



Learning tips: Strategies for Learning English

Grammar: Nobody's perfect

- We all learn by making mistakes, so don't worry about them, learn from them!
- Don't learn by translating into German or by trying to follow complicated theoretical grammar rules. Instead, learn useful model sentences by heart. For example, learn the sentence: „*I've been working for this company since (plus the year when you started)*“. Then you will always use this sentence correctly and you have a pattern that you can use when you want to make other similar sentences. Underline the difficult parts of each sentence and concentrate on them.
- Also try not to translate word for word. Instead, translate sentence for sentence. "Ich kenne ihn seit Jahren" is not "I know him since years" in English. You must say "I have known him for years". Here you must consciously create a new pattern and learn it by heart so that you can use this pattern correctly.
- Be careful! Not every German word that seems to be an English word has the same meaning in English. For example, the German word "Handy" is a mobile phone in Britain and a cell phone in the USA but not a handy. And a "Flat" in German is a flat rate for your phone but in English "a flat" is either "eine Wohnung" or "ein platter Reifen" but not a flat rate. Keep a list of these *false friends* and learn them carefully so that you do not embarrass yourself (*Blame* is not the same as *blamieren!*).

At work**Copy emails from native speakers into a special email file**

You can use these emails to make files of phrases and vocabulary that you can use when you write emails in English. But be careful! Do not thank a customer for making a complaint! You must always know what you are writing and make sure that the sentences that you use fit appropriately into the context of your email. And remember, even native speakers make language mistakes! The best way to check is to go to your Intercom English lesson and ask your trainer to check your writing and your language files.

In the car**Listen to the words of your favourite songs**

On the internet, for example at www.lyrics.com, you can download and print out the words to your favourite songs. Learn the songs by heart and sing them out loud, and at the next karaoke evening you'll be the star. After all, "Practice makes perfect!" Of course, if you have nice neighbours, you can sing in the shower too. The car is also a good place to listen to an audio book. Podcasts can be downloaded on almost any subject that interests you. You can put these on your I-pod and listen to them in your car or almost anywhere.

At the Supermarkt**Look at the labels**

These days you can find English everywhere. While you are queuing at the supermarket, you can read the English labels on the packets to see what each product contains. There are usually translations in different languages so it is easy to know what each word means. You can also practice your English maths skills while you add up the prices of the products in your trolley.

At Home**Put post-its everywhere**

Write a word on a post-it and stick it onto the thing that it describes. Or make a short list of words (not more than 7) that you want to learn and stick the list on the wall in a strategic place - in the toilet, on the bathroom mirror, on the fridge, or near the front door. When you know these words, just replace the list with a new one.

In the Kitchen**Cook with an English cookbook**

Buy an English cookbook, for example the American classic "Joy of Cooking" by Rombauer/ Rombauer-Becker ISBN 0-02-604570-2. Or buy the English edition of a cookbook by Jamie Oliver. You can learn a lot about food and English measurements and at the same time, you can entertain your friends. Or on New Year's Eve why don't you cook the four-course meal from "Dinner for One": Mulligatawny Soup, North Sea Haddock, Roast Chicken and Fruit?

Homework, homework, homework**Help your kids with their English homework**

The best way to learn is to teach it to someone else. Help your kids with their homework and you will learn a lot too. Or ask your kids to help you learn your vocabulary. They will also enjoy playing the role of the teacher.

In Bed**Read a bedtime story**

Scientists say that people can remember things better that they read just before they fall asleep. Even if you don't have kids, you can still read a bedtime story. You can read alone or you can take turns reading aloud to your partner. After all, everyone likes Harry Potter. And if you don't, there are many more authors to choose from. If you don't want to read yourself and have no-one to read to you, you can listen to an audio book before (or while) you fall asleep.

On Holiday**Go on holiday to an English-speaking country**

English is spoken in many different countries, which is one reason for learning the language. Take your holidays in an English-speaking country this year and do all the planning for your trip in English. Go to English websites and print out the brochures in English. If you stay in bed-and-breakfast accommodation, you can save some money and meet some very interesting people as well.

Keep a travel diary

Do you have a diary, an electronic organizer or other hand held device for appointments? What happens to your it when you go on holiday? This time take it along and use it to keep a record in English of what you experience. What did you do where and with whom? Where did you stay? Which restaurants did you go to? What was the food like? Who did you meet? When you are back at work, you can relive your experiences in detail.

Read a book in English

There are many good bilingual editions of classical novels and short stories. One page is in English and on the opposite page, you can find the German translation. There are also so-called "Graded Readers" which are easier versions of more complicated novels. In addition, you can buy short novels that are written in both English and German. Langenscheidt, for example, offers

"Lernschmöker", where the story is written in German but the main character's contacts to an English-speaking country, including most of the dialogues between the main characters, are in English. These books contain exercises that are integrated into the story as well as a glossary of difficult words.

And speaking of difficult words, when you read a book in English, don't always look up every word in a dictionary. This will slow you down and take the fun out of reading. A good rule of thumb (Faustregel) is: Only look up a word in a dictionary, when you see it for the third time and still have no idea what it means. You can understand most words from their context and some words are too rarely used to be useful to you. But if you read a word three times, it is probably necessary to know it to understand the story and then it is time to open the dictionary.

Expand your vocabulary with your own flashcards:

- Write new words on cards.
- Write an example sentence on the back of each card but make sure the sentence is correct. Sometimes just doing this is enough to learn the word. Every day pull out a few cards with words that you want to learn.
- Look at the cards, first from front to back and then from back to front until you know them all.
- Or: Put the cards with the words that you know into the right pocket of your jacket and the cards with the words that you don't know into the left pocket. That way you know which words are difficult for you to learn and you can concentrate on them later.
- Organise your cards alphabetically or according to topic (emails, presentations, etc.) or language topics (grammar, false friends, etc.) Pens with different colours can help you to organise your cards, for example, blue for verbs and red for adjectives, etc.
- You can also record your words and phrases and listen to them in your car or on the beach or whenever you have a moment to yourself.

Learning more effectively:

- Repeat new vocabulary out loud, sometimes fast, sometimes slowly. It even helps if you put the words to a melody and sing them!
- Review your vocabulary regularly. Check the words

that you think you know a day later, a week later and a month later. Then you can be sure that you have them in your head.

- Learn with a partner. Practice your vocabulary together or just make a date to speak English together – in the car, on the bus or at lunch in the canteen.
- If you like to read, read your favourite author in English. You can also find books written partly in English and partly in German. If you prefer other media, watch British or American TV, for example BBC or CNN. Or watch a DVD in English, with or without subtitles. The more you read English or listen to it, the more you will understand.