

# THE LANGUAGE LEARNING ROADMAP

by DREAMING SPANISH



 <b>DREAMING SPANISH</b> <small>EXPERIENCE THE LANGUAGE BECOME THE LANGUAGE</small>		
<p><b>How to use the Language Learning Roadmap:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Read the “YOU CAN DO” column and find the level you’re at.</li> <li>2 Read “YOU NEED TO DO” and “YOU ARE LEARNING” for your level.</li> <li>3 Read also “YOU CAN DO” for the next level to know what you’ll be able to do. Having a small clear goal will help your motivation.</li> </ol>		
<p>The numbers given in this guide are general estimations. In particular the number of hours of input. There are individual differences in the pace at which people acquire a language. The understandability and quality of the input you receive can also have a big impact on your pace of learning. <b>If you speak a closely related language</b> (if you are going from Italian or French to Spanish for example) <b>you can divide the number of hours by 2</b>. Also, expect your understanding to be a further 1 or 2 levels above your production ability, and your reading comprehension to be even higher. <b>If you are learning a language that's completely unrelated to yours</b> (going from English to Arabic or Mandarin for example) <b>you should multiply the number of hours by 2</b>.</p>		
YOU CAN DO	YOU NEED TO DO	YOU ARE LEARNING
<b>Level 1</b> <b>Starting from zero</b>  Hours of input: <b>0</b> Known words: ~0	The sounds of the language sound weird to your ears. You can't tell many of those sounds apart from each other. When hearing the language, it's hard for you to know when one word ends and when the next one begins. Even when you guess what a sentence means, many times you can't guess at the meaning of the different parts. You can't say any words and be confident that a native speaker would understand you.	<b>Listen A LOT.</b> The listening needs to be <b>very comprehensible</b> . The best materials are classes or videos where the teachers speak in the language, but make it easy to understand by using a lot of drawings, pictures, and gestures. <b>Crosstalk</b> is the <b>most efficient</b> activity that you can do, if you can find speakers of the language. <b>Reading is not recommended</b> until later on, especially if you care about having clear pronunciation. Practicing <b>writing or speaking is not recommended</b> yet.
<b>Level 2</b> <b>You know some common words</b>  Hours of input: <b>50</b> Known words: ~300	<b>You understand some common words</b> , even if you are not 100% sure how to pronounce them. You can now guess the meaning of some 2-word sentences, like "go home", or "eat cake". There are only a few words that you could produce yourself. For many words, you're still not sure what sounds they're made of.	<b>Listen A LOT.</b> You are still best served with <b>Crosstalk</b> or classes or videos where the teacher(s) speak in a very comprehensible way. However, with a few words under your belt you are better prepared to make the most of that input. Those words will help you understand the rest of the input you are listening to. <b>Reading not recommended yet.</b>
<b>Level 3</b> <b>You can follow topics that are adapted for learners</b>  Hours of input: <b>150</b> Known words: ~1500	You can now understand people if they stay <b>within certain topics</b> . They still need to talk to you in a way that's appropriate for you, but you know many words, and you don't rely exclusively on visual information. <b>You still aren't completely used to the sounds of the language</b> . You have a good intuition for basic grammar, like sentence order. You can sometimes feel it when other learners make mistakes. It sounds wrong somehow. You can now say quite a few words and that will already be useful when traveling to the country.	<b>Listen A LOT.</b> Now you can listen to videos or classes in which the teacher doesn't use as much visual input, and may even be able to take advantage of really easy audios and podcasts that are catered to learners at your level. <b>Crosstalk</b> is still the best way to spend your time. At this level it becomes easier than before to do crosstalk over the internet using video call software, so you won't need to find native speakers where you live anymore. Reading is still not recommended if you care about your final achievement in pronunciation, but it starts becoming possible to understand lower level graded readers.
<b>Level 4</b> <b>You can understand a person speaking to you patiently</b>  Hours of input: <b>300</b> Known words: ~3000	You're at the intermediate level! You can understand a <b>patient</b> native speaker. You still miss some words, but the speaker can explain their meaning to you without resorting to translation. <b>You can understand a range of daily topics</b> without visual support like drawings or pictures. The sounds of the language are becoming clearer now, and you are getting used to how the sounds are likely to be combined. That helps with retaining new words. If you tried speaking at a store, you could get your point across most of the time, but you still struggle producing even some basic words. Making friends in the language is now possible, but you need to find people who are quite patient, because not everybody will want to make that effort. Depending on your tolerance for getting negative reactions, you may want to wait a bit longer before speaking.	<b>Listen A LOT.</b> You can understand videos or classes in which the teacher doesn't use any visual cues, and can now benefit from listening extensively to <b>audios and podcasts</b> for learners everywhere you go, anytime you can. <b>Crosstalk</b> is still the best, most efficient way to improve. You can now make friends with whom you communicate only in the target language. While you will learn a lot when listening to people speak to you, <b>speaking this early will invariably result in hard-to-fix non-native pronunciation, noticeably bad grammar, and poor word usage</b> . If you really want to start having conversations with people it's recommended that you don't try to actively practice grammar or vocabulary, but rather speak in single words or simple sentences that come to mind easily. Reading is still not recommended if you care about your final achievement in pronunciation. By now you could understand slightly more difficult books, but still mostly just graded readers.
<b>Level 5</b> <b>You can understand native speakers speaking to you normally</b>  Hours of input: <b>600</b> Known words: ~5000	You can understand people well when they speak directly to you. <b>They won't need to adapt their speech for you</b> . Understanding a conversation between native speakers is still hard. You'll almost understand TV programs in the language, because you understand so many of the words, but they are still hard enough to leave you frustrated or bored. <b>Conversation can be tiresome</b> , and if you try to speak you can feel a bit like a child, since it will be hard to express abstract concepts and complex thoughts. You understand most of the words used during daily conversation, but you still can't use many yourself. If you try to speak the language, it will feel like you are missing many important words. However, you can, often, already speak with the correct intonation patterns of the language, without knowing why, and even make a distinction between similar sounds in the language when you say them out loud.	<b>Listen A LOT.</b> You'll be able to understand more advanced materials for learners. Listen to <b>audios and podcasts</b> daily if you want to learn fast. <b>Crosstalk</b> is still as good as always. You may start feeling you are not getting much out of getting input about daily life topics. Try getting input about new topics. <b>Easier TV programs and cartoons</b> should be accessible too. The purists who want to get really close to a native speaker and get a really good accent may still want to hold off on speaking and reading for a little more, but if you do start speaking and reading it's not a big deal by this point. You'll still end up with better pronunciation and fluency than the vast majority of learners. If you want to start reading, by this point you'll be able to understand books targeted at children of lower grade levels, and you can skip over graded readers. If you start reading, try setting every gadget you own (PC, phone, Google and Facebook settings, etc.) to the target language, and following speakers of the language on social media.
<b>Level 6</b> <b>You are comfortable with daily conversation</b>  Hours of input: <b>1000</b> Known words: ~7000	You can really <b>have fun</b> with the language at this point. You are <b>conversationally fluent</b> for daily purposes of living in the country and you can get by at the bank, at the hospital, at the post office, or looking for an apartment to rent. In spite of that odd word that is not quite there when you need it, you can <b>always manage to get your point across</b> in one way or another, and by now you are already <b>making complex longer phrases</b> . At this level, for the first time, you start feeling like you are actually thinking about what you want to say, and not about how you want to say it, even though you may fall back on thinking about how you say things, especially in stressful situations or when feeling self-conscious. Using humor in the language is much easier now. You can <b>understand TV shows</b> about daily life quite well (80 to 90%). Shows about families, friends, etc. Unscripted shows will usually also be easier to understand than scripted shows, as long as they are not too chaotic or rely too much on cultural knowledge. Thrillers and other genres will still be hard.	<b>Listen and read A LOT.</b> It's also a good idea to get <b>massive input</b> in authentic media, be it <b>TV, podcasts, radio, movies, etc.</b> If you can't find a lot of easy media in the target language, you may find that videos and audios for learners are still more efficient for acquiring new vocabulary until you get a bit better. If your target language has many common words with a language you already know you may be able to understand quite well things like TED talks and university lectures. <b>Lots of reading</b> is also recommended if you want to be literate and if you care about reading. You'll still want to read books that are targeted at elementary school children, although maybe you don't need to stick to the lower grades. <b>Nonfiction will often be much easier</b> to understand than fiction. By this point, speaking and reading are completely unrestricted, and it's really encouraged to <b>make friends in the language</b> . If you live in the country, join as many social activities as you can. Live in a shared apartment, go to bars, join dance classes, a sports team, anything! Set your PC, phone, and all your online profiles to your target language. Make a list of daily things you do in your own language, and find alternatives to do them in your target language.
<b>Level 7</b> <b>You can use the language effectively for all practical purposes</b>  Hours of input: <b>1500</b> Known words: >12000	You can <b>understand any general content effortlessly</b> , including newspapers, novels, and all types of TV and movies. You might still struggle with technical texts in unfamiliar fields, regional slang, and shows with intricate plots. <b>You speak fluently and effortlessly</b> , without thinking about the language. While natives might still detect an accent, your clarity and fluidity make you easy to understand. You may still make some mistakes, or miss a specific word here and there, but it doesn't hinder you from being an <b>effective member of society</b> .	<b>Listen and read A LOT.</b> Add variety to what you read and listen to. By this point it's easy to find media in the target language that you understand very well, but it's also <b>easy to get comfortable and not seek new challenges</b> . If you want to continue improving, simply <b>do things that you have never done</b> before. Try reading a book by a new author, try watching a show about a topic that you're unfamiliar with (about space, about the Middle Ages, about lawyers, etc). If you live in the country, <b>try joining activities that are new to you</b> : a sports team, an improv group, comedy nights, etc.