

How People Actually Get Good at English

English learning resource · EN

Key words & expressions · English

15 learning entries

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

1

to get a feel for

DEF

to gradually develop an intuitive sense of something through experience, rather than through rules or analysis

Getting a feel for something is the difference between knowing rules and truly absorbing them. In language, you can know the rule for a comma but still need to get a feel for where sentences naturally breathe.

Shadowing helps you get a feel for the natural rhythm of English far faster than grammar study.

After a month of listening daily, she finally got a feel for how British speakers stress their sentences.

2

a solid foundation

DEF

a strong, well-built base that will support everything built on top of it; the essential basics done right

In language learning, a solid foundation is listening comprehension, core vocabulary, and pronunciation — the elements that must be strong before advanced skills can grow. Without it, fluency is unstable.

Ninety days of consistent daily practice can give you a solid foundation in English.

Don't skip the basics — they are your solid foundation, and everything else rests on them.

3

spaced repetition

DEF

a learning technique that reviews information at increasing intervals, optimising memory retention over time

Spaced repetition is one of the most evidence-backed vocabulary learning methods in existence. The idea: review a word after one day, then three, then a week, then a month. Your brain remembers best what it almost forgot. Apps like Anki are built on this principle.

Spaced repetition is the science behind the notebook habit — review what you know, but not all at once.

She used spaced repetition on her vocabulary and found that words she had known for a year were still perfectly accessible.

4

to immerse yourself

DEF

to surround yourself completely with a language or subject so it fills your daily life

True immersion does not require living abroad — it means arranging your daily environment so English is the default language of your leisure.

Immerse yourself by changing your phone and social media to English.

You don't need to travel abroad to immerse yourself — it can happen in your bedroom.



5

to engage with something

DEF

To give something your active attention and involvement.

More active than simply seeing or hearing it.

Engage with the sentence instead of repeating it mechanically.

Students engaged with the problem from several angles.

6

to come across

DEF

to be perceived or understood in a particular way by others; to create a specific impression

How we come across is different from who we are — and in a second language the gap is often wide. Learners often come across as formal, cold, or flat simply because they lack the vocabulary to project their real personality.

She has a great sense of humour, but in English she comes across as quite serious.

The goal is not perfect grammar — it is to come across the way you really are.

7

to keep going

DEF

to continue doing something despite tiredness, doubt, or difficulty — to not stop

Keep going is the simplest and most powerful instruction in language learning. Not keep going perfectly, not keep going when motivated — just keep going. Movement, even slow movement, beats stopping every time.

When everything feels too hard, just keep going — even one sentence a day is forward motion.

The only difference between learners who succeed and those who do not is that the successful ones kept going.

8

in context

DEF

encountered or used within a sentence or real situation rather than as an isolated item

In context is the essential qualifier for vocabulary learning. A word in context carries meaning, emotion, grammar, and pragmatics all at once. A word on a flashcard carries only a definition. Learning words in context is two to three times more effective than learning vocabulary lists.

Always learn a new word in context — read the full sentence it came from, not just the definition.

She stopped memorising word lists and started learning words in context, and retention improved dramatically.

9

to look something up

DEF

to search for information about a word, phrase, or topic in a dictionary, online, or another reference

Look something up is the fundamental research verb of language learning. You hear a word you do not know — you look it up. The habit of looking things up the moment you encounter them is one of the most efficient vocabulary-building strategies in existence.

Do not skip over words you do not know — look them up immediately while the context is fresh.

She looked up every word she did not understand and wrote it with a sentence in her notebook.



10

consistency

DEF

the quality of doing something regularly and in the same way, without large gaps or variations

Consistency is the most important variable in language learning — more than talent, intelligence, or the quality of resources. One hour a week is better than nothing; ten minutes a day is better than one hour a week. Consistent exposure beats occasional intensity.

Consistency beats intensity in language learning — show up every day, even for ten minutes.

Her English grew not because she worked hard occasionally, but because she was consistent without fail.

11

manageable

DEF

Difficult or substantial, but still possible to deal with or control.

Often describes work, costs, pain, schedules, tasks or problems.

The afternoon felt manageable.

The project looks manageable now.

12

meaningful

DEF

having real significance, purpose, or value — not artificial or empty

Meaningful practice is the opposite of drilling — instead of repeating sentences out of context, you use the language to express something you actually care about.

Meaningful communication is the fastest route to fluency — say real things to real people.

The most meaningful vocabulary is the vocabulary you use to talk about your own life.

13

to reinforce

DEF

to strengthen or support something, making it more likely to continue or be remembered

In learning: repeated exposure reinforces memory. In behaviour: rewards reinforce habits.

Listening twice reinforces what you've already understood.

Good habits need to be reinforced before they become automatic.

14

to compound

DEF

to grow or accumulate at an accelerating rate because each increment builds on what came before

Compound is borrowed from finance — compound interest grows exponentially, not linearly. Applied to habits and language, small daily improvements compound into dramatic long-term change. The 1% rule is a compounding argument.

Getting one percent better at English every day compounds into being thirty-seven times better by the end of the year.

The reason habits compound is that each small win raises the baseline from which the next improvement starts.



15

burnout

DEF

a state of chronic exhaustion caused by prolonged stress — physical, emotional, and mental depletion

Burnout is now widely used in English — it is the word for when decompressing is no longer enough and you need a complete stop. Knowing the word helps you recognise and name the experience before it gets worse.

Many language learners experience burnout if they push too hard without rest — the solution is prevention.

She recognised the signs of burnout early and took a week away from all English study.

