

## How to speak English well: 50 tips to improve your fluency

Do you want to know how to speak English more fluently? Do you lack confidence with your spoken English? In this comprehensive guide to fluent English we provide 50 tips to help you improve your language skills and speak English better each day by adopting the right approaches and creating a suitable learning environment.

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## **Fluency in English is a lifestyle choice**

If you want to understand how to speak fluent English, you need to consider how fluency is gained by native speakers of the language in countries like the UK or USA. Brits and Americans grow up in an environment dominated by English and learn the language through constant contact and social interaction. They use English as a highly practical tool to form relationships with others, study, work and gain or exchange information for a variety of purposes. Life for them would not be possible without fluent English as this forms the basis of almost everything they do. This is certainly the same for your native language and country, but do **YOU** really **NEED** English? If the answer is “yes” and you have a strong desire to become fluent, then you need to make more time for English in your daily routine. In other words, you have to introduce some changes to your current lifestyle in order to speak more fluent English through regular contact with the language. Here are 5 tips to help you get started:

### **1. Set time aside for your English each day and make it a priority**

Any time you spend on your English should be seen as an investment in your future fluency. Many small steps will help you travel a long distance over time. Having a clear idea of exactly why you need English and what you will gain as a result of being fluent is important in order to see it as a priority in your busy life. The amount of time you choose to invest in your English is up to you, but this should be a regular commitment and it will directly affect the speed at which you gain fluency.

### **2. Actively introduce more English into your daily routine**

Make a conscious effort to inject more English into your typical day. Try the following: read one BBC news article on your iPad while you're having breakfast each morning, listen to an English audiobook or radio station on your way to work, do a 10-word vocabulary test during your lunch break using a mobile app, write an email to a foreign colleague or friend, watch a 5-minute Youtube video from a learning English channel, study a little grammar from a textbook some evenings, attend a Skype English class a couple of times a week, organise an English film night at home once a month with a friend, etc.

### **3. Use your native language less**

If you spend 99% of your time speaking your mother tongue and only 1% is left for English, improving your fluency is always going to be an uphill

struggle. Are there situations in which you could use English instead of your native language? This technique is called “replacement” and examples might include: changing the language on your mobile phone to English, watching TV in English 50% of the time or choosing to read a book in English instead of in your native language.

**4. Stop thinking of English as just a “textbook subject”**

Try to view English more as a way of life and less as a school subject. Any contact with the language will help you to speak English more fluently over time so why limit yourself to just traditional classrooms and textbooks?

Taking a broader perspective is likely to make the learning process far more interesting. Native English speakers have regular contact with the language in a wide range of contexts – so should you!

**5. Find some study buddies!**

Involve those around you in your efforts to become more fluent in English; ask them to help you practise, to test your vocabulary or to correct your writing. Those who are close to you can play an important role in supporting and maintaining your new “English lifestyle”. However, also be aware that some could resent your time being spent on English so may try to prevent this positive change.

Don’t look for a quick fix – there isn’t one!

We are living in a world where advertising teaches us to believe everything can be gained quickly and easily with a minimum of effort. In reality, the best things in life are often gained by working consistently to achieve a goal over time. This is certainly the case when learning how to speak English fluently. If you go online, you’ll find lots of books and websites with catchphrases like: “how to learn English fast”, “speak great English in just 3 weeks” or “the easy way to learn English”. However, achieving fluent English is never easy or fast and learners who fail to acquire good English are usually those who a) look for a quick fix solution, or b) do not make enough of a personal investment in their studies in terms of time, effort and money. If you really want to know how to speak English fluently, avoid the gimmicks, take responsibility for your own progress and follow the practical advice in this guide.

**6. Set realistic goals and allow adequate time for improvement**

Many learners set unrealistic targets for themselves, fail to follow their own study timetable and are then disappointed by the end result. Do not let yourself fall into this trap!

Start by setting a series of small and achievable goals in the short-term (e.g. next 3 months). Write down your current commitments and decide how much time you have each week to dedicate to your English. Then compare your list of study goals with your availability and create a realistic plan.

**7. Remember that fluency in English is a “percentages game”**

Accept that you may never become a native English speaker, but that this is not the goal. Work towards improving your respective skills step-by-step over time. It is unlikely you will ever gain a 100% native English accent, but perhaps 90% would be enough. Keep your goals clear in your mind – e.g. with accent the main thing is to be understood by everyone and that means clear, standard pronunciation with minimal confusion between similar sounds. This principle also applies to your other English skills.

**8. Visualise your progress to appreciate what you have achieved so far**

Motivation often comes from seeing the result of your efforts. Testing your skills from time to time can help you visualise your progress so you feel positive about your English. For example, try setting yourself a 20-word/phrase vocabulary test at the end of each week. A larger vocabulary makes understanding the language a lot easier and also helps you speak English more fluently.

Make English relevant and interesting to you

One of the biggest problems with traditional English classroom teaching, as you will have experienced at school or university, is that there tends to be a “one-size-fits-all” approach. Classes are taught in groups, confident students dominate while others receive little attention, and courses tend to be generic or textbook-based. This style of teaching has the potential to kill off any interest in the language and damage your motivation to study. If you want to know how to speak English fluently, the starting point should be **YOU**. Below are several tips to help you establish more of a personal connection with English and boost your motivation to acquire greater fluency:

**9. Connect your existing hobbies and interests with English**

English is never boring if you study with material that is relevant and interesting to you. Take a piece of paper and write down a list of all the hobbies and interests that motivate and stimulate you in your daily life. Now think of ways to connect each of these with English. For example, if you love tennis and read about this sport in your native language each week, stop doing this and start reading in English. In many cases, you will find you have faster access to the latest news and information as you do not need to wait for translations to appear in your mother tongue.

### **10. Avoid using textbooks and materials that you find boring**

Motivation is vital when studying a language. Many learners fail to develop a love of English at school because they find the lessons and textbooks boring. Don't make this mistake again! Try using a wide variety of different material and see what works best for you.

### **11. Make a list of interesting topics for discussion**

To gain more fluent English you need to speak the language regularly with other people. This could be with native or non-native friends, relatives, members of a local English conversation club, other students at a group class, a Skype English tutor, etc.

When you are engaged and interested, you gain fluency in English faster. Try making a list of topics you find intellectually and emotionally stimulating, then search on Google to find relevant articles, videos and other study materials for discussion and further study.

### **12. Join English internet forums that are related to your work or interests**

Even if you live outside a majority English speaking country, you can still gain fantastic access to native English "opportunities" via the internet. If you enjoy communicating with others online, you may wish to join internet forums where likeminded people correspond on subjects that are of interest to you. You can then learn from forum members by noting down commonly used expressions and constructions that you can use later when speaking about these topics. Another advantage of internet forums is that participants tend to use current jargon, phrases that are in common circulation and natural colloquial forms.

Build your other English skills to help with your spoken fluency

Fluent spoken English comes from having a broad vocabulary, good listening comprehension skills and a solid understanding of grammar. Therefore, it is a mistake to focus 100% on just speaking. Imagine you are building a house. You will need a range of different materials – bricks, timber, cement, slates for the roof, etc. This is also the case when you are "building fluency" in English. You need solid foundations on which to build, and these represent the other main skills in the language. Try the following tips to help you improve your "foundations for fluency"

### **13. Always keep working to improve your vocabulary**

Having a large vocabulary gives you greater flexibility and power of expression in English. Therefore, it is important that you continually work to improve your vocabulary through a) conscious study, and b) passive exposure to the language. One of the biggest problems learners face when speaking English is that they lack the words to express what they wish to say or cannot

construct sentences quickly enough to hold a fluent conversation. Working on your vocabulary can help with this immensely. However, you must be selective with the words and phrases you choose to learn if you want to remember them.

Only learn words and expressions that you are actually going to use regularly! Keep a personal dictionary or vocabulary notebook for new words and phrases. Set yourself mini tests each week on a selection of the most useful new terms you have found or perhaps use an app like Wordsteps to compile lists and test your vocabulary over time.

#### **14. Remember that listening is half of the conversation**

If you want to know how to speak English fluently, then first learn how to be a good listener. Fluency is often gained by listening to and then copying the language used by others. English has a wide variety of accents and regional forms so it is vital you work on your listening comprehension skills if you wish to understand native speech. To do this, try the following: watch current English TV series, films with subtitles, Youtube channels, etc. If you enjoy music, pick some of your favourite tracks, print off the lyrics, translate the meaning into your language and perhaps even sing along! You could also try listening to audiobooks and transcribing them on paper, then compare the original printed version with your transcript to see where you went wrong. Note down any new words and phrases you find useful.

#### **15. Be a bookworm!**

Reading more can help build your understanding of the language in terms of word order, grammatical constructions, idioms and other set phrases used by native speakers. If you read lots of articles about the same topic or books by the same author, you will find that words and phrases repeat themselves time after time. The more you read similar texts, the easier it will become to understand them as you familiarise yourself with the vocabulary used.

Avoid reading material that is too old or outdated. Stick to texts written in the last 30 years as these are more representative of the language used by native speakers today.

#### **16. Analyse native English conversations and dialogues for more natural speech**

If you want to speak English more naturally, you need to examine how natives use the language in their everyday conversations. Try taking sample dialogues from textbooks or transcribing them from TV programmes (e.g. soap operas or sitcoms that reflect common usage). You'll notice that native speakers have a tendency to use more phrasal verbs, contractions and simplified tense forms (especially in American English). This language is

likely to differ from that found in traditional textbooks and will give you some valuable insights into how modern English is spoken today. You may wish to try role playing with a conversation partner to practise the common exchanges and situational English you are learning. You will find that many words and phrases are often repeated during everyday conversations in English so it is worth identifying these and knowing them well.

You may like to compare your existing vocabulary with this list of the 5,000 most frequently used words in English.

Avoid focusing too much on grammar (at the expense of speaking)

One of the most common problems among learners of English as a foreign language is that they have been taught in a traditional classroom environment by a non-native tutor who has focused more on grammar than speaking. This is entirely understandable because a) school programmes often emphasise structure over interaction, and b) non-native teachers may lack confidence in their own spoken fluency. However, the fact is that students cannot learn how to speak English fluently unless they are given regular opportunities to practise their speaking skills. This is a failing within our national education systems, but you can choose to make speaking a priority in your own studies and learn grammar more in context.

### **17. Grammar is not only learned through textbooks**

Most learners would agree that studying grammar is essential, but boring. However, this does not always have to be the case. You may be surprised to hear that English children are seldom taught grammar formally at UK primary and secondary schools and that they learn mostly through trial and error – by writing stories and other texts and having them corrected by their teacher. They also acquire an understanding of grammar through constant contact with the language and interaction with others. This proves that textbooks are not the only way to learn grammar. You can also acquire it by listening to native English on a regular basis and copying correct constructions and utterances. When working more on grammar through speaking, it is an advantage to have a native English teacher who can correct your mistakes.

### **18. Remember that natives often break the rules!**

If you want to know how to speak English fluently, you cannot afford to ignore the importance of non-standard forms, regional accents and dialects. According to the latest statistics, only around 2% of Brits speak RP (or The Queen's English). This "posh" form of English is on the decline and is no longer seen by most as a desirable accent. Many BBC newsreaders now use Standard English, but with soft regional accent features – Welsh, Scottish, northern vs. southern English, etc. If you watch television or listen to music, you will hear a wide variety of accents (just pronunciation) and dialects (some different vocabulary and grammar too). While you may not wish to use these

regional forms yourself, it is important that you make an effort to understand them because the majority of native speakers have at least some non-standard features.

Use modern English content produced by native speakers

In order to speak fluent English, you need a correct model to follow and this should be representative of the modern language as it is spoken today. Even if you live outside a majority English speaking country, the internet still provides fantastic access to learning opportunities: news websites, forums, social networks, Skype tutors, study websites, etc. There is no excuse for using outdated textbooks or focusing on material that does not reflect how natives speak the language today. However, there is still a place for literature and older work as long as you are able to distinguish between current versus outdated forms and make appropriate choices when speaking.

### **19. Choices, choices, choices...**

Most ESL learners struggle at times to select the correct words and phrases to match the context in which they are speaking. This is a difficult skill to acquire and mistakes often arise because the student is using outdated textbooks and other material that does not reflect modern usage. Another criticism often directed at non-natives is that they sound overly formal when speaking English. Again this is due to inappropriate word selection – e.g. non-natives might favour formal terms like “postpone” or “collect” where natives prefer phrasal verbs like “put off” or “pick up” in everyday conversation.

It is often best to avoid using textbooks or other resources written by non-native speakers because they are more likely to contain errors and old-fashioned language.

### **20. English is constantly evolving!**

To be a fluent English speaker, you must be prepared to adapt to the changing nature of the language and learn continuously. Native speakers never stop learning English as the language is constantly evolving under a variety of influences – mass media, trends, advertising, politics, foreign language contact, etc. If you want to keep your finger on the pulse, you need to expose yourself to current native English content on a regular basis. Live interaction with native speakers is a big advantage too.

### **21. Television is a window into modern English**

Watching reality shows, TV series and soap operas can give you valuable insights into the type of English being used today in majority English speaking countries. It is not all pretty, polite or in line with standard pronunciation and grammar, but it is a genuine illustration of modern usage and provides learners with valuable access to “raw English” as it is spoken

today by Brits and Americans. Try watching some British TV programmes on a website like [viewabroad.com](http://viewabroad.com) or a Youtube channel like this and note down new phrases, slang and colloquial expressions to use later.

Use it or lose it!

To speak English well, you need to maintain a good active vocabulary. Most learners struggle to achieve this due to a lack of practice (which also means a lack of repetition). We might say that the human brain is like a computer and that active vocabulary is saved in a “temporary files folder”. If information is not used within a given period of time, it is simply deleted or forgotten. Therefore, if you want to speak English fluently, you need to ensure that a) you are learning vocabulary and grammar that you are actually going to use in practice, and b) you are getting regular contact with the language.

## **22. Repetition = retention**

Repetition has been proven to help us remember information for a longer period of time. In the context of English, the main focus should be on repetition of vocabulary and grammar. It is a good idea to keep a record of all your vocabulary tests and regularly look back through your notebooks to ensure this information does not go “in one ear and out the other”. Perhaps ask an English speaking friend to help test your skills from time to time or automate this process via a mobile app.

## **23. Use materials that cover the same topics repeatedly**

This is a good way of getting to know a certain set of vocabulary well through constant exposure to the same words, phrases and constructions. For example, after you have read 25 news articles about tennis you will be familiar with all the common set phrases associated with the sport. The same goes for any topic. Try this for yourself!

Make use of available technology and apps

Technology is changing the way we access and acquire knowledge. Learners across the world are using the internet to improve their fluency in English through study websites, social networks, webinars, Skype lessons and more. Mobile phone usage is on the increase and many choose to install apps for learning English on the move. This can be a great idea because it allows you to fit more English practice into your daily routine, without the need to carry bags of books around!

## **24. Try some apps for learning English**

Check out our list of the top-10 mobile apps for learning English. Some of the best focus on vocabulary and allow you to create your own lists by topic to practise anytime, anywhere. Download several apps and see which work best for you.

## **25. Computers cannot speak like us (yet!)**

Although great progress has been made over the last decade with artificial intelligence, computers still cannot understand and reproduce speech in the same way humans do. This means that apps focused on English speaking and correction are often of limited use. You need regular human interaction with native and non-native speakers.

Improve your spoken fluency by copying a native English model

In order to speak English well, you need a correct native model to follow. In the same way that children acquire language by imitating their parents and others around them, you can learn English through regular exposure to native English content (text, audio, video) and interaction with a tutor or friends. Before you choose a model to focus on, you may like to consider the tips provided below:

## **26. Choose ONE national branch of English**

There can be significant differences between British and American English in terms of vocabulary, pronunciation, and even grammar. Confusion often arises when learners mix different types of English together when speaking and writing the language. To avoid this, consider which national variety of English you prefer (or which suits your needs best) and make this the starting point for selecting a suitable model.

## **27. Find a native model or tutor to guide your learning**

Having your own native English tutor can be a great way of ensuring regular speaking practice and error correction. This tutor can act as your native model and point of reference, as well as boosting your motivation and interest in the language. You could also choose a model like a BBC newsreader, Youtube star or famous celebrity if you have access to enough video and audio material. This person should be a native speaker with Standard English, but also someone you like and perhaps admire.

## **28. Try the “shadowing” method!**

Start by finding a short piece of audio or video clip by a native English speaker – this could be a 30-60 second passage from an audiobook or a very short comedy sketch from Youtube. Listen or watch this several times until you are familiar with it and clear on its meaning. Pay attention to how the speaker uses intonation, emphasis and pauses. Perhaps make some notes on paper and transcribe the passage so you have a visual text to work from too. Now try to “shadow” the speaker by repeating the passage in exactly the same manner and with the same pronunciation. You may like to record yourself doing this so you can then compare your version against the original to see where you can improve further at the next attempt.

## **29. Keep working TOWARDS native fluency**

Unless you have spent the formative part of your childhood living in a majority English speaking country, it is unlikely that you will ever become a

100% native speaker. Set realistic study goals for yourself and work towards these over time. Every learner is capable of achieving fluent English and some even reach near native proficiency.

If you are worried about your pronunciation at advanced level, consider hiring a speech therapist who specialises in accent reduction. Bear in mind that the majority of native English tutors will not have the specialist skills required to provide more than general pronunciation training and error correction.

Network with other English speakers

You must ensure regular speech practice if you want to speak English fluently. Live interaction with native and non-native speakers helps improve your listening skills and gives you a golden opportunity to bring your theoretical knowledge to life. This type of communication may be less formal and organised than English lessons and error correction may be limited, but having an “English social network” can be hugely beneficial for improving your confidence when speaking.

### **30. Join an English conversation club!**

English is the most popular foreign language studied in the world today. This is good news for learners because it means there are English conversation clubs and societies in almost every town and city. Try looking online via Google or Facebook for information on English groups near you. These will often be free, but some may charge a small membership fee. The idea of these clubs is to arrange weekly or monthly get-togethers where native and non-native speakers of English can socialise in an informal setting.

### **31. Speak English with non-natives too**

If native English speakers are in short supply in your town, you can still gain valuable experience by communicating in English with non-native study buddies. Ideally, these will be other learners of your level or higher. Just be aware that non-natives often make mistakes in English so try to avoid taking these on board.

### **32. Use the internet to connect with English speakers**

Do you have a Facebook account or enjoy online gaming? Social networks are full of English study groups you can join for free to practise your language skills with other learners from around the world. If you like online gaming, buy a microphone so you can chat with other participants in English while you are playing. You may find you share a lot in common with other gamers worldwide!

Travel and communicate with others abroad

One of the best reasons for improving your fluency in English is that it is currently the main international lingua franca (or common language). Travelling abroad can be an interesting and challenging way of enhancing your English speaking skills.

Today there are actually more non-native speakers of English in the world than there are Brits, Americans, Canadians and other native speakers combined! Countries like India even teach students their own unique national branch of English.

### **33. Leave your native language in your suitcase!**

Being abroad is a great way to practise your English, but if you are travelling with friends or relatives who speak your language, you may not make full use of this opportunity. Leave your native language in your suitcase and make a conscious effort to use English instead. You may want to consider some solo travel as this will force you to use English 24/7.

You will always be tempted to use your mother tongue if given the choice because this is easier and feels more natural – it is your dominant instinct. However, sometimes you must distance yourself from your native language in order to become more fluent in English.

### **34. Consider working abroad**

While this option may not be open to everyone, working overseas does offer several key advantages when it comes to improving your fluency in English. Full immersion within an English speaking workplace and wider social setting leads to faster progress and a better understanding of the language. If you are able to find work within your professional sphere abroad, then this is an ideal way of getting ahead, both with your English and with your career. If you are currently a university student, you may want to consider a programme like Work & Travel, which offers the chance to earn a basic salary in a service industry job, enjoy a little tourism and improve your English in the USA.

### **35. Think about an overseas study programme**

Studying abroad can be a great way of becoming more fluent in English while learning valuable skills for your professional career. Many of the world's best universities are based in the UK or America and there are a wide variety of degree courses to choose from. You can find out more about higher education opportunities in the UK on the British Council website. If university isn't right for you, then there are still plenty of other courses overseas to suit every budget and availability. These might be work-related or based around your personal interests. For example, if you like Yoga, perhaps consider a residential course in an English speaking country like Malta. If you work in marketing, why not attend a short course in London with a top agency?

Invite English speakers to visit you

If you cannot find the time to visit an English speaking country, why not invite a native speaker to visit you? Playing host, tour guide and translator to a visiting guest is one of the best ways to learn English by socialising and sharing information and experiences with another person. Independent travel is gaining popularity and the internet provides access to everything from individual home stays to adventure tourism with a local guide. If you do not have foreign friends, now is the time to make some!

### **36. Find a friendly foreigner!**

Overseas friends can be made through work, study or travel. However, if your address book is looking a bit empty when you get to “E” for English, you may want to consider looking online. Penpal websites are not as popular as they used to be, but a search like “penpals UK” via Google may still prove fruitful. Social networks are a good place to find travel and hobby pages – for example, check out this unusual Facebook group for travellers looking for others to accompany them on snorkelling trips around the world! You could also try looking up Facebook groups for foreigners interested in your country and language. These might be pages for expats or just for those interested in travel and culture. If you are outgoing and helpful, it should not be too difficult to find friends and extend an invitation to meet up sometime.

### **37. Clean out that spare room!**

Websites like Air B’n’B and Couchsurfing are extremely popular among open-minded British and Americans who like to travel and see the “real life” of a country. If you have a spare room and would like to host foreign tourists visiting your city, try registering on these sites. This could provide some good English practice, as well as a little extra cash.

### **38. Become a host family**

Many schools and universities worldwide have student exchange programmes to promote language learning and cultural activities. This can be a good option for families to improve their English skills together and build relationships with other families internationally. Try looking online or ask at your local school or university for details.

Take English lessons with a native speaker

Although many skills in English can be improved through self-study, spoken fluency is seldom achieved in isolation due to the need for regular interaction and error correction. Having a native English tutor can help provide a focal point for your day-to-day studies. This should be a qualified teacher with appropriate experience who can provide guidance and practical training a couple of times a week.

### **39. Look for a teacher closer to home**

There are several options when considering a face-to-face tutor. You can study in a group class at a private language school or take 1-to-1 lessons at home or at the teacher's place. It may be best to find a tutor closer to home as this will make attending classes easier. Individual training is also preferable in most cases as it saves time and allows you to focus 100% on exact what you need, rather than what other students in a group may require.

### **40. Try online lessons with a native teacher**

In the last decade, e-learning has become a popular alternative to traditional classroom teaching as it offers greater flexibility and access to tutors. It is now possible to have lessons with a native English teacher via Skype (or another VoIP program) from any location with a good internet connection. This method of learning English gives students more choice, while saving them time and money.

If you are interested in live online tuition with a native English teacher, you can request a consultation [here](#).

### **41. Arrange a language exchange**

Search for English speaking expats living in your city. This can be done via Google or Facebook, as well as through the International Department of your local university. Find a native English speaker who is interested in learning your mother tongue and offer them a "language exchange". Then meet at a cafe each week to practise 30-60 minutes in each language.

Never ignore the elephant in the room!

Linguists and teachers are divided on the issue of using the learner's native language in the classroom. However, one thing is for sure – you cannot ignore the elephant in the room! Your mother tongue is equivalent to an instinct and the vast majority of mistakes you make when using English will come about through logical transfer (or interference). In effect, you are trying to navigate an "English landscape" using a map of your own native language. For example, Russian has no articles (a, an, the) so native speakers of this language may always struggle to use these words correctly in English. Native French speakers often find it hard to pronounce English "h", so they are likely to pronounce the word "hen" as "en". If you want to speak fluent English, you should try to correct your existing mistakes by first understanding where they originate.

### **42. Pay close attention to our differences!**

How does your native language differ from English in terms of structure and usage? If you improve your understanding of these differences, you can begin to eliminate some of the errors coming into your English as a result of your

mother tongue (or language instinct). For instance, if you know that the standard word order in your language is “enough big”, but the correct order in English is “big enough”, then you can make an extra effort not to allow this mistake to occur in future. This requires a conscious intervention on your part until you stop making the given error, which is being automatically transferred from your mother tongue.

#### **43. Choose to use English wherever possible**

You will face many situations in which you have a choice of either using English or your native language. If you choose to let your mother tongue dominate, your fluency in English will suffer as a result. Step outside your comfort zone and use your English whenever you have the opportunity! Even if you do not speak perfect English, everyone will appreciate your effort and you will improve with time.

#### **44. Use translation to your advantage**

Some teachers discourage their students from translating to and from their native language. This can be because the tutor feels uncomfortable with a language they do not understand or it can be because they believe students should understand English through English. This approach fails to recognise the benefits of limited mother tongue usage when learning another language. Quick translation to and from the student’s native language can save a lot of time and using a detailed bilingual dictionary often helps build a better understanding of what words mean in each language and how they may overlap or differ.

#### **45. Learning a new language means learning a new culture**

Any linguist will tell you that language and culture are closely connected – you cannot learn one without also learning something about the other. By “culture” we mean: mentality, perspective, norms, etc. Our native language is full of colourful idioms, similes and expressions that reflect our values, beliefs and perception of the world around us. When learning English you will find that our “take on things” is similar to yours in places, but wildly different in others. Be open to the fact we do not all see the world in the same way and that there is no right or wrong. By embracing our cultural idiosyncrasies, you can truly appreciate the beautiful, weird and wonderful faces of our languages. As an illustration, let’s compare English and Russian: a Brit would say “the eye of a needle” where a Russian would say “ear”, a Brit would say “(I’m so hungry) I could eat a horse” where a Russian would say “elephant” and a Brit would say “drink (alcohol) like a fish” where a Russian would say “be quiet as a fish”. What do you say?

Stay motivated, build confidence and achieve your goals

If you are reading this guide, it is probably safe to assume you are not fully satisfied with your English and do not consider yourself fluent. It is also likely that you have studied English at school, college, university, perhaps at private language classes or online, as well as through self-study and your own lived experiences. So why are you not yet fluent? What have been your “barriers to study” in the past? What has caused you to lose motivation? What needs to change? These are all important questions to ask if you genuinely want to improve your English. Take responsibility for your own progress, set tangible and realistic targets, and have confidence in your ability to succeed.

#### **46. First we understand, then we speak**

As young children we develop a good understanding of our parents’ language before we are actually able to speak or produce grammatical sentences ourselves. This is the same for adult learners of English as a foreign language; your understanding will always be ahead of your own practical ability to speak and use the language. Understanding is the basis for the spoken fluency that follows.

#### **47. It is natural to make mistakes, but learn from them**

The only way to become fluent in a language is through trial and error. Therefore, making mistakes is both natural and necessary. Everyone will be expecting you to make mistakes so there is no need to be overly worried about this. The main thing is that you learn from these mistakes in order to improve next time. If you lack confidence when speaking, think of it this way: most Brits and Americans do not speak any foreign languages fluently because they expect everyone else to use English. You are already ahead of them and they should thank you for doing your best to learn their language! Thank you.

#### **48. Be your own best critic**

Always be 100% honest with yourself about your progress in English. It is easy to blame your past classroom experiences or tutors, family commitments and busy working life for your current lack of fluency. However, making excuses will not help you improve. You must take control of and responsibility for your own progress – no one can learn English for you. Be your own best critic, but be constructive with your criticism.

Keep a detailed record of your own mistakes over a prolonged period of time. You can then see how frequently these occur, look up the correct forms and work on eliminating these errors. You may wish to study with a native English teacher while compiling your list of typical mistakes as this can be difficult to do alone.

#### **49. Reward yourself for improved fluency**

Whenever you reach a milestone, achieve a personal goal or just have a good day with your spoken English give yourself a pat on back by rewarding this effort with a treat (e.g. a meal at your favourite restaurant, a trip to the cinema

or a new pair of shoes). This reinforces the positive progress you are making. You deserve it.

### **50. English is not the final destination!**

Think of English as a “tool” that you can use to get something you want or need in life. Whether your goals are career-oriented, study-based or just social, fluent English in itself is **NOT** the final destination. Instead, it is the bridge that will help you cross the river and reach the other side. Your task is to build this bridge brick-by-brick and day-by-day. Let’s start building!

## 5 Effective Modeling Strategies for English Learners

Providing English learners—and all students—with examples of how to do learning tasks is particularly useful during distance learning.

Despite the huge shifts in pedagogical practice caused by the move to online learning, some tried-and-true strategies, such as modeling for English learners, remain crucial. Since teachers often can’t intervene in real time these days, effective modeling—in which the teacher’s expectations for student performance are made explicit through an example—is a lifeline for English learners because of the clarity they provide.

In our experience observing K–12 classrooms—including classrooms with only English learners as well as classrooms that contain a mix of ELs and fluent English speakers—modeling is consistently underutilized despite being an easy, high-leverage strategy. It’s helpful to remember that providing effective models saves time in the end, since it both provides clear examples of expectations for a given assignment and reduces the verbiage a teacher needs to explain a task.

### 5 TYPES OF EFFECTIVE MODELS

Effective modeling can take many different forms. In all cases, modeling should clarify the expectations of the task without giving away the answer, and should remain available for students to access throughout the task. The following are examples of effective models.

1. Completing the first one in a set as an example: This is the simplest form of modeling, yet we’ve found that it’s not used enough. [Click here](#) to see an example. In any kind of exercise in which students are working through multiple examples of the same type of question or problem, it’s helpful to model one or two examples so students see exactly what is expected of them.

2. Providing explicit guidance on the expectations of the assignment through visual models: [Click here](#) for a humanities example and [here](#) for a

math one. These embedded models clearly show the teacher's expectations for performance with visuals instead of many words, without giving away the answers.

3. Using language frames as models for conversational moves: Providing sentence frames models the kinds of conversations students should be having. ELs can engage in conversations more fluidly when they can focus on what they want to express instead of how to express it. See a See Think Wonder activity with language frames and contrast it with a standard version of this same activity.

4. Demonstrating how to complete the steps of the task through video: This video example by Megan Berdugo at Brooklyn International High School models how to solve an equation by showing students each step with an analogous problem. Students can rewatch it as many times as they want and pause where necessary to catch words and ideas they missed.

5. Chunking the steps of a complex process and using a corresponding template for students to complete: ELs can easily get overwhelmed by models of a paragraph, essay, or solution when there is a lot of language to wade through and it's unclear which part of the model corresponds to which part of the assignment. Breaking the model into smaller chunks, and providing space next to each chunk, enables students to focus on one aspect at a time, reducing the cognitive and linguistic loads. [Click here for a writing example](#) and [here for a math example](#).

We've heard concerns that providing a model reduces the rigor of an assignment. We would counter that while demystifying a teacher's expectations does make the task less difficult for a student, it in no way makes it less complex as long as the model cannot be copied. In fact, great models enable students to jump to the heart of the work instead of spending precious mental energy and time on figuring out what a teacher is asking them to do.

Effective modeling is arguably the most straightforward of scaffolds and requires the least amount of customization for individual students. And like many scaffolds, effective modeling helps all students—not just ELs. For any students who struggle, it provides crucial access that can make the difference between frustration and success.

### **What is Teaching method?**

All methods include prescriptions for the teacher and the learners. In the meanwhile all methods are a pre-packaged set of specifications of how the teacher should teach and how the learner should learn derived from a particular theory of language and a theory of language learning. For the teacher, methods prescribe

what materials and activities should be used, how they should be used and what the role of the teacher should be. • For learners, methods prescribe what approach to learning the learner should take and what roles the learner should adopt in the classroom.

### **The Need for Various Methods**

Very often, students learning a foreign language come from many different backgrounds, countries of origin, and educational preparation. To be a successful foreign language teacher, must keep this foremost in mind and adapt your foreign language teacher methodologies to this effect. You must also consider that a foreign language is taught with various goals in mind.

The teacher of a foreign language in a high school or college is teaching with specific goals towards writing exams, the results of which will testify general knowledge of the foreign language. An ESL teacher of adult students needs to use different methods in order to assist immigrant students to achieve the goal of being able to socialize in their new environment, to deal with everyday needs of health, banking and shopping, and to find employment. The private tutor, who is teaching an individual or a group of individuals whose goals are to travel on vacation or business purposes, will need yet a different approach.

### **3 Grammar Translation Method**

Traditional way of teaching Latin and Greek. In the 19th century used to teach French, German and English. Typical lesson consisted of a) presentation of grammatical rule, b) specially written text that demonstrated the rule, c) list of new words, d) translation exercises, e) grammar exercises. Emphasis on learning to read and write. Vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words. Long, elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given. Medium of instruction was the mother tongue. No provision for the oral use of language. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.

### **Direct Method: Early 1900's**

Posited by Charles Berlitz Second language learning is similar to first language learning. • Emphasis on: – oral interaction, – spontaneous use of language, – no translation, – little if any analysis of grammatical rules and structures. Classroom instruction was conducted in the target language. There was an inductive approach to grammar. Only everyday vocabulary was taught. Concrete vocabulary was taught through pictures and objects. Abstract vocabulary was taught by association of ideas. New teaching points were introduced orally. Communication skills were organized around question-answer exchanges between teachers and students.

Speech and listening comprehension were taught. Correct pronunciation and grammar were emphasized.

### **The Audiolingual Method (1950's)**

Outbreak of the World War II: – Heightened the need to become orally proficient. – “The Army Method” (an oral-based approach to language learning). Influenced by structuralism and behaviorism: – Identify the grammatical structures and the basic sentence patterns. – Practice these patterns by systematic attention to pronunciation and intensive oral drilling. New material is presented in dialogue form. There is dependency on mimicry, memorization of set phrases, and overlearning. By constant repetition the learner develops habits. Language learning is seen as acquiring a set of appropriate mechanical habits; errors are not accepted because they lead to the development of bad habits. The role of the teacher is to develop good language habits. There is little or no grammatical explanation. Grammar is taught inductively. Great importance is attached to pronunciation. Very little use of the mother tongue by teachers is permitted. Successful responses are reinforced. There is great effort to get students to produce error free utterances.

### **Community Language Learning Method**

This methodology created by Charles Curran is not based on the usual methods by which languages are taught. Rather the approach is patterned upon counseling techniques and adapted to the peculiar anxiety and threat as well as the personal and language problems a person encounters in the learning of foreign languages. Consequently, the learner is not thought of as a student but as a client. The native instructors of the language are not considered teachers but, rather are trained in counseling skills adapted to their roles as language counselors. The language-counseling relationship begins with the client's linguistic confusion and conflict. The aim of the language counselor's skill is first to communicate an empathy for the client's threatened inadequate state and to aid him linguistically. Then slowly the teacher-counselor strives to enable him to arrive at his own increasingly independent language adequacy. This process is furthered by the language counselor's ability to establish a warm, understanding, and accepting relationship, thus becoming an "other-language self" for the client.

### **Communicative Method**

The communicative approach is the most widely used and most widely accepted approach to classroom-based foreign language teaching today, and in many ways, is a culmination of those approaches and methodologies that appeared before. It emphasizes the learner's ability to communicate various functions, such as asking and answering questions, making requests, describing, narrating and comparing. Task assignment and problem solving—two key components of critical thinking—are the means through which the communicative approach operates. Unlike the direct method, grammar is not taught in isolation. Learning happens in context; detailed error correction is de-emphasized in favor of the theory that students will

naturally develop accurate speech through frequent use. Students develop fluency through communicating in the language rather than by analyzing it. A communicative classroom includes activities through which students are able to work out a problem or situation through narration or negotiation, and thus establish communicative competence. Thus some activities might include composing a dialogue in which the participants negotiate when and where they are going to eat dinner, creating a story based on a series of pictures or comparing similarities and differences between two pictures.

### **Task-based Learning Method**

Task-based learning, a refinement of the communicative approach, focuses on the completion of specific tasks through which language is taught and learned. Language learners use the language that they know to complete a variety of assignments, acquiring new structures, forms and vocabulary as necessary. Little error correction is provided. In this type of learning environment, three- to four-week segments are devoted to a specific topic: ecology, security, medicine, religion, youth culture, etc. Students learn about a specific topic, step-by-step, using a variety of resources, with each unit culminating in a final project such as a written report or presentation. Activities are similar to those found in a communicative classroom, but they are always based around a single, specific theme.

### **The Reading Method**

This approach is selected for practical and academic reasons. For specific uses of the language in graduate or scientific studies. The approach is for people who do not travel abroad for whom reading is the one usable skill in a foreign language. The priority in studying the target language is first, reading ability and second, current and/or historical knowledge of the country where the target language is spoken. Only the grammar necessary for reading comprehension and fluency is taught. Minimal attention is paid to pronunciation or gaining conversational skills in the target language. From the beginning, a great amount of reading is done in L2, both in and out of class. The vocabulary of the early reading passages and texts is strictly controlled for difficulty. Vocabulary is expanded as quickly as possible, since the acquisition of vocabulary is considered more important than grammatical skill. Translation reappears in this approach as a respectable classroom procedure related to comprehension of the written text.

### **Functional Notional Method**

This method of language teaching is categorized along with others under the rubric of a communicative approach. The method stresses a means of organizing a language syllabus. The emphasis is on breaking down the global concept of language into units of analysis in terms of communicative situations in which they are used. Notions are meaning elements that may be expressed through nouns,

pronouns, verbs, prepositions, conjunctions, adjectives or adverbs. The use of particular notions depends on three major factors: a. the functions b. the elements in the situation, and c. the topic being discussed. A situation may affect variations of language such as the use of dialects, the formality or informality of the language and the mode of expression. Situation includes the following elements:

- A. The persons taking part in the speech act
- B. The place where the conversation occurs
- C. The time the speech act is taking place
- D. The topic or activity that is being discussed

### **Immersion Method**

Full Immersion is difficult to achieve in a foreign language classroom, unless you are teaching that foreign language in the country where the language is spoken, and your students are studying all topics in the target language. This would mean your students are truly immersed in the language as well as the culture for twenty-four hours a day. For example, ESL students have an immersion experience if they are studying in an Anglophone country. In addition to studying English, they either work or study other subjects in English for a complete experience. Attempts at this methodology can be seen in foreign language immersion schools, which are becoming popular in certain school districts in the United States, and in bilingual education settings. The challenge with the former structure is that, as soon as the student leaves the school setting, he or she is once again surrounded by the native language. Every word is carefully annotated so that learners have plenty of support (if they need it). You can even click on a word to see how it's used in other videos across the site. Perhaps the most interesting part of Fluent U is its "learn mode," which takes videos and turns them into language learning lessons. The lessons are fully personalized, so the student's learning history is taken into account when presenting questions. FluentU's algorithm sets students up for success by teaching them based on what they already know.

### **Discussion Method**

Discussion methods are a variety of forums for open-ended, collaborative exchange of ideas among a teacher and students or among students for the purpose of furthering students thinking, learning, problem solving, understanding, or literary appreciation. Participants present multiple points of view, respond to the ideas of others, and reflect on their own ideas in an effort to build their knowledge, understanding, or interpretation of the matter at hand. Discussions may occur among members of a dyad, small group, or whole class and be teacher-led or student-led. They frequently involve discussion of a written text, though discussion can also focus on a problem, issue, or topic that has its basis in a "text" in the larger sense of the. Other terms for discussions used for pedagogical purposes are

instructional conversations A defining feature of discussion is that students have considerable agency in the construction of knowledge, understanding, or interpretation. In other words, they have considerable “interpretive authority” for evaluating the plausibility or validity of participants responses.

### **Flipped Classrooms Method**

Broadly, the flipped classroom label describes the teaching structure that has students watching pre-recorded lessons at home and completing in-class assignments, as opposed to hearing lectures in class and doing homework at home. Teachers who implement the flipped classroom model often film their own instructional videos, but many also use pre-made videos from online sources. A key benefit of the flipped classroom model is that it allows for students to work at their own pace if that is how the teacher chooses to implement it. In some cases, teachers may assign the same videos to all students, while in others, teachers may choose to allow students to watch new videos as they master topics (taking on a more “differentiated” approach). But despite this potential for more student-centeredness, flipped classroom models are still mostly based on a teacher’s idea of how learning should happen and what information students need, making it chiefly teacher-centered. From a technology perspective, the system hinges on pre-recorded lessons and online activities, meaning both students and teachers need a good internet connection and devices that can access it.

### **Kinesthetic Learning Method**

Sometimes known as tactile learning" or "hands-on learning", kinesthetic learning is based on the idea of multiple intelligences , requiring students to do, make, or create. In a kinesthetic learning environment, students perform physical activities rather than listen to lectures or watch demonstrations. Hands-on experiences, drawing, role-play, building, and the use of drama and sports are all examples of kinesthetic classroom activities. Though a great way to keep students engaged and, at times, simply awake, very few classrooms employ kinesthetic learning activities exclusively. One reason is that, despite the popularity of learning style theories, there is a lack of researched-based evidence that shows that teaching to certain learning styles produces better academic results .One upside is that kinesthetic learning is rarely based on technology, as the method values movement and creativity over technological skills. That means it’s cheap and fairly low-barrier to adopt, as well as a welcome break from students’ existing screen time. Kinesthetic learning can be more student-centered than teacher-centered when students are given the choice of how to use movement to learn new information or experience new skills, so it’s also adaptable to a teacher’s particular classroom preferences.

### **Personalized Learning Method**

Personalized learning refers to instruction in which the pace of learning and the instructional approach are optimized for the needs of each learner. Learning objectives, instructional approaches, and instructional content (and its sequencing) all may vary based on learner needs. In addition, learning activities are meaningful and relevant to learners, driven by their interests, and often self-initiated. «In other words, personalized learning includes pieces of all of the four approaches listed below, along with an element of learner agency (i.e., students are involved, in some degree, in the decision-making process related to their learning). When implemented correctly, personalized learning experiences will feel relevant to students based on their instructional needs and personal interests.

### **Game-based Learning Method**

In a game-based learning environment, students work on quests to accomplish a specific goal (learning objective) by choosing actions and experimenting along the way. As students make certain progress or achievements, they can earn badges and experience points, just like they would in their favorite video games. Game-based learning requires a lot of time and planning on the teachers' part. Fortunately, there is software that makes this process much easier. Because teachers play a big role in planning and creating content under this model, game-based learning isn't completely student-centered. But it is still very much focused on the student, who works at their own pace and makes independent choices in a game environment.

### **Inquiry-based Learning method**

Based on student investigation and hands-on projects, inquiry-based learning is a teaching method that casts a teacher as a supportive figure who provides guidance and support for students throughout their learning process, rather than a sole authority figure. Teachers encourage students to ask questions and consider what they want to know about the world around them. Students then research their questions, find information and sources that explain key concepts and solve problems they may encounter along the way. Findings might be presented as self-made videos, websites, or formal presentations of research results. Inquiry-based learning falls under the student-centered approach, in that students play an active and participatory role in their own learning. But teacher facilitation is also extremely key to the process. Usually, during the inquiry cycle, every student is working on a different question or topic. In this environment, teachers ask high-level questions and make research suggestions about the process rather than the content. At the end of the inquiry cycle, students reflect on the experience and what they learned.

### **Dialogue Method**

DIALOGUE refers to the mutual exchange of experience, ideas and opinions between two or more parties; i.e., a conversation. Dialogue is two-way or multi-

way communication. It presumes the opportunity to reply on several occasions in order to enhance a line of reasoning. The dialogue concept contains a dimension of simultaneity and direct contact, either physical or via technical aids. In other words, the concept of dialogue has a somewhat deeper implication than information and communication.

### **Standard English**

Standard variety is the variety of a language which has the highest status in a community or nation and which is usually based on the speech and writing of educated native speakers of the language. A standard variety is generally used in the news, media and in literature; described in dictionaries and grammars; taught in school and taught to non-native speakers when they learn the language as a foreign language. A standard variety may contain some variation in pronunciation according to the part of the country where it is spoken, e.g. Standard British English in Scotland, Wales, Southern England. Standard English is sometimes used as a cover term for all the national standard varieties of English. These national standard varieties have differences in spelling, vocabulary, grammar, and particularly pronunciation, but there is a common core of the language. This makes it possible for educated native speakers of the various national standard varieties of English to communicate with one another. British English The British accept and enjoy the class distinctions. And these class distinctions influence people's speech greatly. The way English is spoken helps to identify not only the region that one lives in, but the class status too. Since the days of Shakespeare the English of South-East England has been considered "the standard", and by the way the South-East is the region of economic and political power. Many people in England possess so called Received Pronunciation (RP), derived from the public school system attended by the boys from rich families. RP remains the accent of the elite. There are two kinds of RP. One is "unmarked" RP, which suggests no more that the speaker is well educated. This is the dialect of the BBC. Through radio and television "unmarked" RP is becoming more and more widely spoken accent. Then there is "marked" RP, which indicates high social class and is spoken by many army officers who come from upper class families. Although spoken by less than 5% of the population, RP has great influence and social authority. Regional accents are also often spoken in Britain. Scottish, Welsh and Irish are generally the most popular regional accents. Then come Northern and West country accents and then - the least popular urban accents of London, Liverpool, Glasgow. It is interesting to notice that the television news is usually read by RP speakers, while the weather forecast following the news is often read by someone with a regional accent. The American English English in the USA differs considerably from British English. Pronunciation is the most striking difference but there are also a number of differences in vocabulary and spelling as well as slight differences in grammar. On the whole British people are exposed to a lot of American English on TV, in films, in literature and so they will usually understand most American vocabulary. Examples: British: colour, centre, practice. American: color, center, practise. But American English and British English are not too separate languages. It is one

language in different variations. American English is not the only special variety of English. Each area of the English-speaking world has developed its own special characteristics, its own vocabulary and pronunciation characteristics. Australian English Australian English is particularly interesting for its rich store of highly colloquial words and expressions. Australian colloquialism often involves shortening a word. Sometimes the ending "ie" is changed into "o". Instead of "smokie" they say "smoko". Instead of "beautiful" they often say simply "beaut". Because of current popularity of Australian TV-programs and films some of these words are now being used by British people, too. Scottish English Scottish English uses a number of special dialect words. For example lake - loch; mountain - ben; church - kirk; to remember - to mind; beautiful - bonny; to live - to stay; a girl - lassie; no - ken.

## **COLLOQUIALISM**

The word “colloquialism” comes from the Latin colloquium, which means a “conference” or “conversation.” As a literary device, colloquialism refers to the usage of informal or everyday language in literature. Colloquialisms are generally geographic in nature, in that a colloquial expression often belongs to a regional or local dialect. They can be words, phrases, or aphorisms. Native speakers of a language understand and use colloquialisms without realizing it, while non-native speakers may find colloquial expressions hard to translate. This is because many colloquialisms are not literal usages of words, but instead idiomatic or metaphorical sayings.

### **Differences between Colloquialism, Slang, and Jargon**

Colloquialism can be confused with slang and jargons, since these are two other ways of conversing in informal ways. The difference is that slang words are used in specific social groups, like teenagers, whereas colloquialisms can generally be understood across age and socioeconomic barriers as long as the speakers are all from the same geographic region. Colloquialisms may use slang within them, but this is not always the case. Similar to slang, jargon is used only by certain groups, but it often refers to words used in a particular profession. For example, the way in which lawyers speak is so specific to their profession that it is often known as “legalese.” Other professions that rely on exchanging complex information also use jargon, such as scientists, doctors, and businesspeople.

## **ENGLISH IDIOMS**

English idioms, proverbs, and expressions are an important part of everyday English. They come up all the time in both written and spoken English. Because idioms don't always make sense literally, you'll need to familiarize yourself with the meaning and usage of each idiom. That may seem like a lot of work, but learning idioms is fun, especially when you compare English idioms to the idioms in your own language. Learning to use common idioms and expressions will make your English sound more native, so it's a good idea to master some of these

expressions. The tables below are organized by how common the idioms are in American English. You can start by learning the very common English idioms, since these are the ones you'll encounter regularly watching American movies or TV, or visiting the United States. When you've mastered those, move on to rest. None of the idioms on this page are unusual or old fashioned, so you can be confident using any of them with native English speakers from all English-speaking countries.

### **Difference Between Idiom and Expression**

Every country, state, region, or location has their own versions or variations of slang words. If you hear idioms or idiomatic expressions that you're not familiar with, chances are you will not be able to understand the meaning behind these words or phrases. The problem with idioms is that you won't understand them unless the speaker tells you what they really mean. Idiomatic phrases that have been used over the years like: "Back to Square One" (Start all over again) is now understood by almost everyone. The meanings of these popular idioms had not changed through the passing of time, and it makes these phrases easier to understand. Although there are some idioms that have different meanings, most idioms that are used today still retain their original definitions. An expression, on the other hand, is sharing your views or ideas through speech, facial features, and even with the use of body language. An expression that is used as a phrase will help the listener see the words as the speaker sees them and understands them the way they do. In short, an expression is a method that the speaker uses to convey their message in a manner that will be understood by the receiver. In expressions, one's message will be easier to understand compared to an idiom which can have many meanings.

### **Idiomatic Expressions**

Idiomatic expressions are groups of words with an established meaning unrelated to the meanings of the individual words. Sometimes called an expression, an idiom can be very colorful and make a 'picture' in our minds. Some common idiomatic expressions: He let the cat out of the bag (accidentally told a secret). She got off Scott-free (escaped without punishment). He flew off the handle (went crazy). We love idiomatic expressions and idiomatic phrases in English, don't we? From an English language-learner's point of view, they are the **'icing on the cake'** much like phrasal verbs. But how do we remember what they mean and how to use them?

### **Formal and informal English**

We use formal language in situations that are serious or that involve people we don't know well. Informal language is more commonly used in situations that are more relaxed and involve people we know well. Formal language is more common when we write; informal language is more common when we speak. However,

there are times where writing can be very informal, for example, when writing postcards or letters to friends, emails or text messages. There are also examples where spoken English can be very formal, for example, in a speech or a lecture. Most uses of English are neutral; that is, they are neither formal nor informal. Formal language and informal language are associated with particular choices of grammar and vocabulary. Contractions, relative clauses without a relative pronoun and ellipsis are more common in informal language.

### **Articles in set expressions**

Articles in set expressions often do not follow the rules of the use of articles. The list below illustrates the use of articles in common set expressions. For your convenience, set expressions are divided here into three groups according to the article that is used in them: the definite article "the"; the indefinite article "a/an"; without any article. Of course, it is much more logical to group set expressions according to their meaning or according to the main word in them. Most of the set expressions in the list below are described more fully in the section idioms This material just gives examples of article use in frequently used set expressions. Set expressions should be learned by heart.

### **Word Order**

**Word order** is important: it's what makes your sentences make sense! So, proper word order is an essential part of writing and speaking—when we put words in the wrong order, the result is a confusing, unclear, and an incorrect sentence.

### **Standard Word Order**

A sentence's standard word order is **Subject + Verb + Object (SVO)**. Remember, the **subject** is what a sentence is about; so, it comes first. For example:

The dog (subject) + eats (verb) + popcorn (object).

The subject comes first in a sentence because it makes our meaning clear when writing and speaking. Then, the verb comes after the subject, and the object comes after the verb; and that's the most common word order. Otherwise, a sentence doesn't make sense, like this: Eats popcorn the dog. (verb + object + subject)

### **Types of Phrases**

**Phrase** is such a banal term for two or more words that convey an idea that it may surprise you that there are seven types of phrases, with variations. Here, with pertinent phrases in sample sentences formatted in boldface, is a rundown of the categories: An absolute phrase is a modifying parenthetical or subordinate phrase of a root sentence that includes a subject but does not have an acting verb so cannot stand on its own as sentence: "Their effort to regain the lead successful, the team continued to score until they pulled ahead by a wide margin." Appositive Phrase An appositive phrase is one that restates a preceding term, or expands or

explains it, in a parenthetical statement. There are three variations of appositive phrases: “Her dog, a bull mastiff, looks ridiculous with a pink bow stuck to her head” features a noun phrase. “His favorite hobby, knitting, is rather unusual for a man” includes a gerund phrase. “The Tahitian’s ambition, to become an ice skater, is unexpected” has an infinitive phrase.

### **Gerund Phrase**

A gerund phrase includes a verbal, a hybrid that functions as a noun (or adjective). There are three distinct functions: “**Juggling knives** is not recommended as a relaxation technique” includes a gerund phrase as the subject of the sentence. “I’m **going for a long walk off a short pier**” features a gerund phrase as the sentence’s object. “She’s saving up for **a vacation in Antarctica**” has a gerund phrase as the object of a preposition.

### **Noun Phrase**

A noun phrase consists of a person, place, or thing and any modifiers: “This is a grammar lesson.” It may include one or more adjectives (as grammar modifies lesson here). It might include a noun and a modifying clause: “This is a lesson that explains the various types of phrases.” It might take the form of one of three other types of phrase: infinitive, participial, and prepositional. (The infinitive phrase is discussed above, and the latter two types are described below.)

Many noun phrases are continuous; they consist of words in sequence. However, a noun phrase may be discontinuous, meaning that it is broken up into more than one element: “This lesson is one that explains the various types of phrases.”

### **Participial Phrase**

A participial phrase consists of verbals ending in -ing or -ed, or another irregular form of a verb, and serves as an adjective: The participial phrase in “**Having been lied to before**, I was wary” modifies the word I. The phrase may be parenthetical within a sentence, too: In “You, **knowing what you now know**, are in a better position to judge,” the participial phrase modifies the word you.