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WAYS TO LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE FROM SCRATCH

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In the modern world, knowledge of a foreign language is no longer just a useful skill — it is a vital necessity. In the era of globalization and digital technologies, the borders between countries are becoming increasingly blurred: international companies are looking for employees with good knowledge of English, traveling without the local language proficiency can turn into a series of misunderstandings, and access to high-quality educational and scientific materials is often limited by the language barrier.

One of the key advantages of proficiency in a foreign language is the expansion of professional opportunities. In a competitive labor market, a person who is fluent in at least one foreign language is more likely to get a prestigious job, a high salary, and international business trips. Many large corporations, especially in the fields of IT, finance, and science, expect their employees to be at least proficient in English, and knowledge of a second foreign language becomes a serious advantage. Learning languages also has a positive effect on cognitive abilities. Research shows that multilingual people solve logical problems faster, concentrate better, and are less likely to experience age-related memory changes. The brain, which regularly switches between different language systems, becomes more flexible and trained. Also, an important advantage, of course, is cultural enrichment. Knowledge of the language allows you to better understand the traditions, way of thinking and history of another people. Literature, cinema, music and art in the original language are revealed from new angles, because no translation is able to convey all the shades of meaning and the author's intention and sometimes a translation can be misinterpreted. Learning a foreign language opens up access to new acquaintances and communication opportunities. In the age of social media and international conferences, being able to speak another language fluently allows you to make friends all over the world, participate in international projects, and feel confident in any country.

Despite the obvious advantages, the process of learning a language does not always go smoothly, and this will also be discussed in this article. Many beginners face difficulties that can slow down or even completely stop their progress.

Unsurprisingly, one of the most common problems is a lack of motivation. A person starts learning a language with enthusiasm, but after a few weeks or months they encounter the first serious obstacle: complex grammar, difficult to pronounce sounds, and the need to memorize a large number of words. Without a clear understanding of their goals and coping strategies, motivation fades, and the desire to learn a language is replaced by disappointment. There is also widespread fear — the fear of speaking. Many people are afraid of making a mistake, mispronouncing a word, or not understanding the other person. This leads to the so-called "language barrier", when a person accumulates knowledge, but does not use it in real communication. Fear of judgment or embarrassment in front of native speakers prevents free expression of thoughts. An equally serious problem is information overload and burnout. Modern technologies provide a huge number of resources for learning languages: mobile applications, online courses, textbooks, YouTube channels. However, because of this, beginners often cannot choose the appropriate method and clear strategy, jump from one source to another, and eventually fail to make steady progress. And of course, many people have difficulty remembering new words. Even if at the beginning of learning it seems that new expressions are easily assimilated, over time they begin to fade from memory. Without effective memorization techniques and regular repetition, vocabulary remains passive and is not used in speech. Lack of practice plays an important role. Even if a person has learned the grammatical rules and learned a lot of words, progress will be slow without constant communication in the language. Independent exercises and textbooks are useful, but without real communication, the learned constructions are quickly forgotten, and the level of language proficiency remains at the initial level.

There are many methods of learning a foreign language, and the choice of the appropriate one depends on the goals, time, and preferences of the student. The article will consider: the traditional method (textbooks, courses, tutors), self-learning using online resources and applications, the immersion method (immersion in language), communicative method, gamification and game learning methods

Before you start learning a language, it is important to define the purpose: what is it for? This is an important part of language learning, which will be the basis of the entire subsequent study plan. Some learn the language to advance their careers and work in international companies, while others learn it to travel, communicate with foreigners, or move to another country. A clear understanding of your motivation helps you not to give up learning with the first difficulties. To maintain interest, it is possible to introduce elements of gamification: set small goals (for example, learn 10 words a day), reward yourself for success and track progress. You can keep language diaries where new words and expressions are noted, as well as special tracker applications such as Duolingo or Anki (to be discussed in more detail below). Participating in language challenges (for example, "30 days without a native language") also adds a competitive element and helps you adapt faster. The main thing is not to overload yourself and study regularly, turning language into a part of everyday life so as not to catch burnout.

So, the immersion method is an active learning method involving elements of relaxation, suggestion, and play. Learning a language through immersion means completely surrounding yourself with the language you are learning. For school-age children, this could mean learning maths, science and other subjects through the medium of that language. For those of us not at school, it means living the language in our everyday lives. In a 2012 study looking at language acquisition, subjects were split into two groups. One group studied a language in a formal classroom setting, while the other was trained through immersive learning. After five months, both groups retained the language even though they had not used it at all, and both displayed brain processing similar to that of a native speaker. However, it was discovered that the immersion group displayed the full brain patterns of a native speaker, meaning they showed “native-like neural processing of syntax”. The reason why immersion learning really works is that it puts ones language learning in context. That’s why people who move to a new country appear to pick up a language at breakneck speed – they have to live, interact and carry out day-to-day tasks as normal... Except they are doing it in their new language.

The immersion method is considered one of the most effective ways to learn a foreign language, as it allows you to learn it in a natural way, close to how children learn their native language. One of the key elements of immersion is constant contact with language in everyday life. This can be achieved through watching movies and TV series without translation, starting with subtitles and gradually abandoning them. Music and podcasts in a foreign language also play an important role: regular listening helps you get used to the sound, rhythm and intonation, even if not all the words are clear the first time. Another important aspect is active participation in the language community. On social networks, chat rooms, and forums, you can find like-minded people learning the same language, or native speakers who are ready to help with practice. Platforms like HelloTalk, Tandem, and Slowly allow people to communicate with foreigners in text or voice format, and groups on Telegram, Discord, or Facebook help to discuss interesting topics and ask questions. The more language becomes a part of everyday communication, the faster the language barrier disappears, and the learning of new words and expressions occurs naturally.

The main difficulty of the immersion method is the high cognitive load, especially at the initial stage, when most words and expressions seem unfamiliar. Without basic knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, it can be difficult for a beginner to understand what they have heard, which leads to frustration and a desire to quit. In addition, in live communication with native speakers, there is often a fear of making mistakes or not understanding the interlocutor, which is why some prefer to remain passive listeners rather than active participants in the dialogue.

To not have those kinds of problems that are mentioned above, people consider that a good textbook is one of the most important steps in learning a language. Many beginners start with enthusiasm, but quickly lose interest if the material turns out to be too complicated or incomprehensible, of course. A good textbook should not only be well structured, but also understandable, interactive, and

with enough practice. Among the many manuals, there are several time-tested books that help you learn the language effectively.

This textbook is a real "bible" for everyone who studies English – “English in use”. Written in a simple and understandable language, it explains grammatical rules without complicated terms, immediately showing them in context. The main advantage of the book is its convenient format: each topic is presented on one page, with an explanation on the left and exercises on the right. This makes the material easy to read and repeat. But there are also disadvantages: despite the availability of explanations, the textbook still assumes a basic level (although there are a lot of books of this issues that could be related to different levels). A complete beginner who is not familiar with the basic vocabulary may encounter difficulties. In addition, the book focuses exclusively on grammar and practically does not touch on the development of conversational skills.

The Assimil textbook series is designed for those who want to immerse themselves in the language naturally, without memorizing the rules. The method is based on the gradual acquisition of language through dialogues, audio tracks and the natural perception of grammar. Each lesson includes a short text with translation, comments, and exercises. The main advantage of Assimil is a soft immersion: the student starts with simple expressions, gradually moving towards complex constructions. The balance between reading, listening and writing is also important. However, this approach is not suitable for everyone: some students feel uncomfortable due to the lack of a clear explanation of grammar, and additional practice may be required to consolidate the material.

It would be a mistake to not mention the course from Oxford University Press focused on developing all aspects of language: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Each topic is presented in the format of a lesson, which includes a theoretical part, dialogues, pronunciation exercises and communication tasks. The advantage of the English File is that it makes learning dynamic and lively. The textbook contains a lot of real dialogues and tasks for conversational practice, which is especially important for those who want not only to understand the language, but also to actively speak it. However, this method requires consistency: if you practice irregularly, you may lose the thread of lessons. In addition, it is not always convenient for self-study, as it involves working with a teacher or in a group.

One of the most common problems when working with a textbook is losing interest after a few weeks. Many people start with enthusiasm, but then they encounter a routine: the exercises seem boring, the topics repeat, and progress is not felt. To avoid this, it is important to organize your work properly. First, it's worth scheduling classes by day, for example, practicing 3-4 times a week for 30-40 minutes. Short but regular sessions have a much greater effect than rare and long sessions. Secondly, it is better to use the textbook in combination with other materials. If you are studying the topic of tenses in English, you can watch a YouTube video, make flashcards with examples, or try to use new constructions in

conversation. It is also useful to mix activities: if the day is devoted to grammar, the next lesson can focus on listening or conversational practice. This prevents fatigue from monotonous exercises and makes learning more natural. The main thing is not to treat the textbook as a strict obligation. You can adapt it to suit yourself: skip over complex topics with the intention of returning to them later, change the order of lessons, or shorten assignments if they seem too simple. A flexible approach helps you not to burn out and keep your interest in learning.

Reading (literature, not textbooks) is one of the most effective ways to expand vocabulary and improve language comprehension. However, reading in a foreign language can be difficult, especially if the text is full of unfamiliar words and expressions. In such cases, adapted literature and the Reading & Translation method help to facilitate this process. But many publishing houses produce books in foreign languages with simplified vocabulary and grammar. They are divided into levels (A1, A2, B1, etc.), which allows people to choose the appropriate difficulty. For example, "Penguin Readers", "Oxford Bookworms", "Macmillan Readers" offer classic works and modern short stories adapted for language learners. The main advantage of adapted literature is the accessibility of the text: such books use only words and grammatical constructions appropriate to the reader's level. However, there is a disadvantage: due to simplification, part of the artistic value of the text is lost, and the reader does not always encounter the "living" language as it is presented in the original books.

Anyway, modern technologies have made learning foreign languages convenient and accessible. Mobile applications and online resources allow to study anywhere and at any time: in transport, on a walk, during a break at work or school. Thanks to the interactive format, such as games, memorization tasks and tests, the process becomes less boring and more engaging. However, each method has its pros and cons.

Which applications for learning languages actually are there? First of all, Duolingo. It's playful form of learning, short lessons, a system of rewards and achievements, a gradual complication of the material, the ability to learn several languages simultaneously. But here are strong emphasis on translating sentences, little conversational practice, some phrases sound unnatural, limited difficulty level (not suitable for advanced learners). The second application is "Memorise". It is a good app to the use of associative memorization techniques, the integration of videos with native speakers, the ability to add your own flashcards, word repetition algorithms for better memorization. The focus is on vocabulary, there are not enough grammatical explanations, and the interface may seem overloaded. "Anki" application also should be mentioned. The advantages are powerful card system with interval repetition, the ability to create your own word decks, integration with audio and pictures, convenient for memorizing complex terms and hieroglyphs. But the disadvantages are the fact that it requires self-configuration, the interface is not the most intuitive, there is no built-in reward system like in Duolingo.

Foreign websites, online resources, and so on are also often used in language learning: BBC Languages is a great free resource for learning English and other languages, with grammar exercises, podcasts, video tutorials, and tests; Busuu is an interactive platform with courses for different levels; LinguaLeo is a popular English learning resource aimed at a Russian-speaking audience. Coursera and Khan Academy are also platforms with courses from universities and educational organizations. The courses are entirely in a foreign language, which helps you learn the language in a natural environment. Suitable for advanced level, but can be challenging for beginners.

One of the reasons why many people give up learning a language is the monotony of the process. To avoid burnout, it is important to implement game elements. People can use: reward system and challenges (what Duolingo application provides). Language games, like crosswords, quizzes, board games in a foreign language (Scrabble, Alias) and etc.

Speaking of effective ways to learn a new language, YouTube channels should be mentioned. This is a great way to learn a language through live speech and visual materials. Of course, a wide range of linguistic channels are still aimed at learning English: for example, BBC Learning English and engVid, which offer structured lessons explaining grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, or TED Talks, which allows people to listen to speeches on various topics, expanding vocabulary and developing listening skills. For those who prefer the audio format, podcasts are useful: Coffee Break Languages analyzes the language in convenient short releases, and Duolingo Podcast combines native speakers' stories with simple comments for language learners.

An effective listening technique using online videos or podcasts is the "shadow repetition" method: when listening to a speech, you need to repeat aloud after the speaker with minimal lag, copying intonation and rhythm. This method helps to improve pronunciation and listening comprehension. Active listening is also important — parsing words, writing out new expressions and trying to use them in speech, rather than just listening in the background. Using various methods, people can upgrade different language skills.

Having analyzed the useful ways of studying, we should now analyze the psychological methods of studying, because brain training is one of the key stages in learning something new. The interval repetition method is one of the most effective ways to memorize words based on repeating information at increasing intervals. The Anki and Quizlet apps can help with this, because they use this principle: new words appear more often, and those that are already well remembered are repeated less often. This helps to consolidate the material in long-term memory and avoid mechanical memorization.

Additionally, associations and mnemonics can be used. For example, Cicero's method (the method of loci) involves linking words to familiar places — this is how the word "table" can be "placed" on a kitchen table in the imagination. Phonetic associations also work: the English "cat" can be associated with the Russian "cat", and the word "knight" can be represented as a knight with a night cloak. Beginners often make grammatical mistakes: they confuse do and make, forget about articles, or use the wrong tenses. To avoid this, it is important not just to learn the rules, but to see them in context — for example, to study ready-made phrases and analyze real examples from movies and books.

Choosing your own language learning method is like choosing the perfect workout: running suits someone, yoga suits someone, and someone succeeds in the gym. The main thing is to find what works for you. If you like structure and clarity, use textbooks and grammar courses. Do you like technology? Then there are mobile apps, YouTube, and podcasts. And if it's important to start speaking right away, look for language clubs, communication with native speakers, and immersion techniques. But whichever method you choose, the most important thing is regularity. It is better to learn a language for 20 minutes every day than to sit at a textbook for 5 hours once a week. Practice should become a habit: watch TV series without translation (but with subtitles), keep a diary in a foreign language, and mentally comment on what is happening around you. And the most important thing is not to be afraid of mistakes. Everyone makes them, even native speakers. The main thing is not to stop, experiment with different methods and enjoy the process. Language is not just learning, but a somehow window into a new world, new opportunities and interesting acquaintances. So try it, look for your approach and remember: the main thing is not to have a perfect English or any other language that is foreign for you, but the ability to communicate in it.

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