yourself English is to follow the tips in this guide. How you go through your English course is going to determine how fast you learn the language. Here are four very useful tips:

Tip #1: don't skip anything.

Whether you're a complete beginner or have some previous knowledge of English, start your course on lesson 1. Don't skip any lessons or sections, even if you're familiar with them.

I cannot emphasise enough the importance of building a solid base. The more solid your knowledge of basic English is, the faster you'll learn new things.

Tip #2: don't rush.

Avoid rushing through the first few lessons of your course, even if they're easy. Go through them thoroughly, repeating the drills until you can get all the answers right. That way you'll avoid gaps in your knowledge. Small gaps at the beginning become huge holes by lesson twelve.

Tip #3: trust your course.

Sometimes you may feel that your course goes too fast, or not fast enough. Often you'll get the impression that a difficult grammar point is brought up too soon, or that essential vocabulary isn't coming up soon enough.

Put those thoughts aside and follow the material in the way it's presented. Avoid jumping to more advanced lessons or using two language courses at the same time. It'll all soon fall into place!

Tip #4: take notes if you need to.

Don't hesitate to write notes down in a notebook, or create a document on your computer called, for example: "My English course notes". Make a note of anything

you find difficult or unclear, and come back to your notes every so often. As you progress, you'll see that it all becomes clear and the difficulties disappear.

Let's go through an English lesson, step by step

The first thing to do when you start a new lesson, including Lesson 1, is to listen to that lesson's recordings twice, without looking at their transcript. Always make sure you listen to all recordings before reading their transcript. Often you'll understand very little or even nothing at first, but it's the most effective way to develop your listening skills fast.

Then listen to the recordings again, this time while you read the transcript. Now listen to the recordings again, and read the text out loud along with the native speakers. Make sure you speak out loud, as if you were talking to someone. Speaking a foreign language often requires you to produce sounds you're not used to. You'll make many mistakes at first. You'll get stuck and won't be able to string words together the way you do in your native language. By reading sentences out loud, you'll overcome those difficulties, and you'll get a great accent.

Then go through the recordings line by line. This is an excellent way of developing your speaking skills.

Once you're familiar with the text, move on to the vocabulary. If your course has audio flashcards, play them several times. Say the English words out loud, making sure you understand every word on the flashcards. Once you're familiar with the vocabulary, play the recordings once more. Notice how you can understand them more easily now.

Then move on to the pronunciation rules and practice. Read out the words in that section, focusing on the sounds you're learning. If your course has pronunciation audio flashcards, play them until you can say all the words without hesitation.

Then move on to the grammar section. Make sure you don't skip any points. Then do all the speaking, listening and other drills in your lesson. Don't skip any. Redo the drills until you can get all the answers right.

Before you move on to a new lesson, always revise the one you've just done.

The magic of revising

Revising is essential if you want to learn English fast. Without revision, you'll forget most of what you've learned, even if you have a good memory. Revising will boost your motivation to continue learning, and it'll close any gaps you may have in your knowledge.

Go back to the lessons you've completed in your course as often as you can. I always advise my students to revise at least 50% of the time they're studying. The more you play your course recordings and vocabulary flashcards, and the more you repeat the drills, the faster you'll learn.

Completing your English course

Once you finish the last lesson in your English course, don't move on to a new course. Not immediately. Instead, go through all the lessons one more time.

Make sure you can understand all the recordings without looking at their transcript. Play all the vocabulary flashcards. Redo the drills fast, until you can easily get all the answers right. Play the speaking drills and aim at saying whole sentences at the same speed as the recordings.

Remember: going through your course a second time will put you a lot closer to becoming fluent in English.

"One does not inhabit a country; one inhabits a language.
That is our country, our fatherland - and no other."

– E. M. Cioran

Chapter 5: How to develop your English speaking skills

The easiest way to develop your speaking skills fast is to speak English from day one, and to continue practising every day. The easiest way to get yourself to speak every day is with a good English course.

A good course will take you step by step, and will help you build your confidence, one sentence at a time. There are two exercises that will skyrocket your speaking skills. They are:

Exercise #1: line by line recordings.

Being able to play the recordings in your English course line by line will do wonders for you. Play a line and say it out loud, along with the recording. At first, you'll be unable to keep up with it, but with practice you'll get better every day.

To make fast progress, the secret is to focus on one line at a time. Instead of racing through all the lines in a text, focus on each one for a few minutes. Say it out loud several times until you're comfortable with it. This is one of the exercises I often did to become fluent in English.

Are you looking for an English course where you can play the recordings line by line? Have a look at my English online lessons: learnenglishwithmaria.com/lessons

Exercise #2: speaking flashcards.

Speaking flashcards give you a set of English words on one side, and you're asked to build a sentence with them. When you flip the flashcard, you can see the complete sentence, and you can play it to hear it said by an English native speaker. Throughout your course, the sentences you get on the flashcards slowly become more and more complex.

Speaking English can be a scary experience, that's why speaking flashcards are so great. By doing exercises that take you step by step you get to develop your conversation skills without pain.

In my English online lessons, there are plenty of exercises with speaking flashcards to help you step by step.

“There are seven days in a week and ‘someday’
isn’t one of them.” – Anonymous.

Chapter 6: How to understand English without trouble

The best way to develop your listening skills is to listen to lots of English, but not just any English.

When you listen to radio shows, music, films and TV programmes you make painfully slow progress. To make fast progress, the secret is to focus on the recordings in your English course.

Listen to those recordings regularly and often. Become familiar with all the words, and master the common expressions you hear. That way you'll build a sound knowledge of basic English that will allow you understand the language without trouble. To skyrocket your listening skills, there's one magic exercise.

The magic exercise: listening before reading

Whenever you come across a new recording in your English course, make sure you play it before reading its transcript.

You'll understand next to nothing the first time you play it, but that's OK. Play it again and try to catch a word or two. Then, read the transcript. Play the same recording a few more times. Notice how you start to understand a few more words. For a while, you'll find this a frustrating exercise, but the results are amazing and well worth the discomfort.

In my English online lessons, I walk you step by step through the recordings, so you can develop your listening skills fast. To see how this works, go to [**learnenglishwithmaria.com/lessons**](https://learnenglishwithmaria.com/lessons)

“To have another language is to possess a second soul.” – Charlemagne

Chapter 7: How to learn English words & remember them

Forgetting English words is frustrating, and it kills your motivation to continue learning the language. That's why you need to make sure you can learn words fast, and remember them. Here are my three best tips for learning English words fast:

Tip #1: use vocabulary audio flashcards.

The easiest and fastest way to learn English words is with audio flashcards. But those flashcards cannot be random words from random lists. Instead, they have to be words that have come up in your course lessons.

By hearing English words both in your course recordings and audio flashcards, you'll become familiar with those words fast, and you'll remember them forever.

To revise the vocabulary in your course, play the audio flashcards as often as you can. Say the words out loud along with the native speakers, and check that you're familiar with their usage.

Tip #2: learn phrases as a whole.

Avoid analysing English phrases word for word. Instead, learn phrases as a whole, for example: "from time to time", "on the other hand", "you're welcome". When possible, learn phrases in context, as part of complete sentences. That way you'll remember them more easily.

Tip #3: find similarities between words.

If you can find a similarity between an English word you've just come across (for example: "impersonal") and another English word you already know (for example: "person"), you won't forget it easily.

"... words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within."

– Alfred Tennyson

Chapter 8: How much English grammar do you need to learn?

Without some knowledge of English grammar, you'll never become fluent. Knowing some grammar is essential for using the right verb tense, the right preposition, and the right word order, among other things. More importantly, learning grammar will allow you to make fast progress.

But learning grammar doesn't have to be dull. A good English course will introduce you to the main grammar topics in an easy and practical way. It'll also give you exercises and drills to practise them. By the end of your English course you should be familiar with:

- Verb tenses
- The irregular verbs.
- When to use each preposition.
- How to build questions and statements.
- Basic word order.

Your course should also cover, in more or less detail: articles, negative words, possessives, pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions, etc.

Once you've done some English, you may find yourself wanting to learn more grammar than your course offers you. If that's the case, avoid starting a grammar course before finishing your current English course. First, go through all the lessons in your course, and then get a grammar course and focus on it. You'll get a lot more out of it that way.

How to learn English grammar

Here are my three tips on how to learn English grammar fast:

Tip #1: grammar lessons are there to help you.

Always read the grammar lessons in your English course carefully. Don't skip any of them, and don't rush through the topics you find easy. You may miss something crucial.

Tip #2: grammar drills are your best friend.

Complete all the grammar exercises and drills in your lessons, however easy or difficult they are. Repeat them until you can get all the answers right.

Tip #3: finding similarities is magic.

When you're learning grammar, look for similarities with topics you're already familiar with. For example, try to find similarities between irregular verb forms, the word order in questions and statements, adverbs and adjectives, etc.

Once you finish your English course, it's likely that you'll want to learn English grammar in more depth. To see the English grammar courses I recommend, go to: learnenglishwithmaria.com/grammar

"Language most shows a man; speak that I may see thee."

– Ben Jonson

Chapter 9: How to get a great English accent

The only secret to a great English accent is regular practice with good exercises. Focusing on your English pronunciation may not be an obvious thing to do, but it has four superb advantages:

Advantage #1: the better your accent is, the better native speakers will understand you.

Advantage #2: the better your accent is, the better you'll understand native speakers.

Advantage #3: having a good accent allows you to avoid bad pronunciation habits that are difficult to get rid of later on.

Advantage #4: having a good accent is hugely rewarding and motivating.

Getting a good accent requires patience and practice. There's no way around it. But once you start working on your pronunciation you'll notice an improvement immediately. Guaranteed!

How to work on your English accent

When I was learning English, I spent a lot of time working on my accent. Looking back, both personally and professionally, the results have by far outweighed the effort. Here are my five best tips on how to get a great English accent:

Tip #1: focus on your English accent from today. You'll make many basic mistakes for a while, but you'll soon notice your improvement.

Tip #2: remember that the more English you hear, and the more speaking practice you have, the better your pronunciation will be. Reading out the texts in your course, practising the vocabulary out loud, and saying the drills out loud, will all improve your accent.

Tip #3: go through the pronunciation rules in your English course carefully. Compare the way letters are pronounced in English and your native language.

Tip #4: go back to the pronunciation rules in your course as often as necessary.

Tip #5: read out all the words in your pronunciation flashcards. Saying them quietly or in your head will be of little help. To develop a good accent you need to say them out loud, as if you were talking to someone.

In my English pronunciation course, I take you step by step through all the English sounds. I give you audio flashcards with pronunciation tips, I show you the mistakes you're likely to be making, and I give you plenty of pronunciation exercises.

To see my English pronunciation course, go to learnenglishwithmaria.com/course

“Words, once printed, have a life of their own.”

– Carol Burnett

Chapter 10: How to communicate well in English

Being able to communicate in English is a great motivation to continue learning the language.

Mastering English will take you time, but you can start using your first sentences within a few lessons. You'll be able to have simple English conversations even if you only know a few hundred words, some expressions, and some verb forms. To communicate well in English, here are my best six tips:

Tip #1: speak loud and clear.

When we lose our confidence, we tend to lower the volume. Often the reason why people don't get what we're saying is because they cannot hear it, not because they cannot understand us.

Tip #2: keep your sentences short.

Long sentences are much more difficult to master than short ones. In long sentences it's easy to get their word order wrong, making them meaningless. For a while you may only be able to say simple sentences, but if you can say them clearly and with confidence you'll be able to get by in most situations.

Tip #3: use words you can pronounce well.

If a word you cannot say clearly is essential, practice saying it until others can understand it. If all the English words you know can be understood by others when you say them, those words will take you a long way.

Tip #4: think ahead what it is you're going to say.

If you're going shopping, check the words for the items you're looking for. If you're going to a restaurant, check your food and drink vocabulary.

Tip #5: think of the possible answers you may get.

Check the vocabulary that's likely to come up when people talk to you, and familiarise yourself with it.

Tip #6: master the numbers.

Numbers come up in almost every conversation, and native speakers always say them fast. Get into the habit of practising the English numbers regularly.

Remember: people like being addressed to in their language, especially in their own country. Making the effort to communicate in English will earn you lots of new friends!

"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart."

– Nelson Mandela

Chapter 11: How to keep up your motivation to learn English

Motivation will make you fluent in English fast. Taking up a foreign language is easy for many of us. The difficulty is in finding the motivation to persevere, and the power to ignore the negative thoughts that lead to failure. Fortunately, motivation doesn't just come naturally or not at all. There's a lot you can do to boost it. Here are my nine tips:

Tip #1: learn some English every day.

Even if it's just a few words. With a mobile-friendly course, it's easy to listen to some recordings, play a few audio flashcards, or do a drill, wherever you are. Knowing that you've got a bit closer to your goal is a great booster. Remember: you don't need to speak fluently to get by, so every word you learn really counts.

Tip #2: think of all the benefits of learning English.

It'll help you in your career, it'll make travelling abroad a lot easier, it'll save you plenty of time when surfing the Web, it'll help you make new friends. And that's only the start.

Tip #3: be kind to yourself.

Aim for short-term goals, like finishing one lesson per week. If you try hard but cannot achieve your goal, set yourself a more realistic one for the following week.

Tip #4: ignore naysayers and cynics.

There are negative people everywhere. Their ugly comments can be a big blow to your motivation, especially if they come at the wrong time. Ignore those unwanted comments or, even better, take them as a challenge.

Tip #5: embrace the language difficulties.

Don't let them overwhelm you. Patience is a great ally. Things that don't make sense today will be clear in a couple of weeks. The more you learn, the more everything will fit into place.

Tip #6: remember that motivation's worst enemy is boredom.

To keep boredom at bay, have short learning sessions of no more than twenty minutes each. If you have time, take a short break and then continue with a second session. But always stop before getting bored. That way you'll look forward to tomorrow's session.

Tip #7: slow progress is a huge demotivator.

To learn English fast, spot those "lost minutes" in your day when you could be learning some English. Play your lessons while you wait in a queue or sit on a train. Make a habit of having your English course at hand, so you can learn hundreds of words in those "lost minutes". That's guaranteed to boost your motivation.

Tip #8: look back and celebrate.

Every so often, as you get on with your English course, browse the material you've covered to see how much progress you've made. Have you noticed how many words you learned last week, and how much more grammar you know now? Have you seen how many things that seemed difficult only a month ago are now easy? Finishing your English course is just a few lessons away.

Tip #9: reward yourself.

That's a trick that never fails to boost motivation. The greatest reward I can think of is a visit to an English-speaking country. On the weeks leading to your trip, you'll learn faster than ever before.

If travelling abroad isn't something you can do, you may want to try my live English online classes. I'd love to see you there. To find out more, go to

learnenglishwithmaria.com/class

Every day that you persevere with English makes you more positive and motivated. It gives you that indescribable sense of achievement that comes with learning a foreign language.

When your motivation gets down, remember that the only thing preventing you from reaching your goal are your negative thoughts. Think positive and you'll become fluent in English fast.

"Language is the inventory of human experience."

– L. W. Lockhart

Chapter 12: How to build the English learning habit

Habits put learning on steroids. They kill procrastination, remove excuses, and leave a clean path for fast and steady progress. To build your English learning habit, follow these six easy steps:

Step #1: start small.

Even better, start very small. On day 1, do only two minutes of English. Play a recording in your English course or a few vocabulary flashcards. No more. On day 2, do three minutes. On day 3, do four minutes. Soon you'll be doing ten or twenty minutes without even noticing it.

Step #2: make it convenient.

Use an English course that suits your lifestyle. Forcing yourself to sit down and free up a whole hour in the middle of your busy day won't work. You'll find yourself procrastinating. Instead, go for a course that blends into your daily routine. Online courses and courses you can download to your phone and tablet are ideal.

Step #3: make it daily.

It's better to learn for ten minutes every day than two hours once a week. You'll make faster progress, and you'll look forward to playing your English course, instead of dreading it.

Step #4: make it predictable.

Find a daily time slot and stick to it. For example, play your English course on your commute or during your lunch break. That'll help you avoid procrastination, and will get rid of the stress of having to find the time every day.

Step #5: have micro goals.

Most goals we think of in life are too vague. Here's an example: "I want to become fluent in English one day". A goal like that is not just vague, it's also scary.

To come up with achievable goals you need to think tiny. Try having weekly and daily goals, for example: "I'm going to finish one lesson per week" or "I'm going to do three drills every day". Achieving your daily micro goals will make you fluent in English.

Step #6: allow for imperfection.

When you let yourself down and miss your goal, avoid dwelling on the negative. Instead, think of what you can do to stay on target. Is there a better time slot for your English lessons? Would a different type of course be more convenient for you?

Remember: the secret to becoming fluent is to make your English lessons addictive. When you can't say "NO" to your lessons, you'll become fluent fast.

"You can't see other people's point of view when you
have only one language." – Frank Smith

Chapter 13: How to enjoy learning English

The more you enjoy learning English, the more English you'll learn, and the faster you'll learn it. Here are nine ideas on how to look forward to your English lessons:

Idea #1: make it a no-brainer.

Use an English course that fits into your lifestyle. The more convenient your course is for you, the more you'll use it.

Idea #2: make it a tiny effort.

If you have to make a big effort every time you sit down to learn English, you'll soon find yourself avoiding your lessons. Instead, focus on learning for just ten or twenty minutes at a time and you'll see great results.

Idea #3: make it a shared experience.

Learn English with your partner, friends, colleagues, children or neighbours. It'll be much more fun.

Idea #4: change the scenery.

With modern technology you can learn English wherever you are: car, train, bus or plane; when you're out walking, while waiting for someone, during lunch, and even in the bath.

Idea #5: make friends.

Get to know some English speakers in your community.

Idea #6: find a guide.

Get a teacher or join an online class. They're fun and you'll learn a lot faster.

Idea #7: love the challenge.

English will get tricky at times. When it does, take a step back and redo some of your course drills, listen to the recordings again, or practise reading out some sentences. Everything will soon get easier.

Idea #8: set yourself realistic goals.

The secret is to go for doable daily goals. Achieving your goals, no matter how small they are, will not only help you enjoy learning, it'll also save you from procrastination. Taking it one day at a time is how you'll become fluent in English fast.

Idea #9: stay positive.

It's easy to get drowned by the thought of how much you still have to learn. To stay positive, remember that every English word you learn counts.

“Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going.”

– Rita Mae Brown

Chapter 14: How to make the most of your English learning time

If you make good use of your English learning time your progress will be amazing. But how do you make good use of your time?

There are superb ways of learning, and then there are dreadful ways of wasting your time and getting nowhere. Here are the four superb ways:

Superb way #1: study at the right level.

If you're not sure about your level in English, get a course that covers some material you already know. The idea here is to never study above your level. Otherwise you'll be wasting time looking up words you're supposed to know, and you'll develop gaps in your knowledge.

Superb way #2: focus on your lessons.

For just ten or twenty minutes, remove all distractions (social media, TV, phone ...), and you'll learn in those twenty minutes what can otherwise take several hours. I do that every day with my Japanese and German lessons, and it works wonders.

Superb way #3: go through your lessons several times.

Study each lesson in your English course not just once, but several times. As we've seen in previous chapters, revising is an essential part of language learning. If you only go through your lessons once, you'll soon forget most of what you've learned. And you'll also develop gaps that will prevent you from making progress.

Superb way #4: listen carefully and often.

Play the recordings in your English course as often as you can. The more you listen to them the faster you'll develop your listening skills. Also, the more you listen to the audio flashcards, the faster you'll expand your vocabulary.

Those are the four superb ways of learning English. There are also dreadful ways of wasting your time, which you must avoid. The main three are:

Dreadful way #1: making lists of words.

Self-proclaimed language gurus love recommending that you spend endless hours creating word lists. The problem is, word lists are a sure path to failure. They're slow to create, boring to look at, and a complete waste of time. What's worse, you'll never remember more than a handful of words from a list after a couple of days, no matter how good your memory is.

Instead of making lists of words, focus on the vocabulary audio flashcards in your English course. They're the best tool for learning new words fast.

Dreadful way #2: using more than one course at a time.

Jumping from one English course to another, from one website to another, will drain your energy. You'll spend half of your time wondering what to study next.

Instead, focus on one course; the one you like best and suits your lifestyle. That way, to make fast progress, you simply resume where you stopped the day before.

Remember: the smaller the effort, the faster you'll learn.

Dreadful way #3: skipping the material you dislike.

Skipping material in your English course will leave you with gaps. Don't skip any part of your lessons, however easy or irrelevant it may seem to you. Skipping material often leads to confusion.

Instead, go through all the sections in your course thoroughly. You won't regret it when you start making fast progress!

"The magic of the tongue is the most dangerous of all spells."

– Edward Bulwer-Lytton

Chapter 15: 3 exercises to make super fast progress with English

If you want to learn amazingly fast, here's a treasure. When I was studying English I often did the three exercises I'm about to show you.

The ideal time to do these exercises is when you're revising, rather than the first time you go through a lesson. If you do them frequently, your progress will go up exponentially.

Exercise #1: reading out loud.

Whenever you go through the recordings in your English course, don't stop at getting the gist of them. Instead, over a number of weeks, read them out loud, along with the native speakers, until you can keep up with them. Doing this exercise frequently will skyrocket your speaking skills.

Exercise #2: dictation.

Do dictations from the recordings in your English course. This is the best way to do this exercise: have pen and paper handy, or a device where you can type text in. Go to the first recording in your course and play it through. Just listen to it carefully, without typing or writing anything down. Make sure you don't look at the transcript.

Then play the recording again, but this time pause it after a few words or a sentence. Write down what you've heard. Then play a few more words, pause the recording, and write down the new words. Write down the whole recording this way. Then play it through one more time and check whether you need to amend anything.

Once you're done, compare what you've written with the lesson transcript. Make a note of the words you've got wrong. Keep your dictation for future reference. A week or two later, do the same dictation again. Compare the two and notice your improvement!

Exercise #3: translation.

First, translate a text in your English course into your native language, and then back into English. This exercise will be hard the first few times you try it. You'll make many mistakes, but it'll soon get easier. This is the ideal way to do this exercise:

Go to the first English transcript in your course and translate it into your native language. Write your translation down, one sentence at a time, or type it in. Then translate the whole text back into English, without looking at the course transcript. If you cannot remember a word or phrase, leave a gap.

When you're done, go to the English transcript in your course and compare it with your translation. Mark the mistakes you've made, and keep your translation for future reference.

A couple of weeks later, redo the same translation. You'll find that many of your original mistakes have now vanished, and you can translate the whole text faster!

"In general, every country has the language it deserves."

– Jorge Luis Borges

Chapter 16: The 7 ugly English learning myths

Myth #1: you're too old to learn English.

I've been teaching languages for more than five thousand hours over twenty years. I've had many students in their sixties and seventies who've learned without trouble. Their enthusiasm is often awe-inspiring. Their memories might not be what they were thirty years ago, but their patience, determination and common sense more than make up for it.

Remember: age isn't a barrier to language learning. A negative attitude is.

Myth #2: you cannot learn English on your own.

This is just another ugly myth. Fortunately it's just that, a myth.

I, myself, have learned on my own most of the English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese and Japanese that I know today. Many of my students have come to me for private lessons after reaching an intermediate or even advanced level by themselves.

With a good course, you can become fluent in English on your own, without question.

Myth #3: you can learn English with that old course you found in the attic.

Only if you want to get very bored, waste a lot of time, and make little progress.

Technology has revolutionised language learning. Today you can get English courses you could hardly dream of even five years ago. English courses now have many more and better quality recordings. They often have interactive speaking and listening drills, pronunciation tools, videos, progress monitoring, audio flashcards, and a whole set of other features that render old courses totally obsolete.

Many of those new courses cost around €100 or less. If you want to learn English fast, they're a great investment.

Myth #4: you need to have a perfect English accent to be understood.

No, you don't. Aim at clarity, rather than perfection, and everyone will understand you from the beginning. As long as your accent is clear and you avoid certain pronunciation mistakes, you'll have no trouble communicating in English.

A good English course will teach you which pronunciation mistakes to avoid. It'll show you the sounds you need to focus on, and it'll give you pronunciation drills. Developing a good English accent is straightforward when you do your pronunciation drills.

Myth #5: you can skip the grammar, if you just want to learn to speak.

To be able to build even simple sentences, you need to know some grammar. If you skip the grammar, you'll soon get confused, and you'll never become fluent in English.

Learning some grammar will allow you to make quick progress. You'll be able to understand people better, and you'll speak with more confidence. Mastering some English grammar is well within your reach, and it's absolutely worth the effort!

Myth #6: learning languages is boring.

Slow progress is what makes language learning boring. Forgetting what you've learned, not knowing what to study next, and needing a dictionary, all make English learning a drag.

Bad courses are boring, but learning English can easily be fun. Throughout this short book I've shown you how to stay motivated, develop your speaking skills, learn words fast, and a lot more. Follow those tips and you'll enjoy learning English. Guaranteed!

Myth #7: you can only learn English in an English-speaking country.

Learning in an English-speaking country works best when you've completed at least one English course. If you're at an intermediate or advanced level, learning in an English-speaking country can be one of the most memorable experiences in your life. But if you're a beginner, it can be truly daunting, and almost certainly a waste of time and money.

Learn all the English you can before traveling abroad, and you'll get a lot more out of it.

“Language is the most human thing there is. It is a privilege of mankind... Each word carries within itself a life, a state, a feeling.”

– Carmen Conde

Chapter 17: What to do when you finish your English course

When you reach the end of your English course, don't put it aside. Not for a while. Before you move on to another course, you should revise all your lessons one more time. You'll get a lot more out of your course if you spend a bit longer on it. The best way to go about it is this:

- Go back to lesson 1. Listen to the recordings. Play the vocabulary flashcards. Do all the drills.
- Over the next few days, go through all your course lessons in order. Don't skip anything. Pay attention to the things you're still finding difficult, and spend a bit more time on them. Try playing the drills faster. Can you get all the answers right when you do?

Remember: a good knowledge of basic English will help you become fluent a lot faster.

"You can never understand one language until you understand at least two." – Geoffrey Willans & Ronald Searle

English courses & lessons by Maria Fernandez

To help you become fluent fast, I've created a number of English courses, classes and lessons. They come in different formats to help you learn English wherever you are. Here are their titles and where to find them:

English Pronunciation Course – Online: interactive course with lessons covering all the English sounds. It has pronunciation rules and tips, audio flashcards, quizzes, speaking exercises, listening drills, and more. Get the free samples at learnenglishwithmaria.com/course

Live English Classes: join my live online group classes. There, you can practise speaking and listening, and you can ask me your questions. For more details, go to learnenglishwithmaria.com/class

English Learning Tips: my best tips to help you become fluent in English fast. Read and watch them at learnenglishwithmaria.com/blog

English Video Lessons on YouTube: my short video lessons with speaking and listening drills. Watch them at learnenglishwithmaria.com/videos

Sherlock Holmes Bilingual Story: my Spanish translation of the Sherlock Holmes story "A Scandal in Bohemia" (Un escándalo en Bohemia). A parallel text edition with glossary. For more details, go to learnenglishwithmaria.com/story

How to contact Maria Fernandez

Do you have any questions, suggestions or comments? To get in touch with me, go to: learnenglishwithmaria.com/contact-maria

“Uttering a word is like striking a note on the
keyboard of the imagination.”

– Ludwig Wittgenstein

Do you want to have a great English accent?

Play the free lessons from [Maria's English Pronunciation Course](#).

The screenshot shows the website interface for 'Learn English with MARIA'. The top navigation bar includes links for FREE, COURSE, CLASSES, BOOKS, ABOUT, HELP, ACCOUNT, and LOGIN. On the left sidebar, there are buttons for 'LOG IN TO YOUR LESSONS', 'ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION COURSE', 'INTRODUCTION TO COURSE FREE SAMPLES & DETAILS', 'Free lessons from course', 'Course details', 'MODULE 1 INDIVIDUAL ENGLISH SOUNDS', and 'MODULE 2 - COMING SOON COMMON MISTAKES BY LANGUAGE WHEN WILL IT BE AVAILABLE?'. The main content area features the title 'Free lessons from Maria's English pronunciation course' and three lesson cards. The first card is 'PRE-TEST YOUR /ɪ/' with a pencil icon and a 'PLAY' button. The second card is 'HOW TO PRODUCE THE /u:/' with a megaphone icon and a 'PLAY' button. The third card is 'SPELLINGS: /əʊ/' with an 'ABC' icon and a 'PLAY' button.

Happy English learning!

Maria Fernandez

Your English teacher @ [LearnEnglishWithMaria.com](https://www.LearnEnglishWithMaria.com)