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BEGINNERS'

Guide

TO LEARNING
LANGUAGES

**Learn how to easily pick up
any language within days**



BEGINNERS' *Guide* TO LEARNING LANGUAGES

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Introduction

When I was reading Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*, I promised myself I would 'treat myself to something beautiful' one day. This was something a Russian woman in Elizabeth's language class said when asked why she wanted to study the 'seductively beautiful' Italian language, and till today these words have stuck with me.

That is because, to me, learning a new language has always been something of a 'treat'; a luxury to indulge in while you eagerly explore the culture of foreign people within the meanings behind mouthwatering, new words. I've always believed that the only way you can successfully learn a new language is if you look at the learning process with a looking glass tinted with the colors of enthusiasm, love and passion.

To become fluent in the language of your choice, you have to enjoy tasting each delectable word that you add to your vocabulary, relish pronouncing it with all its fun intricacies and cherish the whole experience as a beautiful journey to undiscovered realms.

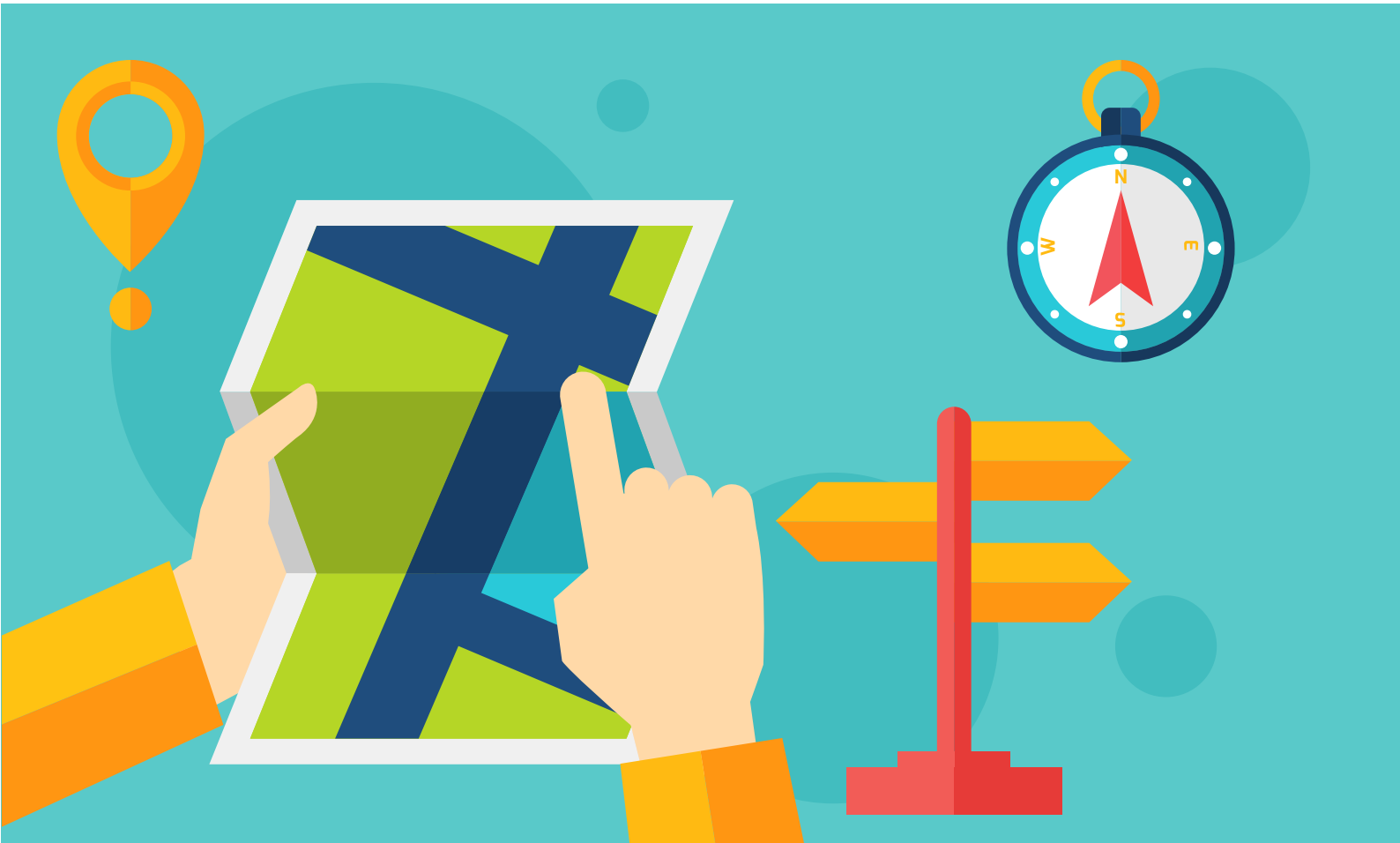
Apart from the right attitude, you will need several learning tools and a few practical tips and techniques to help you do well. Learning a new language is not as daunting a task as it may seem and all you really need are a few memorization techniques, good time management and an awareness of your end goal.

You probably want to learn a new language so you can build rapport with foreign business clients, interact with locals on a vacation or impress your French girl friend's parents. Don't let the prospect of messing up hold you back. It doesn't really matter if you make a few mistakes - it will only help break the ice and make the conversation light hearted. You're not aiming to be a master in linguistics, so don't take the learning process too seriously.

By the time you reach the end of this book, you will hopefully have found some incredibly useful techniques that will assure you how fun and easy learning a new language really is. Before going any further, I would advise you to grab a pen and paper or open the notes app on your smart phone so that you can jot down anything that you might find useful. Do this when studying a language too. Never underestimate the usefulness of taking notes in helping to boost the retentive power of your memory.

Now we can begin...

Where to start from



Once you've decided which language you want to learn, you will be faced with a glaring question - where do I start? Ideally, if you have the time, motivation and resources, you should plunge into a whole new world and travel to the country your chosen language is home to.

There is literally no substitute for immersing yourself in a new culture and interacting with native people in their vernacular. It will only make your entire learning experience more meaningful and memorable to say the least. However, not everyone can just hop on a plane and leave everything behind to learn a new language.

Practicality dictates that you find something close to your home, a language center that can act as a convenient retreat. You will be surprised to know that many foreign language classes are conducted in various institutions around the world so finding one in your city shouldn't be a problem.

Joining a class will expose you to all the resources you need in the best way possible - nothing is more motivating than being a part of a group of people who are as eager about something as you are.

If you are not too keen on joining a class you can always opt for self teaching. There are several language books you can find in a bookstore or online. I have mentioned a few helpful online resources towards the end of this book, which you can check out. The main aim of this book, however, is not to provide you with learning material but to introduce a handful of practical learning techniques.

These techniques will hopefully assist you in quickly grasping new words and help you in memorizing them with relative ease. While you might feel that joining a class or putting in significant hours of your time requires too much effort, you must remember that once you take the first step forward and cross your mental barriers, everything becomes easy. You will be surprised to see how much you can actually learn in just a few hours if you set your mind to it.

Set realistic goals



The first step towards overcoming the mental hurdles that stop you from undertaking what seems to be a challenging task, is to set yourself relevant, realistic and measurable goals. I have already discussed how your aim is not to be a linguistic professor, so setting a goal which entails achieving absolute perfection and complete fluency, would not be very relevant to your cause. You rather need to identify small, attainable goals which will push you to focus on the task at hand rather than Herculean objectives that will only de-motivate and intimidate you.

You can, for instance, aim to learn and memorize ten to fifteen words a day which isn't too

difficult a task. The number given is of course, just for explanation purposes as everyone has different capabilities. Since you will be making use of learning tools, you can set yourself a target of studying a certain number of pages a week and revising them over the weekend or you can aim to complete a few exercises at the end of each month to evaluate your progress. As you can see, these goals are closely linked to effective time management which we will discuss in detail in the following section.

Manage your time well



You probably do not want to spend hours poring over study material and feeling like you're studying for an exam. Learning a new language should be fun and exciting and not something that causes you stress and anxiety. In order to avoid feeling overwhelmed and stressed it is very important that you manage your time well.

Your end goal is probably something along the lines of being able to hold a decent conversation in the language you're aiming to learn. Therefore, it is imperative that you keep that in mind when preparing your study schedule and determining what topics you need to focus on within the time period you allocate for learning.

An effective time management technique to ensure complete focus and uninterrupted flow would be the 'pomodoro' technique. According to this technique, mental activity is enhanced when you divide your learning time into short intervals of traditionally 25 minutes each. These intervals are known as 'pomodori' which is an Italian word for tomatoes. This is because

the developer of this technique, Francesco Cirillo, used a tomato shape kitchen timer while studying in college.

These short study periods are to be spaced out evenly and separated by breaks of 3-5 minutes each. So basically, once you sit down to study, determine what needs to be accomplished by you that day and set the timer. Keep taking short breaks after every 25 minutes or so and record the learning outcomes of the pomodori, four of which form a set. After four pomodori, take longer breaks of 15-30 minutes so that your brain gets enough time to recharge itself.

The whole technique involves organizing your study material, making to do lists and recording your progress-elements which are essential to establishing a feeling of accomplishment and creating a visual picture of how close you get to your goals, one pomodoro at a time.

Be aware of the pareto principle



Let me introduce to you a very interesting concept here that will ensure you make the best use of your time with minimal effort and great results. While this sounds almost too good to be true it is actually possible. Have you heard of the Pareto principle? It is a tried and tested theory which proves that usually 80% of an outcome results from only 20% of the total effort put in toward it.

So when you're setting your goals and making your timeline, be sure to incorporate this principle. You can do this by giving priority to the goals that contribute most towards your final

outcome and that require the least amount of time to achieve. For instance, reading difficult comprehensions that might be included in your learning material, is not only irrelevant to your cause but is an arduous job that would take up an enormous amount of time. What is important here is prioritizing your objectives with regards to your ultimate goal. Let us look at a few hypothetical examples to illustrate this concept:

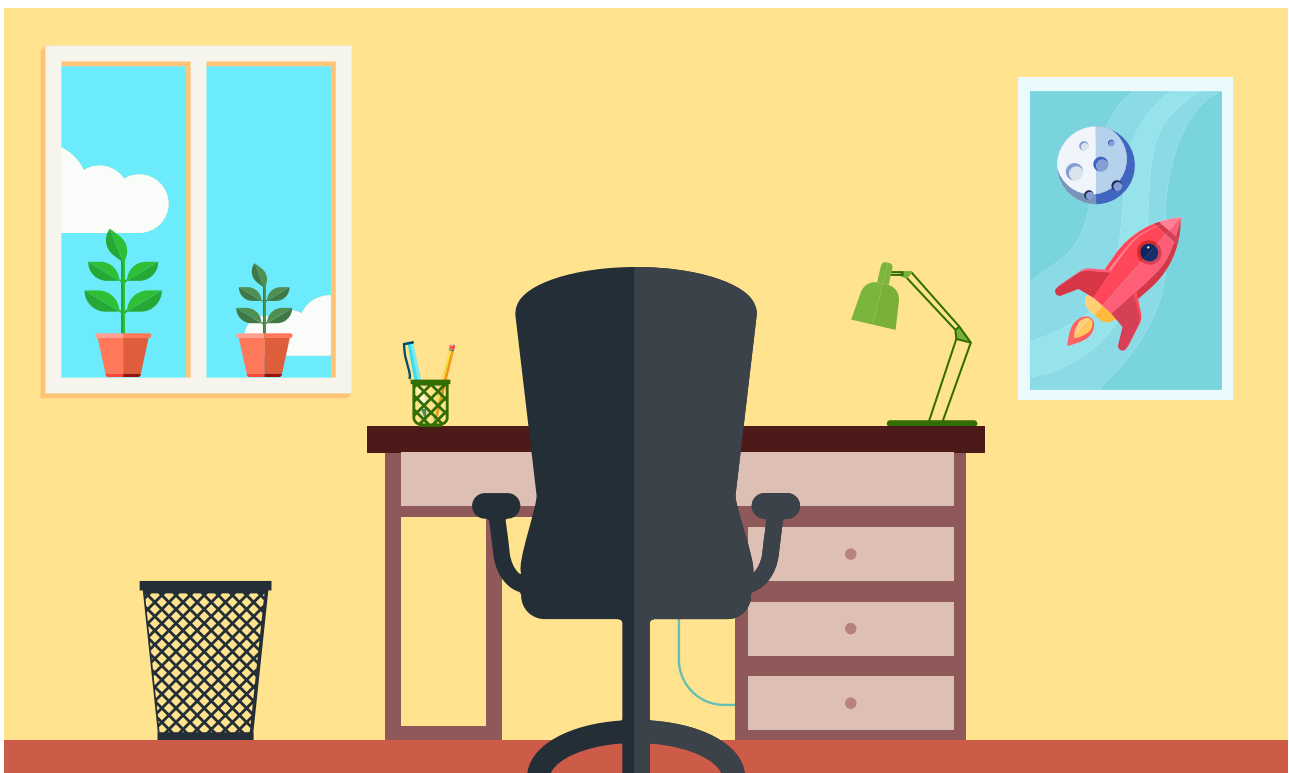
1. If your aim is to study Chinese for an upcoming business trip, focus your time and energy on learning business terminology and colloquial phrases for polite conversation.
2. If you're learning French to impress your love interest's family, dedicate your efforts towards learning a few jokes and charming phrases.
3. If you're learning Italian just because you want to, spend time learning words that will enable you to have a casual conversation and study literature or topics that interest you.

The basic advantage of identifying aspects that require the least effort and that contribute most towards your desired outcome, is that you can achieve a great deal without tiring yourself unnecessarily. Spending a lot of time on minute details and dedicating too many brain cells towards a difficult and irrelevant objective can be counter-productive and lead to mental exhaustion. So many people give up because they fall into the trap of aiming to do everything at once. Such a strategy causes them to become overwhelmed and overburdened, something that you must consciously choose to avoid. And it is the pareto principle that will help you here.

Make your learning experience fun

While it is important to be free of any distractions and have a clear focus on learning and memorization, the process doesn't have to be dull and boring. Here are a few examples of how you can make it fun and productive at the same time:

1. Create a motivating environment that's conducive to learning



One of the most difficult things about self learning is finding ways to motivate yourself. It is easy to lose sight of your vision and get distracted so it is of utmost importance that you create a motivational learning space for yourself. Do not underestimate the value of having a comfortable place to sit while being surrounded by posters and images that remind you of your goal.

If you're studying French, for instance, you could have a poster of the Eiffel Tower on the wall facing your seat. You can even have motivational quotations, uplifting lyrics and inspirational phrases on the walls, a lot of which should definitely be in the language you're learning. Not only will these aesthetic details uplift and inspire you they will leave a lasting impact; our brain has an incredible power of effectively processing and retaining visual information. Make your learning space a colorful, inspirational and relaxing place to be in.

2. Flash cards are the way to go



Nothing says fun and learning the way flash cards do. Really. Give it a try: Write important words on colorful flash cards with their meanings on the back and play a game with yourself by seeing how many meanings you can get right. This can be a great way to measure your periodical goals as well, making flash cards a go-to tool in the language learning process.

You can also use color association by using different colored flash cards for different themes. For example, you can write nouns on green cards, verbs on red cards, adjectives on blue cards etc.

The [App2Brain vocabulary trainer](#), by the way, is based on a similar concept. Try it out, it's addictive!

3. Find a Partner



Learning a new language doesn't have to be all about memorization. Since a large part of the process involves learning how to speak, what better way to achieve this end than practicing whatever you learn along the way with a language partner. This could be a friend, family member or spouse who has undertaken the same journey as you or it could even be an acquaintance who is fluent in the particular language.

You can also find a professional 'partner' online. Yes, there are many foreigners available to skype with you at an hourly rate and you can only imagine how much you can learn (and have fun!) by availing the services of one of these online instructors.

4. Think outside the box



Don't limit yourself to traditional methods of studying. There is a whole range of materials out there that can not only improve your vocabulary but provide you with a contextual insight.

How about reading a French poem, flipping through an Arabic news paper, listening to a Spanish song, watching a Turkish soap opera or going over an Italian restaurant's menu? These are just some of the interesting things you can do to widen your perspective and gain a more practical understanding of a particular language.

Memorizing and studying can only help you to a certain extent. At the end of the day, your true prowess will be determined by how you can apply that knowledge in a practical situation. Imagine the look on your French girl friend's face when you sweep her off her feet by reciting a romantic French poem in her honor or the impression you will leave on an Italian client when you order a meal in fluent Italian at a business dinner.

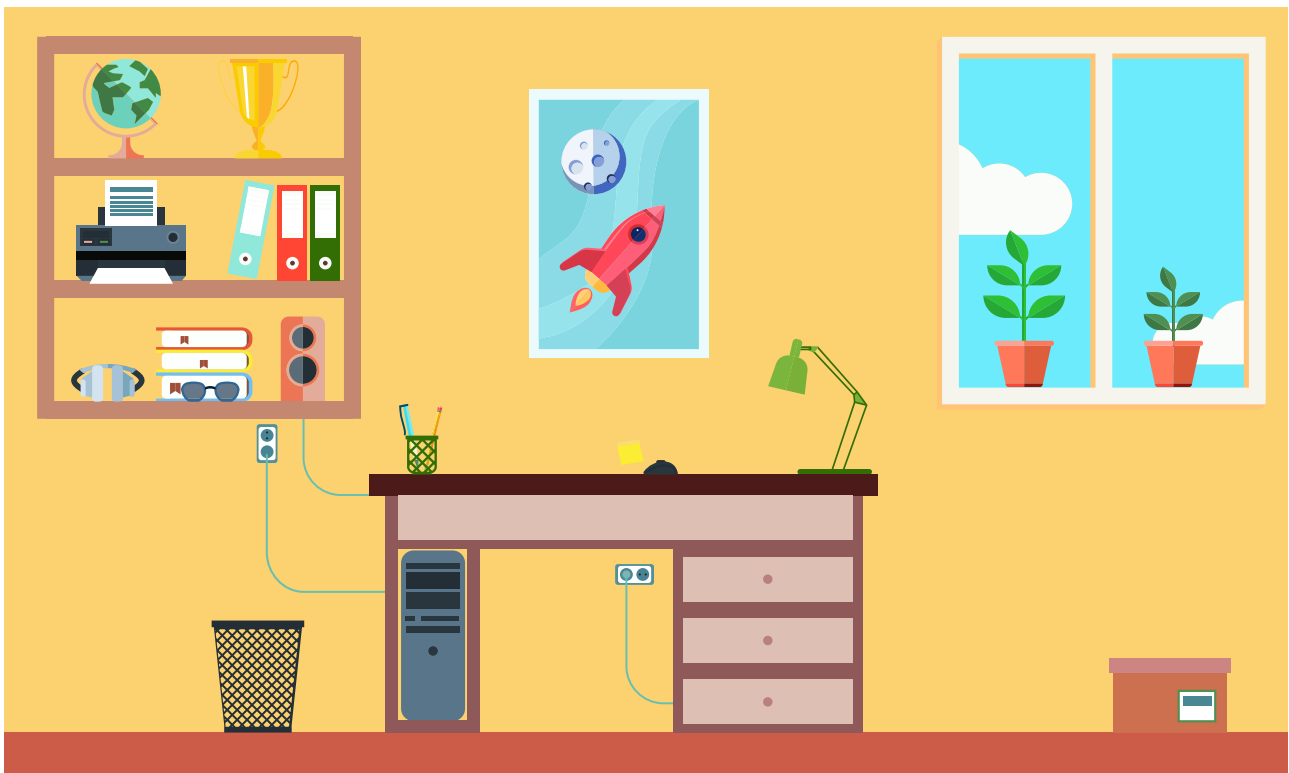
These are just some of the ways you can make learning a new language much more than a mental exercise. I am sure you can come up with many more methods to make your learning experience enjoyable.

Memorization Techniques

Apart from setting realistic goals, managing your time well and making the learning process fun and enjoyable, you also need to be aware of a few memorization techniques. This is extremely important and relevant as learning a new language requires a heavy reliance on the power of that computer inside your brain that retains information-your memory.

Here are a few techniques you can use to make sure you can remember and internalize as many words as possible.

1. The Method of Loci



An interesting memorisation technique called the Method of Loci can be very beneficial to language learners. By mentally associating certain words with certain places, vocabulary learning can become a much easier process for the many of us who struggle with long lists.

Close your eyes and visualise a familiar place: this could be your own home, your parents' home, your workplace, anywhere you know very well. Now walk into the first room and find places to 'put' your word. For example, if you were learning the word for 'suitcase', imagine placing the suitcase beside the couch and mentally repeating the foreign word for it.

Continue doing this inside the room with a few more words, and then proceed to the next room and repeat the process. Now, when you need to recall the words, you can make the visual journey into this well known place and retrieve the vocabulary from your memory.

2. The LinkWord technique



This technique is a very useful way to learn new foreign words, which are essentially a bunch of meaningless syllables strung together. In order to bring some sense to them, you can adopt this technique to associate each word with a word in your own language.

These associations can be made powerful by evoking strong visual ideas. Let us look at a few examples containing a foreign word, its meaning, and finally an association in English that will help us remember it.

- Nourriture- French word for food-the English word nourishment which is directly linked to food
- Bella- Italian word for beautiful-a pretty girl called Isabella
- Rouge- French word for red- a rogue looking guy proposes to his girlfriend with a red rose
- Caminar- Spanish word for walk-a photographer walks around a seminar hall clicking photos with his camera.

3. The town language mnemonic



This technique involves imagining a small village or town and associating objects you might find within it with an image that links to a foreign word you are aiming to learn. It would be helpful to dedicate certain areas for certain types of words. You can use the location of a park in the town to associate images within the park with adjectives. This is because adjectives such as green, tall, cold and beautiful can find great relevance here.

For example:

- Froid- French word for cold-the famous psychologist Freud shivering after dipping his feet in the cold pond at the park
- Piccolo- Italian word for small- small children sitting with their nanny in the park while she reads to them a story about Pinocchio
- Verde-Spanish word for green-at the far corner is a café with a verandah that opens up into the lush green of the park

Similarly, verbs can be associated with a sport centre, football field or gymnasium and nouns can be associated with locations in the town that easily evoke images associated with them.

- Lauf- German word for run - Players of a soccer team cracking jokes and laughing, as they run around the field.

- Bere- Italian word for drink- A person at the gym drinking a glass of berry shake after a tiring workout
- Jeter- French word for throw- Someone throws a javelin shaped like a jet plane
- Pestel- Spanish word for cake- Cup cakes decorated with icing in pastel colors at the town bakery.

4. The top 100 words



Tony Buzan wrote a book called 'Using your memory', in which he claimed that every language has around hundred words that contribute towards 50% of all words used in everyday conversation.

So, learning these commonly used words can get you a long way ahead. Apply this technique in relation to the pareto principle and you will be well on your way to achieving your goal without wasting precious time and effort.

Conclusion

I hope you found these learning techniques and tips helpful. As you can see, learning a language is not really that difficult once you set your mind to it. The initial task of actually deciding you want to do it and then taking that all important first step is the only thing that's stopping you. The actual process itself is simple, fun and stimulating to say the least and you have to try it to see what I'm talking about.

On App2Brain.com we've got lots of great stuff for you to start learning your language of choice, and most of it is for free. Check out our website and video recommendations to find more useful resources around the interwebs that will help you get started quickly on your language learning journey.

Good luck. Buona Fortuna. Bonne Chance. Buena Suerte.



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