

Read the article from *The Guardian* and match headings A-L with their corresponding paragraph 1-9. 0 is an example

Learning a language -10 things you need to know

Thinking about learning a foreign language? Our multilingual experts share their tips.

0. *Example J*

You have decided to learn another language. Now what? On our recent live chat our panellists first piece of advice was to ask yourself: what do you want to achieve and by when? Donavan Whyte, vice president of enterprise and education at Rosetta Stone, says: "Language learning is best when broken down into manageable goals that are achievable over a few months. This is far more motivating and realistic." You might be feeling wildly optimistic when you start but aiming to be fluent is not necessarily the best idea. Phil McGowan, director at Verbmaps, recommends making these goals tangible and specific: "Why not set yourself a target of being able to read a newspaper article in the target language without having to look up any words in the dictionary?"

1.

It might sound obvious, but recognising exactly why you want to learn a language is really important. Alex Rawlings, a language teacher now learning his 13th language, says: "Motivation is usually the first thing to go, especially among students who are teaching themselves." To keep the momentum going he suggests writing down 10 reasons you are learning a language and sticking it to the front of the file you are using: "I turn to these in times of self-doubt."

2.

Often the discussion around how to learn a language slides into a debate about so-called traditional v tech approaches. For Aaron Ralby, director of Linguisticator, this debate misses the point: "The question is not so much about online v offline or app v book. Rather it should be how can we assemble the necessary elements of language for a particular objective, present them in a user-friendly way, and provide a means for students to understand those elements." When signing up to a particular method or approach, think about the substance behind the style or technology. "Ultimately," he says, "the learning takes place inside you rather than outside, regardless of whether it's a computer or book or a teacher in front of you."

3.

For many of our panellists, reading was not only great for making progress, but one of the most rewarding aspects of the learning experience. Alex Rawlings explains that reading for pleasure "exposes you to all sorts of vocabulary that you won't find in day-to-day life, and normalises otherwise baffling and complicated grammatical structures. The first book you ever finish in a foreign language is a monumental achievement that you'll remember for a long time."

4.

Memorising lists of vocabulary can be challenging, not to mention potentially dull. Ed Cooke, co-founder and chief executive of Memrise, believes that association is key to retaining new words: "A great way to build vocabulary is to make sure the lists you're learning come from situations or texts that you have experienced yourself, so that the content is always relevant and connects to background experience."

5.

You are a monolingual adult: have you missed the language boat? Ralby argues "a key language myth is that it's harder as an adult". Adults and children may learn in different ways but that shouldn't deter you from committing to learning another language. "Languages are simultaneously organic and systematic. As children we learn languages organically and instinctively; as adults we can learn them systematically." If you're still not convinced of your chances, Ralby suggests drawing inspiration from early philologists and founders of linguistics who "learned dozens of languages to encyclopaedic levels as adults".

6.

Speaking your first language may be second nature, but that doesn't necessarily mean you understand it well. Kerstin Hammes, editor of the Fluent Language Blog, believes you can't make good progress in a second language until you understand your own. "I think understanding your native language and just generally how language works is so essential before you launch yourself at a bunch of foreign phrases."

7.

Different approaches may be necessary at different stages of the learning process. Once you have reached a certain level of proficiency and can say quite a bit, fairly accurately, Rebecca Braun, senior lecturer in German studies at Lancaster University, says it is typical to feel a slowing down in progress. "Translation," she says, "is such an important exercise for helping you get over a certain plateau that you will reach as a language learner ... Translation exercises don't allow you to paraphrase and force the learner on to the next level."

8.

Many of the panellists were cautious of the F-word. Hammes argues not only is it difficult to define what fluency is, but "as a goal it is so much bigger than it deserves to be. Language learning never stops because it's culture learning, personal growth and endless improvement. I believe that this is where learners go wrong".

9.

It may not be an option for everyone but Braun reminds us that "if you are serious about learning the language and getting direct pleasure from what you have learned, you need to go to where that language is spoken". Travel and living abroad can complement learning in the classroom: "The books and verb charts may be the easiest way to ensure you expose yourself to the language at home, but the people and the culture will far outclass them once you get to the country where your language is spoken."

- A - Be prepared to go back in progress
- B - Find opportunities to practise the language
- C- Focus on exactly what you want to learn
- D - Ignore stereotypes
- E - It's not only about the second language
- F - Never ending process
- G - Read as a hobby
- H - Relate what your study to your own experience
- I - Remind yourself of what is driving you to learn English
- J - ~~Set realistic, specific objectives~~ Example 0
- K - Set up study groups to develop fluency
- L - What to do when you hit a wall in your progress



Photo: Holger Burmeister / Alamy in [The Guardian](#)