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Hester is the Director of Studies at our Langports Brisbane (https://www.langports.com/locations/brisbane/) school. She has a strong passion for education and has set up her own website and blog to help her students.

Her blog for this week is a list of:

100 things you can do to improve your English

Have a read of the below list and we are sure you will find a lot of **helpful tips to improve your English!**

1. Don't be afraid to make **mistakes**. Be confident. People can only correct your mistakes when they hear you make them.
2. **Surround yourself** in English. Put yourself in an all English speaking environment where you can learn passively. The best way to learn is through speaking.
3. **Practise** every day. Make yourself a study plan. Decide how much time a week you are going to spend studying and stick to it. Establish a routine.
4. **Tell your family and friends** about your study plan. Get them to push you to study and also don't let them interrupt you.
5. Practise the **4 core skills**: reading, writing, speaking and listening. They all need to be worked on for you to improve.
6. Keep a **notebook** of new words you learn. Use them in sentences and try to say them at least 3 times when you speak.
7. Do a lesson at least **once a day.**
8. **Memorisation** of lists is one of the most common ways of learning vocabulary for a test. It's only a good exercise for short term studying because you often do not retain the information that you have learned for a test.

9. Use your **body clock**. If you're not a morning person, study in the afternoon.
10. You will find words easier to remember if you try to **remember an example** sentence using that word rather the word on its own.
11. Plan to **take a test**. You'll find that you work harder when you need to study for something.
12. Saying that, it's better not to study *just* to take a test. **Think of the bigger picture**. What can you do when you have a good command of English? How will the quality of your life improve?
13. Give yourself a **long term goal**. Focus on working towards it.
14. Give yourself **short term goals** too and reward yourself when you achieve each one.
15. Create an **atmosphere** in which you want to learn, not because you have to. You'll learn more when you're learning because you want to.
16. Know **what works best** for you. Think about what methods have been successful for you in the past and stick with them.
17. Figure out **how you learn**. It can be by memorising, reading, speaking, summarising or other methods. Find out how you study best. It can be in a quiet place by yourself or with a group.
18. **Get help!** If you don't understand something you've got to ask someone. Ask your teacher, classmates or friends for help.
19. **Review** and review and review! Make sure that you take the time to review things you have studied in the past.
20. It's not a good idea to study on your own for more than 30 minutes at a time. Take **regular breaks**, get some fresh air and stretch your legs.
21. Don't be in such a hurry to move up a level. Concentrate on the level **you are at now**.
22. **Watch DVDs** rather than TV. It's better to use something that you can watch over again to catch information you might have missed the first time.
23. **Watching TV** only gives you the chance to hear something correctly first time. This is better for high level students. It can be great practice for speaking to native English speakers so you don't have to ask them to repeat themselves!

24. **Read graded readers**. These books are especially written for your level. Read a whole novel. You can do it! You'll feel great afterwards.
25. **Children's books** have easier words and are a good alternative to graded readers.
26. **Newspapers** are a good place to find passive constructs. Read through an article and see if you can find the passive sentences.
27. Read for the **general meaning first**. Don't worry about understanding every word, then go back and look up new words.
28. For a word you don't understand in a sentence, look at the **other words around** it. They will give you a hint. Try to guess the meaning from the context.
29. Learn **root words**. They'll help you guess the meaning of words. For example: *scrib* = write, *min* = small
30. When you learn a new word, think of all its **other forms**: *Beautiful* (adjective),*beauty* (noun), *beautifully* (adverb).
31. Learn **prefixes** (*dis-*, *un-*, *re-*) and suffixes (**-***ly*, *-ment*, *-ful*), these will help you to figure out the meaning of words and build your vocabulary.
32. English, unlike Japanese or French, uses **word stress**. For new words, count the syllables and find where the stress is. Only one stress per word and always on a vowel. Two syllable verbs have a stress on the second syllable (be**GIN**). 2 syllable nouns (**TEA**cher) and adjectives (**HAP**py) stress the first.
33. Use English **whenever you can**. It's as simple as that!
34. Don't translate into English from your own language. **Think in English** to improve your fluency. Talk to yourself…but not on the bus otherwise people will think you have gone crazy!
35. You can't learn English from a book. Like driving a car, you can only learn **through doing it.**
36. The most natural way to learn grammar is through **talking.**
37. Keep an English **diary or journal**. Start by writing a few sentences a day and then get into the habit of writing more.
38. Why not start an online **blog** and share your writings with the world?

39. To become a better writer brainstorm as many **ideas and thoughts** onto paper without worrying about grammar or spelling. Then think about the structure. After that, write your piece using good grammar and spelling. Finally, read it through or give it to someone else to check for mistakes.
40. Keep an eye on your **punctuation** as it can totally change what you're trying to say. Check out the difference in meaning between these two sentences: "*A woman without her man is nothing*" and "*A woman: without her, man is nothing*".
41. **Sing your heart out!** Show the world your beautiful voice! Learn English songs and sing along with them to improve fluency and intonation… anyone for Karaoke?
42. Get a penfriend or use **chat-rooms, forums and community sites**. If you can't speak to someone in English, this is the next best thing.
43. Shadow **English CDs**. Listen to a few sentences then repeat what you heard. Focus on the rhythm and intonation.
44. Have English **radio** on in your house. Even if you are not actively listening to it, you will still be training your ears.
45. Mirror CDs. **Read out loud** along with a CD. Again, this is great for intonation, pronunciation and rhythm.
46. **Dictation**. Listen to a CD or friend and write down what you hear.
47. Nobody likes to hear their own voice, but be brave and try it! **Record your voice** and listen to your pronunciation and intonation. It will help you to identify your problem areas.
48. Ask your helpful teacher if you can **record his lesson**. This is a great way to review. You can also listen to your teachers speaking speed and intonation.
49. Use an **English/English dictionary** as it will help you to keep thinking in English and not translating.
50. If an English/English dictionary seems scary, there are **learner's dictionaries** for English students of your level.
51. **Don't become too reliant** on your dictionary. Your dictionary should be an aid, not your main teacher. Try to guess the meaning of words rather than going straight for your dictionary.

52. Don't give up! **Stay positive!** Sometimes you will feel that you aren't learning quickly enough. Everyone feels like this, don't worry about it. You'll get there in the end.
53. **Enjoy it!** We learn more when we are having fun!
54. If you get nervous when speaking, take **two deep breaths** before you say something. You'll speak better when you feel relaxed.
55. Keep yourself motivated by **looking back** at the textbooks and CDs you used in the past. You'll be surprised at how easy they seem to you now! Congratulations, your level is improving!
56. You are never too young or too old to start learning English. **Don't make excuses** not to learn. What are you waiting for?
57. Procrastination can stop you from being successful. To **stop procrastinating**, it's important you understand if your procrastinating is to avoid studying, or if it is your bad habit.
58. If you haven't gotten the results you wanted yet, it's not because you're bad at languages, it's because you haven't found **your own special way of learning** yet.
59. Use resources which **match your level**. Don't use texts/listening exercises which are too difficult or too easy. Use materials which challenge you but don't frustrate you.
60. Don't worry about making your accent perfect. It's an important part of your cultural identity to **keep your accent**. Native English speakers enjoy hearing English spoken with an accent.
61. There are **many types** of English: British, American, South African and so on. None of these are wrong or not as important. English is English.
62. Instead, be aware of the differences in American and British English and **use your words accordingly**. For example: *Elevator* (US) / *Lift* (British).
63. Carry **cue cards** with you. These are small cards which you can write new words on. You can pull them out and look at them whenever you a free minute.
64. Use **post-it notes** and stick them around your home. You can use them to label things. Stick one on your pet dog!
65. You can't ignore **phrasal verbs** (two words verbs), there are hundreds of them in English and they're widely used. The more you focus on their meaning, the more

you'll be able to guess the meaning of new ones. You'll start to recognise their patterns.

66. Use your **intuition**. Go with your gut feeling, you'll be surprised how often your first guess is the right guess. Like we said before, be confident.
67. **Gather your thoughts**. Take a second to think about what you're going to say. You know the grammar, but maybe you don't use it correctly when you speak.
68. **Meet new people**. Make the effort to mix with English speakers in your town. You could join a club or go to bars where foreigners hang out. Buy one a drink, they love that!
69. Be the person to **start conversations in English**. Try to keep the conversations moving and use listening words ('*really?*' / '*go on…*'/ '*what happened then?*') Don't wait for others to speak to you. Get in there!
70. **Debate**. Discuss topics in a group. Each person should choose a viewpoint (even if you don't agree with it) and debate it within the group. Make sure you get your point across. Learn to listen actively. Active listening will help in the classroom and it will help you get more out of, and contribute more to, group study sessions. Focus on the person who is talking. Concentrate on the speaker with your ears and eyes.
71. It's not enough to only learn English words. You can teach a parrot English words but that doesn't mean it can speak English! You still need to **have an understanding of grammar**.
72. **Verb tenses** are used by English speakers to talk about the timing of actions. You might not have the same expressions in your own language. It's important that you know these tenses and when to use them.
73. English has many **irregular verbs**. You should drill yourself on them.
74. **Keep it up!** If you take a break from speaking English, you will find that your level decreases and all your hard work has been wasted.
75. Don't be put off by a bad test score. Sometimes students have the ability to pass an English test, but can't communicate well with English speakers. If you can speak freely in English, you should **be proud of yourself**.
76. Remember that as long as you have tried your hardest, **you have succeeded!**

77. Learn English **with a friend**. You'll have someone you can practice with and you can motivate each other to study.
78. Remember, the way we write English is not the same as **how it's pronounced**. For example '*Ough*' has over 6 pronunciations. Familiarise yourself the Phonetic Alphabet. It will help you correctly pronounce words in the dictionary.
79. Get used to the '*schwa*' sound **[É™]** — an unstressed and toneless neutral vowel sound. '*Schwa*' is the **most common vowel sound** in English. For example, the '*a*' in*about* and the '*u*' in *supply*.
80. Keep in mind that it takes longer to improve **when our level is high**. Usually the fastest progress is made when we are beginners. Don't think that you're suddenly not learning anymore, it's just a less noticeable progress.
81. Make sure that your English **matches the occasion**. It's OK to use slang with friends but not in a business meeting. Decide in which situation it's appropriate to use the words and phrases you have learned.
82. Textbook English is often different from the way we casually speak. To **learn casual 'slang'** watch movies.
83. **Idioms** can be difficult to memorise, but they are great fun to use and they'll make your English more colourful.
84. When talking we usually **link words together** so that two words can sound like one. Simply put, we link words ending with a consonant sound to words beginning with a vowel sound (consonant > vowel). We link words ending with a vowel sound to words beginning with a vowel sound (vowel > vowel). Practice these to improve your listening and pronunciation.
85. **Make use of the internet.** It's full of resources to help you learn: BBC Learning English (https://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/) ; learnenglish.ecenglish.com (http://www.ecenglish.com/learnenglish/)
86. Think about your **strong and weak points**. Write down which areas you want to improve on and work on improving them. Of course, don't ignore your strong points. Congratulate yourself on how well you've done!

87. **Unlearn your mistakes.** You probably make the same grammar mistakes over and over again. Use English tests results as a study tool. Go over your mistakes and choose one or two that you want to focus on. Use your favourite grammar book to check rules.
88. Use the **correct article** (a/an, the). Be aware that there is more to this rule than a/an= non specific, the=specific. For example: *A university* (not *an university* because it begins with a consonant sound). *An hour* (not *a hour* because the '*h*' is often silent).
89. For fluency, try **image training**. Before you go to that restaurant think through what the waiter is likely to say to you. Think of what phrases you are going to use.
90. Much communication comes through **body language and gesture**. These can be different between cultures and countries. For example, the two-fingered "V" for victory symbol is fine palms-out. If you make it with you palm facing toward you, you'll offend a British person. It means…well, you ask a British person and find out for yourself!
91. The easiest one **— Sleep!** You'll learn more after a good night's sleep. You'll be able to concentrate more.
92. Take an English course (https://www.langports.com/study-options/ufo/) in an English speaking country.
93. If you studying abroad, **mix with people from other countries** not only people from your own country. It's not a good idea for you to live in a shared house with people from your own country. Enjoy a more cultural experience by spending time with other nationalities.
94. Have you thought about **getting a job** or doing **an internship abroad**?
95. Get yourself a **qualified teacher**. Who wants to learn wrong things?
96. Nobody can learn all of the English language. No need to worry about trying. A **useful shortcut** to learning is that in English we have lots of words that have the same pronunciation, but a different spelling and meaning. For example, 'come *here*' has the same pronunciation as, '**I** can *hear* the birds'. You might find it easier to build vocabulary by knowing the different meanings.
97. Once you have a basic level of English explore the **different ways** you can say the same thing. This makes your English more interesting to the listener and it shouldn't

be too difficult for you because you already know the basics. For example, how many ways can we say, '*Goodbye*' in English?

98. When you are on your English course, **be prepared for your class**. Do your homework as soon as possible and hand it in on time. Review your notes and your last lesson a few minutes before the class. Doing this will refresh your memory and you'll be warmed up for lesson.
99. **Don't get distracted** in class. Focus on the lesson, don't stare out of the window. Don't be late, arrive a few minutes before the start of the lesson. Don't sit next to people who won't speak to you in English. Switch off your phone. Be organised, remember to take your textbook, notebook and pen.
100. Find a comfortable, peaceful place for quiet study. You need somewhere where you can **focus 100%.**

Check out Hester's blog! (http://digilearner.com/)

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Send us an email to **info@langports.com** (mailto:info@langports.com)

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