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Posted by u/broadexample **Beginner (A1-A2)** 11 months ago 🚩 🤖 💰

Duolingo - finished full Spanish tree in 18 weeks. Summary, advice and Spanish test results

Yesterday I finished Duolingo, the whole Spanish tree, and mostly without jumping levels (more about this below). It took four and half months, practicing 2-3 hours a day, each day. Usually cleared a full circle level in one day, spread around; sometime two or even three (there are a few tiny lessons).

Besides Duolingo I also used Anki daily (filling it up with Duolingo and books), read a few books (Madrigal and Espanol En Serio), finished the whole LanguageTransfer, and chatted heavily on HelloTalk for a month now. Did not listen to anything except Duolingo and had only couple voice conversations in Spanish, in which I totally sucked. I listened to En Serio podcast but I still don't understand anything there, so it was mostly getting used to sound.

First, the results as this seem to be the most frequently asked question here. I have done three tests:

1. https://www.cervantes.to/test_inicial.html - this was a very easy test which brings you through tests for A1-A2-B1-B2-C1. I got all the way to C1 question set which I failed (got 6 out of 10 right, needed 8). The test said I'm B2 "UPPER", which I don't believe at all.
2. <http://pruebadenivel.cervantes.es/exam.php?id=17> - this one doesn't give you level, but it says I should study "Curso B1.3-B1.4 de ave global"
3. <http://www.transparent.com/learn-spanish/proficiency-test.html> - this one was more difficult, included a serious section of reading comprehension. Here I scored 86/150 or 57%, 60% on grammar 1, 71% on grammar 2, 43% on vocabulary and 47% on reading comprehension. This is probably the real level.

The above tests I found easy because they test grammar and vocabulary - which was exactly what I studied. None tested speech, and only one tested listening (and it wasn't difficult).

Now, how to get the maximum out of Duolingo:



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SpanishDict would probably be enough.

2. You need Anki, a flashcard program. Avoid the temptation and do NOT download any decks, start with an empty database. You will add there, from Duolingo:

- all new words you learned;
- all the phrases where the existing words used in unusual way (i.e. tengo cuidado, pedir prestado)
- the verbs for which you cannot easily remember conjugations (i.e. oler)
- full idiomatic phrases (i.e. "no se gana Zamora en una hora")

1. Start your practice with Anki. It will initially take 1-5 minutes and slowly grow. Then Duolingo.

2. It is better to practice Duolingo twice a day, for one hour each time.

3. I recommend sliding approach, when you have three different circles open at the same time:

519 | Duolingo ...

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b) Then you do level 2->4 on the circle on which you've done level 0-2 the previous day;

c) Then you do level 4->5 on the circle on which you've done level 2-4 two days before;

This approach has an advantage that you don't get to repeat the same boring phrases (which repeat between levels 1-4 and only on level 4 some new phrases are introduced)

6. You should also spend a lot of time reading the question-related discussions (i.e. click "Discuss" at the question), generally every time when:

a) You answered the question incorrectly and it is not clear why your answer isn't wrong. Most likely someone already have done that, and you'll find the answer there. Sometimes it takes a while digging through



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(this is typical when you choose one answer among three).

7. Duolingo is pain in the butt with some concepts. For example, it is incredibly strict on articles (use "a" instead of "the") and this/that mismatches. Mix those and you fail, no matter how well you have formed otherwise a very complex sentence. I find this approach counter-productive to learning. It is frustrating to translate "if you did your homework, you would be able to eat that apple" otherwise correctly, but fail because you wrote "esta manzana" instead of "esa manzana".

To counter this crap, I keep an empty document open in a separate file. If Duo fails the sentence for what I consider garbage reasons such as above, I copy-paste the correct response into this file, and when the sentence is repeated I copy-paste back the answer. This is done for cases like incorrect/missing article unless its absence changed the meaning, mismatch of this/that, and translating buenissimo as "good" instead of "really good" which duolingo demands.

8. I suggest to never speed up the lessons (i.e. accelerate the levels) until Checkpoint 5, because it defeats the purpose of repetitive learning.

9. At Checkpoint 5 you need to make a decision whether to continue, because the quality of the course drops dramatically after it (and goes all the way to the floor after Checkpoint 6). There are no more tips, the sentences are sloppier, the lessons more haphazard - you have courses with 10 lessons in the round, 5 rounds - 1,000 questions in one lesson! They do let you practice new words and grammatical concepts, but they stop teaching you. The Past Subjunctive lesson is the worst in all Duolingo - it is only 5*2 rounds with zero explanations and multiple mistakes. I have done it in full, but suggest switching to another platform after passing Checkpoint 5.

Overall its a good platform (because it is free), and yes you can learn a lot using it.

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I've been trying to form my own daily routine to study Spanish for about a month now. Although I followed similar methods to yours (listening to the Language Transfer podcast, using Practice Makes Perfect grammar book), I failed to keep up because I was caught up with the leaderboards! I didn't focus on the learning anymore, but rather grinding the XPs to secure my top spot. I really appreciate the tip for turning it off, it eases my anxiety for being a completionist.

I'm definitely going to use Duolingo with more attention in mind, focusing on vocab, grammar and revise the material more often. I also like the trick of writing the "illogical" sentences in a notebook to keep track. Super helpful!

Anyways, many thanks to you and I hope your journey continues with many success!

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Posted by [u/createdamadman](#) 5 days ago

Why is the first phrase "Voy a leerlo" and not "Lo voy a leer"? Or why is the second phrase "Lo leí" and not "Leí lo". Could I say either for both phrases or is there a rule where I would have to say "leerlo" and "Lo leí"?



Posted by u/bertn 1 day ago

Why children's literature isn't beginner material

TL;DR - For implicit language acquisition, learner literature (graded readers written for language learners) is far more effective than "authentic" children's literature. I compared samples from children's, adult, and learner literature as an objective, if not scientific, demonstration. It shouldn't be a surprise that learner literature is more effective than "authentic" children's literature. They're written with different purposes. Children's literature is meant to expand the vocabulary of native speakers that already have huge vocabularies (thousands of word families), with the purpose of developing literacy, not general proficiency. Graded readers are written to take advantage of learners' already-developed literacy, general knowledge, and comparatively even larger first-language lexicon.

The texts: The first 250 or so words of *El patito feo*; *Tigres azules*; Borges; *Frida*

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Posted by u/0-972fathoms 6 days ago

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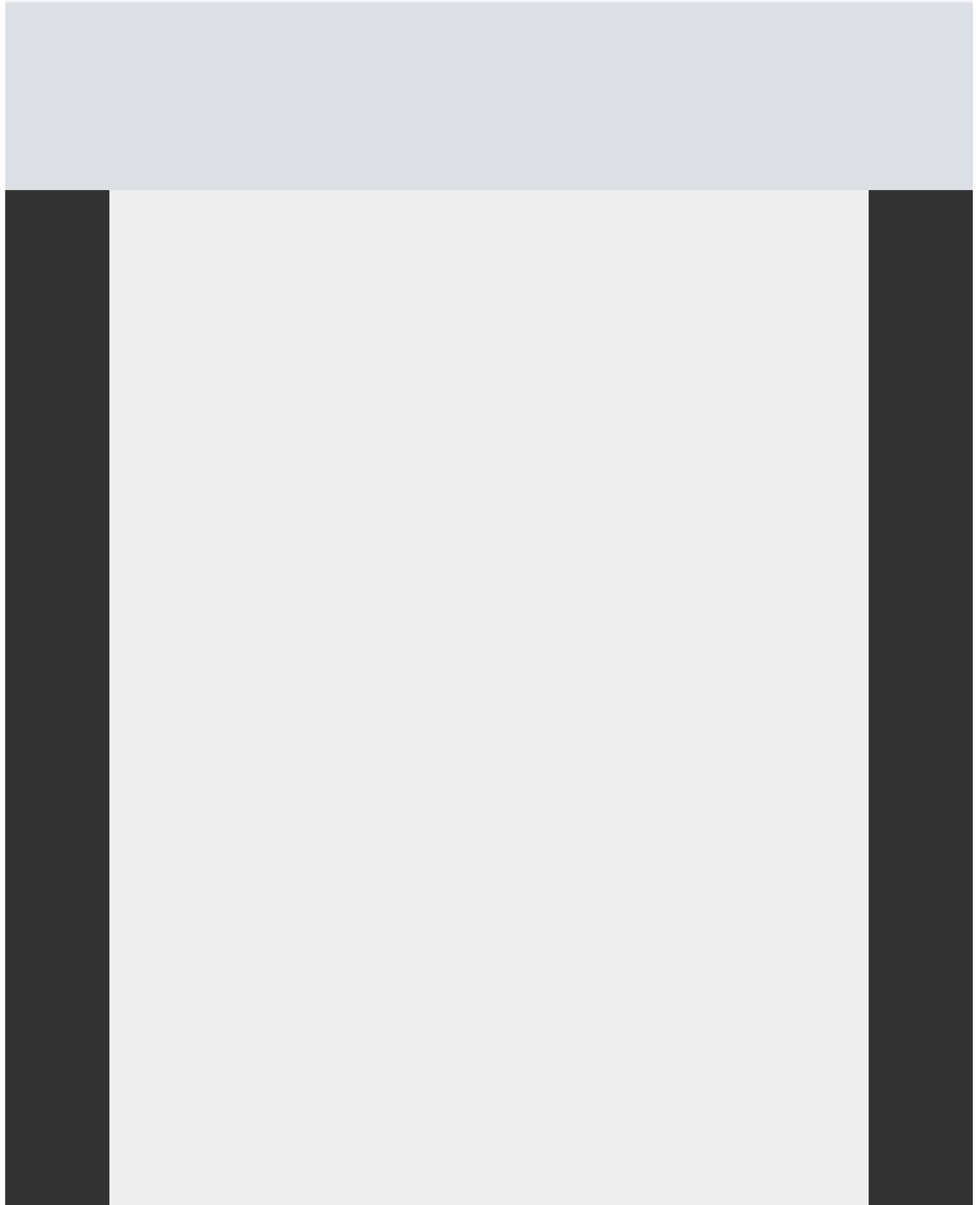


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