



Foreign Language Immersion Online

Want to speak a language naturally?



by KATHERINEKOSTIUK

## The Fastest, Most Direct Way to Learn a New Language in 8 Lightning-quick Steps

Want to put a rush on this whole “learning a new language” thing?

Maybe you need to [learn a language](#) so you can speak it on an upcoming trip.

Or so you can take on new job responsibilities.

Or so you can read your favorite novel in the language it was first written in.

Whatever your [reason for learning a new language](#), you can probably agree it'd be ideal to [learn it fast](#).

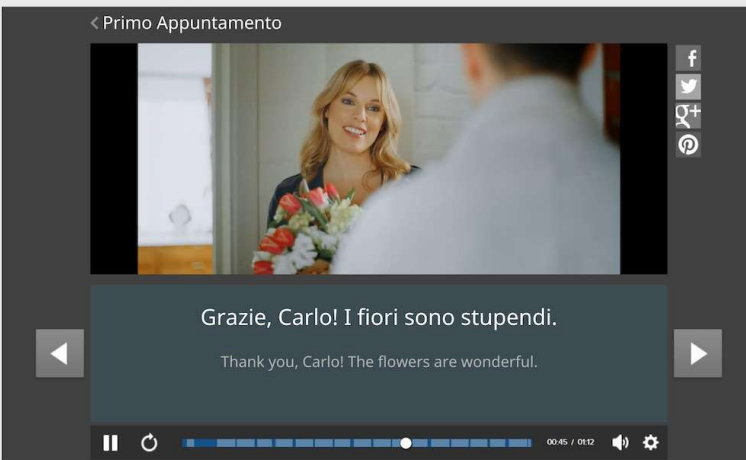
Yet the idea of learning a language, especially when you're [learning it from scratch](#), seems anything but fast: You'll have to learn a new grammar, [memorize vocabulary words](#), practice speaking...

But learning a new language doesn't need to be a slow or tedious process. Although nothing can replace the hard work and effort it requires, you can absolutely [learn a new foreign language fast](#) if you follow the right strategy and dedicate yourself to the process.

Follow these eight steps, and you'll be on your way to [mastering that new language faster](#) than you ever imagined!

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## The Fastest Way to Learn a New Language in 8 Simple Steps



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### 1. Set language-learning goals.

The first step to learning a new language fast is to set goals for what you want to achieve. When you think about it, this makes a lot of sense. If you don't set goals, how can you know what you want to achieve and measure whether you have achieved it?

When faced with the idea of learning a new language, most of us feel overwhelmed. There are so many words to learn and so many different ways to study. Setting goals narrows your focus so you can stop worrying about the details and get down to business.

[Research](#) shows that people who set the right kind of goals are more likely to achieve success.

Use these guidelines to get the most from your goals:

- **Focus on specific, tangible outcomes.** Set detailed goals, and focus on what you plan to learn rather than how much time you plan to study. An example of a good goal might be, “This week I’m going to learn 30 Spanish vocabulary words related to shopping.”
- **Set short-term goals.** It’s good to have an ultimate goal—the thing you eventually hope to achieve. But long-term goals are too overwhelming to motivate you on an everyday basis. Break down your ultimate goal into smaller bits, and set smaller goals for each week or month.
- **Challenge yourself (but not too much).** Goals work best when they make you push yourself. But if they’re too daunting, they can actually discourage you. A good way to get around this is to **set goals with a range of outcomes**. For example, you might say, “I want to learn 30-50 new vocabulary words this week.” The lower number in this range helps you feel the goal is achievable, while the higher number allows you to push yourself.
- **Write down your goals.** Writing down goals helps you commit to them. Post your goals in a prominent place, like your bathroom mirror or the home screen of your smartphone.

## 2. Learn the “right” words.

Languages are made up of a shocking number of words. English, for example, has between [600,000 and 1 million words](#).

Luckily, you don’t need to learn anywhere near that many words to be proficient in a language. Consider [this](#): the **top 100 words** make up about **50**

**percent** of English language texts, and the **top 1,000 words** make up about **90 percent**!

Check out these lists of the top 1,000 words in these languages:

- [Spanish](#)
- [French](#)
- [German](#)
- [Japanese](#)

By focusing on learning these words first, you can eliminate wasted time and increase the amount of information you understand very quickly.

### 3. Study smart.

When learning your words, you'll learn faster by using the very best study techniques.

For example, one of the best ways to learn vocabulary words is to use **flashcards**. Flashcards help you focus on individual words and allow you to test yourself, which helps you memorize new information.

When you learn with flashcards, follow these tips to learn fast:

- **Try out electronic flashcards.** Paper flashcards work just as well as they ever did, but electronic flashcard programs like [Anki](#) provide some great benefits. By using electronic flashcards, you can easily carry large stacks on your smartphone or tablet, and you can take advantage of flashcards that other people have created and made public. These programs also automatically change the order of cards and use [spaced repetition](#) to gradually increase the amount of time between repetitions of a flashcard. Both of these techniques help you learn faster and better.

To maximize your use of SRS programs and electronic flashcards, check out polyglot Olly Richards' [Conversations](#) course, which is designed to help you set up workable, step-by-step systems for learning your target language. You can also get more targeted help with the Uncovered courses,

which introduces the basics of specific languages including [Spanish](#), [French](#), [German](#) and [Italian](#).

- **Make sure to guess the meaning of a word before turning over the card.** Flashcards work best when you use them to test your memory, so don't be too quick to flip the cards over. Even if you don't know a word, make a guess.
- **Learn the translations first, then learn to produce the new words.** It's easier to learn the translation of a foreign word than it is to learn to say the foreign word when you see its English equivalent. Start by looking at the side of the flashcard with a foreign word on it, and memorize what the English translation is. Later, turn the cards over and use them to practice producing the foreign words when you see their English equivalents.

Practice makes perfect, but effective practice makes perfect even faster!

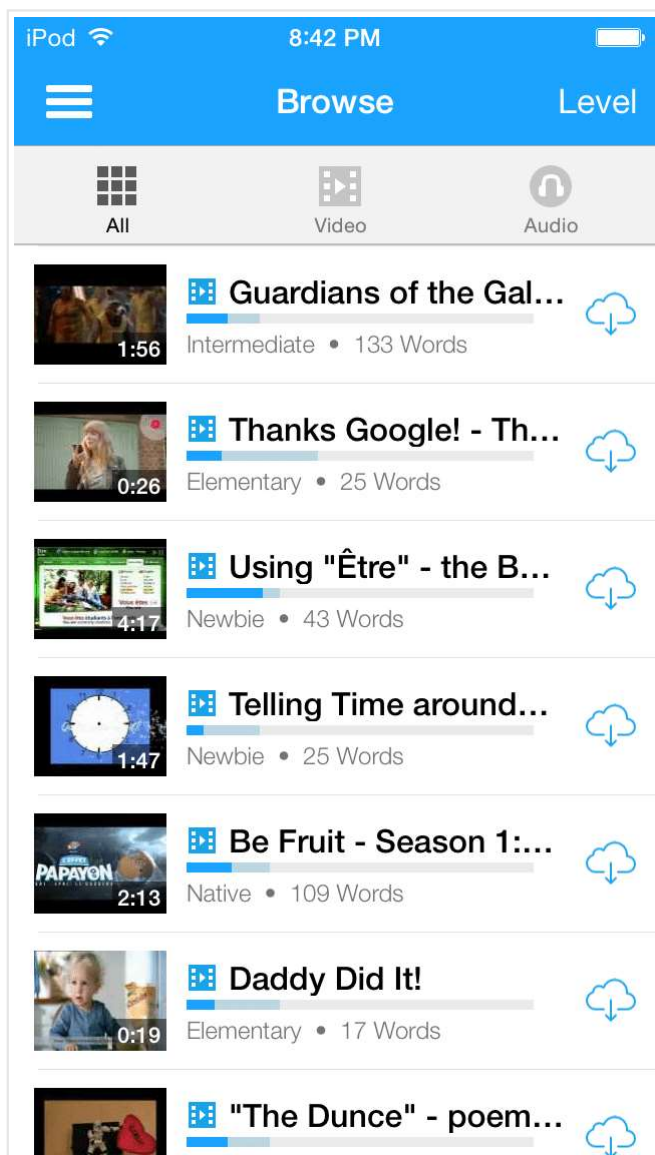
Some more great strategies for integrating new words alongside and beyond flashcards include:

- **Visualize and vocalize.** Visualize the word you're learning, imagine the image of what it represents and say the new word aloud. This helps you connect the concepts and can improve memorization.
- **Gesture.** The brain [learns better](#) when you use physical actions while learning. Take advantage of this by gesturing. If you want to learn the German word *Schuh* (shoe), say the word while you pretend to put on a shoe.
- **Use [FluentU](#).** FluentU provides unique, in-context learning that goes way beyond regular flashcards.

FluentU makes it possible to learn languages from [music videos](#), [commercials](#), [news](#), [inspiring talks](#) and more.

With FluentU, you hear languages in **real-world contexts**—the way that native speakers actually use them.

Just a quick look will give you an idea of the variety of FluentU videos on offer:




FluentU really takes the grunt work out of learning languages, leaving you with nothing but **engaging, effective and efficient learning**. It's already hand-picked the best videos for you and organized them by level and topic. All you have to do is choose any video that strikes your fancy to get started!

Each word in the **interactive captions** comes with a definition, audio, image, example sentences and more.

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📺 "My Heart's Hanging In Your Hands" - Carlos Baute

Intermediate • 93 Words

▶ Watch ✎ Learn

Listen to the song that broke records for the most hits on YouTube by a Latin pop singer. With a great range of tenses and its repeated chorus, this song will be a favorite in no time as you master the vocabulary and verb tenses. We're glad Carlos Baute never changed the lyrics like he had originally planned to do!

DIALOGUE VOCAB

Quizá no fue coincidencia encontrarme contigo .

Perhaps it wasn't a coincidence to run into you.

Tal vez esto lo hizo el destino .

Access a complete interactive transcript of every video under the **Dialogue** tab, and easily review words and phrases from the video under **Vocab**.

You can use FluentU's unique **adaptive quizzes** to learn the vocabulary and phrases from the video through fun questions and exercises. Just swipe left or right to see more examples of the word you're studying.





The program even keeps track of what you're learning and tells you exactly when it's time for review, giving you a **100% personalized experience**.

Start using [FluentU on the website](#) with your computer or tablet or, better yet, download the FluentU app from the [iTunes store](#) or [Google Play store](#).

- **Use the word in your native language.** When you're learning a new language, it can be hard to practice words in context because you haven't yet mastered enough vocabulary to make complex sentences. To get around this, simply use the word in your native language. For example, if you're learning the Spanish word *casa* (house), you could say, "I'm going to go to my *casa* now."



- **Keyword technique.** Make up a sentence with the new word you're learning, the meaning of the word and a word in your native language that sounds similar. For example, if you want to learn the Spanish word *mesa* (table), you could think of an English word that sounds similar and make up a sentence like, "My kitchen table is always a mess!" Since "mess" and *mesa* are very similar, this can help you remember the new word.

## 4. Start using the language all day, every day.

As a beginner, it can seem overwhelming to try to use the language all day, but it's not as difficult as it seems. There are many easy and even fun ways to make the language a part of your regular life.

First, make use of every moment you have to learn new words. Take flashcards with you, and study them during your train or bus commute (but not while driving, please!) or when you're waiting to meet a friend.

When you start to feel tired, switch from active learning to passive learning by doing what you would normally do in your native language in your target language. Try [watching a video or TV show](#), or [streaming radio broadcasts in your target language](#).

There are many online resources to access entertaining audio and video clips. You can go to [YouTube](#), search for radio stations available on the Internet or use [FluentU](#).

You may be asking, "How can I possibly watch a video or listen to the radio when I only know a handful of words?"

The goal when you start is not to understand everything you hear but to familiarize yourself with the sounds of the language. Even if you don't understand much of what you hear, simply listening can have many positive effects, including:

- Becoming accustomed to the cadence of the language.

- Learning to identify and understand common words.
- Learning to understand using only context and a few cognates.
- Staying motivated!

## 5. Seek out real-life practice.

Some of the best learning happens in real-life situations, particularly when you have no choice but to use a foreign language.

The easiest way to gain real-life practice is to travel or study abroad. Going abroad creates opportunities to be surrounded by people who speak the language you want to learn, many of whom don't know your native language.

This is the favorite approach of organizations like the [Peace Corps](#), which regularly places people with little or no knowledge of a language into full immersion situations. Although such situations can be uncomfortable, they provide enormous motivation to learn quickly.

But even without traveling abroad, you can immerse yourself in real-life situations that give you loads of language practice. Try these options:

- **Meet with a language partner weekly or biweekly.** You might pay your language partner for his or her time or offer to exchange one hour of practice in the language you want to learn for an hour of practice speaking English.
- **Join a conversation club.** Many cities and schools have conversation clubs where language students meet regularly to practice having informal discussions in their target language.
- **Use an online tutoring or language partner site.** Sites such as [Coeffee.com](#) or [My Language Exchange](#) can introduce you to people who speak the language you want to practice. Even if you don't see them in person, you can gain real-life language practice by chatting online.
- **Volunteer with immigrants in your city.** Find volunteer opportunities on a site like

[VolunteerMatch](#) or [Idealist](#), or directly contact organizations that serve immigrants who speak the language you want to learn.

- **Visit businesses where people speak primarily your target language.** Perhaps there's a Mexican restaurant nearby where you can enjoy delicious food and practice your Spanish with the waiters or owners, or perhaps you can practice your Chinese at a grocery store that sells food to the local Chinese community.

## 6. Learn about the culture.

Understanding a language is about more than understanding words on a page. It's important to learn about the culture and history associated with these words.

Knowing something about a country or culture's history, current events, religious beliefs and common customs can help you understand a lot about what people say and do.

[Researchers](#) have found that children learn to read in a second language better when they understand the culture and context behind the pieces they read.

As you begin to study a new language, take some time to learn about the culture of the people who speak that language. Don't feel this is a waste of time, even if it involves reading and watching videos in your native language. It will help you enormously and can even prevent you from making embarrassing and potentially offensive mistakes.

## 7. Test yourself.

Knowing that you plan to take a test is a great way to motivate yourself to learn faster.

Try to regularly test yourself in little ways. If you're learning from a textbook, take practice tests or complete the exercises at the end of each chapter. You can also play online games or take online tests. Online practice tests can be found in almost any language, including [French](#), [Spanish](#), Japanese and German.

Planning to take a standardized test several months to a year after you begin learning a new language can also keep you motivated, and having the results can help you “prove” your language level to potential employers, schools or even just yourself.

The [ACTFL OPI test](#) is popular in many language-learning circles and widely respected. It tests oral proficiency and provides a score that ranks your level anywhere from “Novice Low” to “Superior.”

Some languages also have a standardized test specific to that language, such as the [JLPT](#) for Japanese or the [HSK](#) for Chinese. Ask teachers or professionals who know the language what tests they recommend.

## 8. Have fun!

We tend to learn best when we’re enjoying ourselves, so don’t forget to make language learning fun.

[Playing games is a great way to have fun](#) while learning. Games take advantage of our natural competitiveness and can help us practice language skills even when we feel tired.

You can also focus your learning on things that you find interesting, like a favorite hobby.

If you like to sew, for example, study words in your target language related to sewing, watch instructional sewing videos and talk with tailors who speak your target language.

If you’re learning French and fascinated by French politics, learn words used to describe political processes, and immerse yourself in articles about political issues, videos of political debates and talk shows about current events.

Finally, make friends who speak your target language or are interested in learning it. Languages aren’t meant to be learned in a vacuum! Real-life social events and conversations are what make language learning fun and worthwhile.

Make a point of talking to people and learning more about their lives and cultures.

You might be surprised at how excited they are to share information with you, and how quickly you make lasting friendships in the process.

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 No

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Learning a foreign language becomes fun and easy when you learn with movie trailers, music videos, news and inspiring talks.



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