

Class Notes

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How to Contact Me

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I am happy to answer any questions: about English, life in the U.S., anything. I know a little about a lot. Also if you have ideas for how to improve the class or topics you'd like us to discuss, please tell me.

What We're Covering Today

Introductions & Personal Info

The verb *to be*

Present	I	<i>am</i>	Past	I	<i>was</i>
	he / she / it	<i>is</i>		he / she / it	<i>was</i>
	you / y'all*	<i>are</i>		you / y'all	<i>were</i>
	we / they	<i>are</i>		we / they	<i>were</i>

* *y'all* = *you all*. A popular word here in the southern U.S.

Past tense of regular and irregular verbs

Basic rule for regular verbs: add -ed to the end.

But sadly it's not quite so simple. Here are a few extra rules for spelling:

verb ends in	do this	example
-e	add -d	like → liked
vowel + consonant	double the consonant, add -d	stop → stopped
consonant + -y	remove -y, add -ied	try → tried
vowel + -y	add -ed	play → played

Tips for Learning English

Practice every day. No exceptions. Half an hour is good, but even 5 to 10 minutes is ok on days when you're really busy. Always practice for at least a few minutes though, every day.

Practice doesn't need to be boring grammar and vocabulary from a book. Here are several ideas which can be more fun, convenient, and interesting:

Online courses — Many either cost money or aren't very good, or both. However, here is a good one: <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/p/5644.html>. It's free, useful, and funny too. You will like it.

Songs — Find a band or two you like and listen to the same songs again and again. Repetition is good. At first you won't understand much of the words, but as your English improves you'll slowly understand more and more. You can find the lyrics written out online. Read them and look up any words you don't know. Alternate between listening and reading and eventually you'll be able to understand the whole thing without looking at the words. (Maybe. Some lyrics don't make much sense to anyone.)

Movies and TV — Watch them in English but with subtitles in your language. Like with songs, repetition is good. Watch the same thing several times and each time focus a little more on what the actors are saying and less on reading the subtitles. Once you get good at this—or if subtitles aren't available in your language—switch the subtitles to English (this can also be called “closed captioning” or CC). Some people are hard to understand and having their dialog written out can really help.

Podcasts — These are like radio shows which download to your phone or computer. They're convenient since you can listen while driving, walking, doing chores around the house, where ever. Think of a topic you're interested in and there's probably a podcast for it. Some are especially for English learners, with slow speech and simpler language. One of the best podcasts is *This American Life*. It's advanced and not designed for learning English but there's a transcript for each episode, which is a great tool. I recommend doing this:

1. Listen to an episode. You may understand very little; that's ok.
2. Read the transcript. (Apps like Pocket are handy for saving it to a phone or tablet.) Look up any words and phrases you don't know.
3. Listen again, this time while following along with the transcript. That is, listen and read at the same time. Pause and repeat parts you have trouble with until you can distinguish all the words.
4. Finally, listen to the episode once more without the transcript. You'll find you understand much more than the first time.

It might take you a few weeks per episode at first, but after some months you'll notice a real improvement. You'll also hear some great stories and learn about other people's lives in the U.S. I do this same thing myself with *Radio Ambulante* to learn Spanish and find it useful.