

Learning English

1 Before you read Work with a partner.

- How long have you been studying English?

2 Vocabulary Match the word with the correct meaning.

optimistic (adj)

in a matter of (idiom)

master (v)

a chunk (n)

motivation (n)

competent (adj)

a piece

able to do something / having enough skill

wanting to do something

to learn completely

to feel positive

only



3 Reading Quickly read the following text:



How difficult is it to learn English? The answer probably depends on the person you speak to. However, it's certainly pretty easy to get a good knowledge of the language for everyday business and conversation.

Language-learning is big business, with bookshops filled with book/CD packs which have optimistic titles promising fluency in a matter of months. But has anyone really succeeded in learning a language this way?

There is no big secret to improving your chances of successfully mastering a language. 'A little, often' seems to be the most common advice. The brain is, we are told, designed to take information in small chunks. Instead of spending all weekend studying lists of vocabulary, it's a better idea to study a few words every day. Carrying a small vocabulary notebook is a great way of doing this.

For some students, setting a goal is important. It could be an academic goal, such as passing an English examination. Alternatively, the goal might be the ability to order a meal in a restaurant entirely in English. Both are worthy aims, and can help students with motivation.

Students sometimes feel that they are not making a great deal of progress. For low-level learners, progress is obvious. For higher-level students, it's not so clear. A good way of checking progress is to look back at material previously studied. If you are able to understand it, you have probably made progress.

For students who are serious about becoming competent in English, regular reading is perhaps the answer. The key is reading for *pleasure*, rather than for study. It doesn't need to be heavy-looking newspaper articles, or thick novels. Instead, it's a great idea to choose reading materials on a topic of interest. It could be music, cars, computers – anything at all.

Whatever methods the student uses to improve progress, perhaps the greatest challenge is motivation, rather than the language itself.

4 Comprehension Are these sentences true or false? Correct the false ones.**According to the article...**

- 1) It's difficult to learn enough English to use in business and conversation.
- 2) It's a good idea to study English for a long time at weekends.
- 3) Carrying a vocabulary notebook with you is a good idea.
- 4) Setting goals can help with motivation.
- 5) Sometimes, students think they aren't improving.
- 6) The writer recommends reading serious articles in newspapers.

5 Collocations Can you link the two halves of these phrases?

- | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1) It's a good idea to set | newspaper article. |
| 2) Such as passing | aims. |
| 3) Both are worthy | studying vocabulary. |
| 4) Has anyone succeeded | a great deal of progress. |
| 5) Spend the weekend | a goal. |
| 6) Making | an English examination. |
| 7) A heavy-looking | in learning this way? |

6 Role Play Work with a partner.

- Student A:** You are studying English. You are worried that you are not making a great deal of progress.
- Student B:** You are a friendly English teacher. Offer Student A some advice on learning English.

7 Discussion Ask your partner(s) these questions. Ask follow-up questions!

- Do you think it's difficult to learn English?
- How does English compare to your mother tongue? Which do you think is more difficult to learn?
- Have you ever bought a self-help 'book/CD pack'? Did you make a great deal of progress?
- Do you agree with the advice given by the writer of the article?
- Can you think of some other advice for language learners?
- Do you have good study habits?
- Have you set any goals for learning English?
- Do you read anything in English outside the lessons?
- Your Ideas!

Learning English : Teacher's Notes

Target Structure:	Theme Lesson: Reading and Discussion
Vocabulary:	Language Learning
Level:	Intermediate
Time:	1 hour, depending on discussion
Preparation:	None

Suggested Teaching Method

This worksheet covers vocabulary, reading and discussion practice. Your students are bound to have an opinion on their progress in learning English. This worksheet gives them a chance to express their feelings, and explore ways of making more progress in the language.

① Give one worksheet to each student. Follow the instructions on the worksheet. This should be quite brief: the main discussion questions are at the end.

② In this exercise, encourage students to work out meaning based on context. Tell students to look for the words in the text and underline them *before* doing the vocabulary section. If necessary, explain the concept of scanning compared to detailed reading. A good example is a bus timetable – you look for a specific time, rather than read the timetable from top to bottom.

③ Set a time limit. Students should read the text at a brisk pace.

④ Put students into pairs. Students should read the comprehension questions, and go through the answers in pairs. If an answer is true, they should find the relevant text in the article.

If necessary, remind students that the answers here are based on the article, and not their own opinions. (That will come later in the lesson.)

⑤ Students should work in pairs. The phrases are all taken from the text. Students should not refer to the text to begin with. When students have finished, they can check their answers by looking at the text again.

Go through the answers with the class. If necessary, teach (and ask for additional example sentences) using some of the language in the collocation practice. (e.g. 'It's a good idea to [do something]' or 'spend time [doing something]').

⑥ Follow the instructions on the sheet. Place students in new pairs. Before beginning, brainstorm some ideas on ways to improve ways of learning English, including the methods mentioned in the text. You could also add some functional language for giving advice. (You should / How about / Why don't you / Have you tried etc.)

Monitor, but try not to interrupt. If there is time, reverse roles. Go through important errors with the group at the end.

⑦ Leave plenty of time for class discussion. To maximize student talking time, it's best to put students in pairs, or small groups. Students should read all the questions first, before beginning the discussion.

Encourage eye contact and follow-up questions. Some discussion phrases might also come in useful. On the board, write "I know what you mean.", "Yeah, but on the other hand.." and other such useful phrases, if you think it would be of benefit to your students.

While the students are speaking, monitor the conversations, but try not to interrupt. When the discussion comes to a close, ask a few of the questions yourself, and go through any points of English you made a note of while monitoring.

The answer key can be found on the next page.



Answer Key (Other answers may be possible.)

- 2
- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| optimistic (adj) | to feel positive |
| in a matter of (idiom) | only |
| master (v) | to learn completely |
| a chunk (n) | a piece |
| motivation (n) | wanting to do something |
| competent (adj) | able to do something / having enough skill |
- 4
- 1) It's difficult to learn enough English to use in business and conversation. **False.** *It's pretty easy.*
 - 2) It's a good idea to study English for a long time at weekends. **False.** *'A little, often' is better.*
 - 3) Carrying a vocabulary notebook with you is a good idea. **True.**
 - 4) Setting goals can help with motivation. **True.**
 - 5) Sometimes, students think they aren't improving. **True.**
 - 6) The writer recommends reading serious articles in newspapers. **False.** *Anything you're interested in is ok.*
- 5
- 1) It's a good idea to set a goal.
 - 2) Such as passing an English examination.
 - 3) Both are worthy aims.
 - 4) Has anyone succeeded in learning this way?
 - 5) Spend the weekend studying vocabulary.
 - 6) Making a great deal of progress.
 - 7) A heavy-looking newspaper article.

How are we doing?

Have you taught this lesson? We'd be pleased to hear some feedback on our worksheets.

Tell us how this lesson went by sending your comments to editor@handoutsonline.com.