

CONNECTING LEARNING WITH TEACHING

ENGLISH LANGUAGE THROUGH SPELLBEE

GROUPS – 1 and 2

English is probably the most important subject that your child studies at school. Consider the following suggestions to help your child get better at English, in a very undemanding way.

- Teach your child all the rhymes you know. Learning English through songs and happy bodily movements will definitely trigger their interest to learn the language.
- Surround your child with books almost from birth. Heavy-duty books for children are widely available, even from supermarkets. Children soon learn that books are interesting objects. They are brightly colored and good to chew! They will then begin to turn pages and explore the pictures.
- Read stories to your child even if you think that she won't understand. Reading gives you the chance to communicate with your child. As he/she begins to communicate with you, ask your child to point to favourite images on the page and talk about them.
- Be visual whenever possible: Use flashcards, magazine pictures, drawings, mime, and gestures to put across meaning. The more visual you are the more memorable they will be for your children.
- Your child is never too young to join the local library. Many libraries have specialised sections for small children.
- The first thing your child can 'read' will probably be her name (or its first letter). Develop child by using this letter. It could be on a car registration plate, on a street sign, even on an inspection cover in the street. Soon you will find yourself explaining the child other letters.
- When your child starts to take an interest in letters, play 'I spy', as in: 'I spy with my little eye, something beginning with L - Light!'
- Show your child the initial letters of other members of the family and, when the post is delivered, see if she can work out who each item of mail is for.
- Let your child cut up headlines from old magazines and newspapers and stick the same letters on pages of a scrapbook. (One page for A, one for B, etc.) Then, find pictures of things that begin with that letter and stick them on as well.

- Encourage your kids to do their homework regularly. Help them, but do not do it for them.
- Set aside some time everyday to communicate to each other only in English.
- Don't over-correct and always remember to appreciate their efforts.
- Encourage your kids to keep talking to build confidence and fluency.
- Motivate your child to work on his/her pronunciation – it need not be perfect but it needs to be sufficiently clear for communication.
- Many websites contain several fun and educational games for young children. Make use of them.

Note: These tips do not aim to solve any problem your child may have with a particular area of English. In certain situations you should address your child's teachers to be assisted. Try not to be too demanding of your child, though - you don't want to turn him/her off English for good!

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Kid whose parents take an active interest in their child's education will probably be much more likely to become successful language learners. This is why parents should get involved in their kids learning process. This article provides some useful tips for both kids and their parents.

Useful Tips:

Encourage good study habits by scheduling regular homework time and offering help and encouragement when necessary,

Listen to English CDs/cassettes - for example music with English lyrics or storytelling.

Use CD-ROMs with educational games:

Watch appropriate English DVDs/VCDs/television programs suitable to the age and level of student. Animated films on DVD with language options can be a very good choice. Use English when the child is already familiar with the story. This will help them focus on the language rather than the plot.

Encourage children to read you English stories every day.

Let your child teach you what they learned in class. Look at the pages in the book your child studied. Ask them to identify pictures and name objects.

Put stickers around the house labeling objects students have recently learned. This helps to bring language alive and gives learners day-to-day exposure.

Ask your child to copy new words ten times each. This improves handwriting and reinforces word recognition and good spelling.

Help your child make a 'personal dictionary'. In a notebook, write a letter of the alphabet at the top of each page. Start with A and end with Z. Children can record new words learned at school on the appropriate page. They can draw pictures to illustrate the meaning, give the translation or use it in a sentence. This can be a great way to review.

Make Reading a Habit

Reading is a great way to get your child interested in learning as well as a fantastic tool to supplement their English classes by teaching them vocabulary and grammar.

Here are ten tips to get your child reading:

1. Set a routine. Get children used to a specific time for reading, maybe after their bath or at bedtime. This will get them into the habit of reading.
2. Make reading fun. You might want your children to be science whizzes when they are older and that's great but it's likely that at a young age books that are too grown will be boring to them and make them less likely to read. If they are interested in puppies and birthday cakes allow them to read books with these themes. You will find that this will make them more interested in book time.
3. Let them pick out their own books. You will find that children will be particularly interested in reading if they have chosen the books themselves.
4. Talk to other parents with children of the same age about what their children are reading. You might get new ideas and even be able to swap books with them.
5. Don't promote reading to the extent that you become anti-television. Remember that many television series and movies are based on books. You might find that your child is more interested in a book if he or she is already familiar it.
6. Keep it short and sweet. For young learners it's a good idea to keep reading time short, maybe between 20 and 30 minutes. This will keep the experience exciting and they will be less likely to become bored.
7. Don't force your child to read. There will be days when your child is simply not interested in reading or books and that's fine. Leave it for another day.

8. Don't force a child to sit down while reading. Some children like to walk around or play while they are with their books or listening to a story. They still could be paying attention.

9. Don't associate books with punishment. For example, if a child misbehaves you might be tempted to tell them to turn off the television and go to their rooms with a book. This could be a mistake if you are trying to encourage reading as it could give the child negative associations with books.

10. Sit with them during their reading time. Children will be even more eager to read in English when they realize that it is an opportunity for them to spend quality time with you.

Be Realistic about What Your Child Can Do

All students have active and passive knowledge. This means that students can understand and recognize more than they can say or write.

Focus on what children know rather than what they have forgotten. Students often personalize new words. Preeti might remember "doll", "skipping rope" while Hari remembers words like "dinosaur" or "robot".

When children acquire their mother tongue, they understand and speak before they are capable of reading and writing. This is also true when learning a foreign language.

Studies show that learners who have regular exposure to another language before puberty are more likely to have better language skills (including pronunciation) by the time they are adults.

Making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process.

Most important of all: Remember that kids are not sponges! Do not expect them to absorb all that they have been taught at school. Also, do not be too hard on your kid. Parents should make English learning as enjoyable as possible.

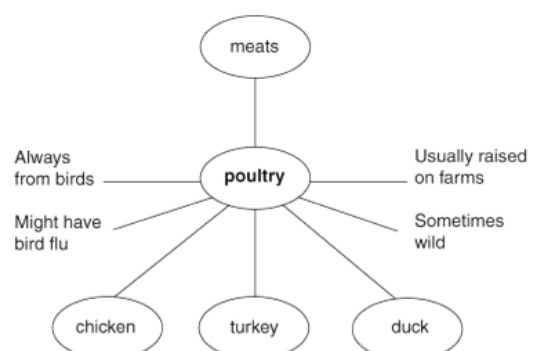
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How to improve your vocabulary?

There are many ways to improve your vocabulary. Reading can be a great way to improve your vocabulary. Here are a number of other methods to help you improve, and expand, your English vocabulary.

Vocabulary Trees

Vocabulary trees help provide context. Once you've mapped out a few vocabulary trees, you'll discover



yourself thinking in vocabulary groups. When you see a cup your mind will quickly relate such words as knife, fork, plate, dishes, etc. This overview to vocabulary trees provides will help you get started. Here is an example of a vocabulary tree.

Create Vocabulary Themes

Create a list of vocabulary themes, include the vocabulary, a definition and an example sentence for each new item.

Use Technology to Help You

Watching DVDs is a great way to help you understand native speakers of English. Using all the fancy options watching individual scenes can help make DVD use into a vocabulary learning exercise.

Specific Vocabulary Lists

Rather than studying a long list of unrelated vocabulary, use specific vocabulary lists to help you prepare for the type of vocabulary you need for work, school or hobbies.

Word Formation Charts

Word formation is one of the keys to learn maximum words. Advanced level English exams such as the TOEFL, IELTS, First Certificate CAE and Proficiency use word formation as one of the key testing elements. Play Scrabble and other vocabulary building and testing games.

Visual Dictionaries

A picture is worth a thousand words. It's also very helpful for learning precise vocabulary. There are a number of excellent English learner visual dictionaries for sale.

Learn Collocations

Collocations refer to words that often or always go together. A good example of a collocation is to do your homework. These lists of important verb + noun collocations will help you learn some of the most important ones.

Use a Corpus

Corpora are huge collections of documents that can track the number of times a word is used. By using a corpora, you can find which words are often used together with target vocabulary words. Combining corpora use with vocabulary trees is a great way to learn key vocabulary for specific vocabulary target areas.

NOTE:

- Use vocabulary learning methods to focus quickly on the vocabulary YOU need to study.
- Don't make random lists of new words. Try to group words in themes. This will help you memorize new words more quickly.
- If you have the time, and even if you think you don't have the time, try to add context. Writing a few example sentences using new vocabulary will help you remember the words in context.
- Keep a vocabulary notepad at hand whenever you are reading in English.

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General

Decide why you want to study English. Keep this in mind when studying gets tough. Regular study is important. Try to study a little and often, 30 minutes a day is better than 3 1/2 hours once a week. Motivate yourself by studying for an exam eg TOEFL or IELTS.

Listening

Watch movies and TV programmes, and listening to the radio, in English. Don't be discouraged if you can't understand everything first time, the more you listen the more you will understand. Follow movies on video, if you find it difficult, watch with subtitles, checking any new words in your dictionary.

Listen to songs. Try to write the lyrics of a song only by listening to it; you'll probably need to listen several times with many pauses. (The lyrics of many songs can be found on the Internet, try starting with a search engine such as Google, Yahoo or AltaVista.)

Speaking

Practice introducing yourself in English.

Prepare a 5 minute presentation on a subject that interests you. Give it to your friends.

Reading

Read newspaper and magazine articles that interest you.

Subscribe to an English newspaper or magazine or read one regularly on the Internet.

When you find new words try to guess their meaning before looking at them in the dictionary.

Practice reading quickly, without re-reading, to see how much you can understand (this can also help your listening).

Practice different kinds of reading:

- Scanning is reading for specific information, eg reading some adverts to find the ones that interest you.
- Skimming (or reading for gist) is reading to get the main point of a piece of text, e.g you might do this with a newspaper or magazine to decide which articles to read in full.

Writing

Keep a diary. For each day consider the "WH"-questions (what, where, who, when, why, how).

Write reviews of movies you've seen, restaurants you've eaten at etc. Describe them and say what you liked - and didn't like about them.

Find some English speaking penpals or email friends to practice real English communication with.

Write letters to newspapers and magazines on subjects that interest you.

Vocabulary

Read newspaper and magazine articles that interest you. Write down any new or difficult words. Try to guess what you think they mean from how they are used. Check the meanings in a dictionary.

Try using an English-English dictionary before looking at the translation of new words. Try the Cambridge – Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Oxford Elementary Learner's Dictionary of English, or Collins COBUILD Advanced Learners English Dictionary.

Write down and check new words or expressions you hear in movies, songs etc.

Do crossword puzzles and other word games.

Set yourself targets for learning new words - eg try to learn 10 new words a week.

Grammar

Most native speakers NEVER learn rules of grammar.

English grammar rules are complex and have many exceptions. It is best to learn grammar by hearing and reading as much natural English as you can.

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Speak English like a native!

Yes, you can. All you need to do is train yourself to speak English as comfortably and perfectly as you speak your mother tongue.

How do you train yourself? By inculcating certain practices in your daily lifestyle. These will get you closer to sounding like a native English speaker and equip you with a global accent -- and you will speak not American or British English, but correct English.

i. Observe the mouth movements of those who speak English well and try to imitate them.

When you are watching television, observe the mouth movements of the speakers. Repeat what they are saying, while imitating the intonation and rhythm of their speech.

ii. Until you learn the correct intonation and rhythm of English, slow your speech down.

If you speak too quickly, and with the wrong intonation and rhythm, native speakers will have a hard time understanding you.

Don't worry about your listener getting impatient with your slow speech -- it is more important that everything you say be understood.

iii. Listen to the 'music' of English.

Do not use the 'music' of your native language when you speak English. Each language has its own way of 'singing'.

iv. Use the dictionary.

Try and familiarise yourself with the phonetic symbols of your dictionary. Look up the correct pronunciation of words that are hard for you to say.

v. Make a list of frequently used words that you find difficult to pronounce and ask someone who speaks the language well to pronounce them for you.

Record these words, listen to them and practice saying them. Listen and read at the same time.

vi. Download Audio books.

Record yourself reading some sections of the book. Compare the sound of your English with that of the person reading the book on the tape.

vii. Pronounce the ending of each word.

Pay special attention to 'S' and 'ED' endings. This will help you strengthen the mouth muscles that you use when you speak English.

viii. Read aloud in English for 15-20 minutes every day.

Research has shown it takes about three months of daily practice to develop strong mouth muscles for speaking a new language.

ix. Record your own voice and listen for pronunciation mistakes.

Many people hate to hear the sound of their voice and avoid listening to themselves speak. However, this is a very important exercise because doing it will help you become conscious of the mistakes you are making.

x. Be patient.

You can change the way you speak but it won't happen overnight. People often expect instant results and give up too soon. You can change the way you sound if you are willing to put some effort into it.

Quick tips

Various versions of the English language exist. Begin by identifying the category you fall into and start by improving the clarity of your speech.

~ Focus on removing the mother tongue influence and the 'Indianisms' that creep into your English conversations.

~ Watch the English news on television channels like Star World, CNN, BBC and English movies on Star Movies and HBO.

~ Listen to and sing English songs (Westlife, Robbie Williams, Abba, Skeeter Davis and Connie Francis among others).

Books to help you improve your English

- *Essential English Grammar* by Murphy (Cambridge)
 - *Spoken English* by R K Bansal and J B Harrison
 - *Pronounce It Perfectly In English* (book and three audio cassettes) by Jean Yates, Barrons Educational Series
 - *English Pronunciation For International Students* by Paulette Wainless Dale, Lillian Poms
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10 tips for better writing

Standard of your writing has always been important. Today, though, more than ever before, FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT. First impressions increasingly determine what we read and what we don't, and poor writing leads to a poor first impression. The following list of tips should help you to avoid some of the most common slip-ups.

1. Capitals:

Avoid the temptation to capitalize words in the middle of a sentence Just To Provide Emphasis Like This. If you want to be more emphatic consider using bold face, italics, color or larger text.

2. Commas:

The most common use of the comma is to join together short sentences to make a single longer sentence. We do this with one of the following small joining words: and, or, but, yet, for, nor, or so. For example:

We have finished the work, and we are looking forward to the weekend.

Notice that the two halves of this sentence could each be sentences in their own right. They thus need to be separated with a comma and joining word. In the next example, though, we don't need a comma: We have finished the work and are looking forward to the weekend.

The halves of that sentence could not stand alone, so no comma was used.

3. Ellipsis:

The ellipsis is a series of three (ONLY THREE) full stops used to mark missing words, an uncertain pause, or an abrupt interruption. Avoid the temptation to use six or seven dots -- it looks amateurish.

4. Excessive punctuation:

Only one exclamation mark or question mark should be used at a time. Excessive punctuation looks too much like hysteria and detracts from your credibility. Avoid it.

5. Headings:

For long works, establish a clear hierarchy of headings. Microsoft Word's heading styles are great for this. (They also allow you to automatically create a table of contents.)

6. Hyphenating prefixes:

Most prefixes don't need a hyphen; i.e. we write "coexist", not "co-exist". There are exceptions, though. The prefixes "self-" and "ex-" are almost always hyphenated.

7. Numbers:

Numbers of ten or less are normally written as words.

8. Quotation marks:

Users of American English should use double quotes (" "). Users of British English should choose either single quotes (' ') or double quotes and stick with them for the whole document. Incidentally, British English usage is increasingly moving towards single quotes.

9. Spaces:

Modern style is to use a single space at the end of a sentence, not two. Also, most punctuation marks (e.g. commas, full stops, question marks) are not preceded by a space.

10. Tables:

Set table text one or two points smaller than the main body text and in a sans-serif font such as Arial or Verdana. Avoid vertical lines as they tend to add unnecessary clutter.
