

Ask about English

Top Tips for Learning English



BBC WORLD SERVICE LEARNING ENGLISH



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A question from Hisham in Egypt:

Please, I want to improve my English. How can do it?

George Pickering answers:

Well Hisham, it's hard to give specific advice without knowing more about you so I'm going to give you some general advice which will maybe be of interest to other listeners and readers.

Point 1

Be clear about why you want to learn English. Do you want it for your job, to help you get a job, to talk to English speakers, to help you study?

Point 2

Be clear about how good you want your English to be. How good do you want to be at speaking English, listening, reading, writing?

Point 3

Have a clear image of yourself when you have achieved the proficiency that you want. What will you see, what will you hear, how will you feel?

Point 4

If possible, enrol on a language course. If you can't, put yourself in situations where you can use English which leads on to

Point 5

Look for opportunities to learn and use English. Speak English whenever you can. Listen to the radio and CDs in English, read and write in English. If you look for opportunities, you will find them.

Point 6

Write down new words and phrases in a notebook. Keep the notebook with you so you can look at it when you have a spare moment.

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Point 7

Practise, practise, practise. There's an expression in English. If you don't want to lose it, use it. This is very true when it comes to learning foreign languages.

Point 8

Find a learning buddy or colleague. Find someone you can learn English with. Speak with each other. Send each other messages in English.

Point 9

Learn little and often. Make it a habit to learn English ten minutes each day. This is much better than learning for longer once a week.

And the final point. At the beginning of a learning period, ask yourself, "What do I want to learn today?" At the end of a period, ask yourself, "What have I learnt today?"

There's a story about a teacher who told his students, "You know you're making progress in English when you speak in English, think in English, and dream in English.

One day a student came into the class very excited and said, "Teacher, Teacher, last night I dreamt in English." The teacher said, "That's wonderful. What did you dream about?" And the student said, "I don't know, it was in English."

Hisham, may you achieve your dream of learning English.

George Pickering is an educational coach, consultant and trainer. He is an associate tutor at the University of Sheffield, and a British Council inspector of language schools in the UK.

Audio available online at:

www.bbclearningenglish.com/radio/specials/1535_questionanswer