

SOAS LANGUAGE CENTRE

Eleven keys to successful language learning

Last updated: 12 January 2007

DEFENCE

1

Revise

2

Evaluate your performance

3

Keep a language learning diary

4

Study with a partner

5

Use memorisation techniques



MIDFIELD

Know your needs and set objectives

6

Know more about your learning style

7

Know the target culture

8



ATTACK

9

Guess and hypothesise

10

Do not be afraid to make mistakes

11

Praise yourself



Read more on the reverse side!

Language learning is a complex process. Paying attention to detail is as important as caring about the big picture. In the same way a successful football team is organised at three levels, and achieves excellent cooperation among all three of them, you need to keep an eye on the various strategic aspects of learning a language.

DEFENCE – Maintain and exploit your experience and knowledge

1. **Revise.** Follow a regular routine that suits you best. For example, revise new materials on the day you learn them, the day after, four days later, one week later, two weeks later etc. Keep a list of all language points that you feel you need to revise again in a later session.
 2. **Evaluate your performance.** Fill in self-assessment forms to keep track of your progress.
 3. **Keep a language learning diary.** Write down what you think you have learnt, what you have difficulties with, your feelings about learning the language, and reflections on how you think you learn best.
 4. **Study with a partner.** A great deal of learning takes place when you interact with other students. Find a study partner, decide on study times and days, and revise and/or do your homework together.
 5. **Use memorisation techniques.** Find out about and use different techniques for storing and retrieving new vocabulary. Make your own flash cards and try using mind maps. Attend the Memorising Vocabulary workshop for more ideas.
-

MIDFIELD – Know yourself, organise and take control of your learning

6. **Know your needs and set objectives.** Decide what you want to learn and review it regularly. Set small-scale, realistic objectives that you can achieve and will lead to a higher level of competence. You can improve by learning language that is especially meaningful to *you*. Attend the Needs Analysis & Goal Setting workshop, or follow the 4 steps to Independent Learning – the help sheets are available in the Resources Room.
 7. **Know more about learning styles.** Are you a visual, auditory or kinaesthetic type of learner? What types of language learning strategies and activities suit you best? Attend the Learning Styles workshop for more information.
 8. **Know the target culture.** Learn more about the target culture from the speakers themselves. Read newspapers & magazines, watch TV and films, listen to music, visit art exhibitions, and make new friends. Try to experience what it is like to be in a native speaker's shoes. Immerse yourself into the culture and you will soon find yourself adopting the mannerisms and accent of native speakers more easily. Attend the language-specific workshops on Watching Soap Operas and Watching Recorded News.
-

ATTACK – Be ambitious about attaining a higher level

9. **Guess and hypothesise.** Whether it is new vocabulary, a difficult grammar structure, or an ambiguous piece of information in written or spoken form, don't give up. Guess new words from the context, try to deduce the grammar rule from examples rather than wait for the teacher or a book to present it to you, or try to check the meaning by asking the person you are interacting with. Attend the Developing your Listening Skills workshop.
10. **Don't be afraid to make mistakes.** In the initial stages, fluency may be more important than accuracy. Interact as much as possible, or make recordings of yourself talking. You can then spot (or ask native speakers to do it for you) a couple of particularly problematic areas, and work intensively to improve them. Attend the Developing your Speaking Skills workshop.
11. **Praise yourself.** In language learning, we can easily feel disappointed when we do not do as well as we want. We also tend to underestimate our achievements. Think positively. Tell yourself you have memorised some new words, you have mastered a difficult grammar point after much practice, you have had a chat with a native speaker about something simple... Be proud of what you have achieved, of all the progress you have made, and maintain a sense of optimism about your learning!