

COUCH TO CHIT CHAT

14 DAYS TO YOUR FIRST CONVERSATION

HELLO!

I LOVE YOU!

AWESOME!!

XOXO <3



SEE YOU!

I LIKE IT

BAZINGA

INTRODUCTION

Couch to chit chat in 14 days

USING THIS METHOD, YOU WILL BE SPEAKING ANOTHER LANGUAGE. YOU WON'T BE FLUENT, YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SAY EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY, BUT YOU WILL SPEAK THE LANGUAGE.

So many methods talk about *fluency* as your goal. This just isn't good enough when you want to start reaping the benefits of being multilingual right away.

The most natural learning happens out in the wild, through interaction with native speakers, in natural environment. So, it's really important to try and jump head first into real-world language practice as soon as possible in your learning process! You'll be bad. You'll make mistakes... but nobody will mind! In fact, quite the contrary! People will be delighted you've made the effort to say a few words in their tongue.

To help you make this difficult, but crucial leap of faith, we've prepared an actionable study plan that will get you **from zero to your first casual chit chat in just 14 days** that actually works. Follow it properly, and you'll amaze your friends and family with your newly-acquired language skills.

The secret of this approach is that it's a gentle introduction to the **most actionable set of words and expressions**, which makes you speak from day one: starting off with simple greetings and introductions, and slowly building up to compliments and pleasantries that will get you through the whole evening, and beyond. You'll be a far cry from a native speaker, but you won't have to resort to speaking English...

To get you through your first chat with such a limited linguistic arsenal, it will also arm you with **handy expressions you can use to avoid difficult questions and encourage others to take hold of the conversa-**

tion. This is critical to make sure that people who are speaking to you in your second language enjoy the process of speaking to you, and don't feel let down by your less-than-perfect abilities.

The plan is divided into daily, bite-size portions which you can complete easily even if you're busy with work and studies. We've also included regular practice breaks in the schedule, with simple tasks you can complete to solidify the skills you've acquired earlier in the week. **This is achievable with just two weeks of discipline.**

Try out the basic phrases that you learn without fear—native speakers expect new learners to make mistakes. When was the last time you were bothered by a non-native speaker of English making a slight grammar mistake? Never, right! So, don't be embarrassed for a single moment. It's far more embarrassing to not be able to speak at all...

(MON) Greeting, thanking and parting

(TUE) Say your name

(WED) **Practice break:** Greet a clerk

(THU) Deflections and interjections

(FRI) Studies and occupation

(SAT) Age and hometown

(SUN) **Practice break:** Call the radio

(MON) Favourite food and drink

(TUE) Making a compliment

(WED) Ask and offer help

(THU) **Practice break:** Help a stranded tourist

(FRI) Find out the zeitgeist

(SAT) Show off

(SUN) **Your first chat chat!**

DAY 1

Greeting, thanking and parting

WHETHER IT'S IN YOUR NATIVE LANGUAGE, OR ONE YOU'VE ONLY STARTED LEARNING TODAY, YOU'LL GET MUCH FURTHER IF YOU'RE RESPECTFUL AND POLITE.

A big part of that is cultural sensibility, empathy and observation, but some nice words and expressions can also come in handy, particularly to get you out of countless embarrassing situations you're bound to find yourself in at the beginning of your learning journey.

I recommend getting a hang of a few basic polite expressions whenever you go abroad, even if you don't ever plan to learn the local language, and a good place to look them up is the Useful foreign phrases list at Omniglot. Failing that, why not try using HiNative to ask native speakers how they would say the expressions?

Which brings us to your first daily task!

TO DO:

Find translations of the following expressions in your target language:

- Hello
- Pleased to meet you
- Goodbye
- Excuse me
- Thank you
- Please
- May I___?
- Shall we___?
- You're welcome

Write down the translated expressions somewhere you can reference them quickly and inconspicuously. Why not get a tiny notebook that can fit in your pocket, dedicating one page to each day in this guide? You could also write them on your phone, or if you were feeling really motivated, set your phone lock screen to a list of these expressions!

Remember, that just like in English, there will be times when some of these expressions aren't appropriate for any given social situation. When finding your translations, be aware that there may be various ways to thank somebody or excuse yourself, but it's really not worth spending too long getting bogged down in the details just yet. A good rule of thumb is go for the most polite version that is used in everyday conversation.

Whenever you feel like there's some ambiguity in how one of these expressions is used in the real world, make a mark next to it to remind yourself to listen carefully to how it's used by native speakers.

Once you've got this list, give yourself some helpful pronunciation hints, spelling words out phonetically if it helps. You want this chart to be readily accessible and usable. Commit these words to memory as soon as you can, and practice them until they just roll off the tongue.



DAY 2

Say your name

OUR NAMES ARE BY FAR THE CLOSEST WORDS TO US EMOTIONALLY, PROCESSED AT AN ENTIRELY UNCONSCIOUS LEVEL. SO POWERFUL IS THE EFFECT, THAT WE EVEN HAVE A STRONG, IMPLICIT PREFERENCE FOR LETTERS OUR NAME IS COMPOSED OF.

What's amazing is that most people are notoriously bad at remembering others' names, even in their own language! This makes names a low hanging fruit for foreign language learners looking to impress in a conversation.

But how do you remember what are in essence random sets of letters, pronounced in a way you can barely decipher, and only mentioned in passing? We asked Mattias Ribbing, a three-time Swedish Memory Champion, and Grand Master of Memory.

Matthias travels on speaking gigs around the globe, encountering hundreds of new faces every month, yet he never forgets a name! What's his secret?

Rather than putting pen to paper, or resorting to cheesy smart-phone apps that would break the flow of the conversation, **Matthias follows a simple, three-step approach every time he comes across a new name:**

1. Think of an image that clearly represents the name. This can be a common association (Mary > Virgin Mary), sound resemblance (Siegel > Seagull), etc.
2. Enlarge the image in your head and combine it with the person you want to associate it with. If your contact's name is Bree, for example, don't just think of a small slice of cheese, but imagine Bree balancing an enormous round of stinky in her hands!

3. Remind yourself of the image through the day, and a few more times throughout the week, to solidify it in your memory via the [spacing effect](#)

And that's it! Follow these three simple steps and you'll never be the one awkwardly thinking of a way to attract someone's attention without admitting you forgot the name they mentioned just five minutes ago.

At first, you'll struggle to pay enough attention during your interlocutor's introduction, and find it difficult to think of a good image fast enough, but eventually this process becomes second nature, and you'll barely have to think about it.

Of course, to remember someone's name, you'll first have to ask them. In fact, as a foreigner, chances are it's you who'll get this question first! Look up the expressions below on Omniglot [useful foreign phrases list](#) and add them to your phrasebook.

Also, from now on, think really carefully before asking the question "What's your name?". Don't treat it like some throwaway greeting, but ask the question with conviction, at only a time that you're ready to hear the answer. Take ownership of the question, and you'll be able to take ownership of the answer too.

TO DO:

Find translations of the following expressions in your target language:

- What's your name?
- That's a nice name
- My name is...
- Please call me...
- Please say that again
- Please speak more slowly
- Please write it down for me

DAY 3

Practice break: Greet a clerk

JUST AS YOUR MUSCLES NEED SOME REST WHEN YOU'RE PREPARING FOR A MARATHON, YOUR BRAIN REQUIRES BREAKS TO CONSOLIDATE EVERYTHING YOU'VE LEARNED AND FORM MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS.

Today, there will be no new information to acquire. Instead, you'll try to put what you've learned already to good use!

This will be the first day that you've had a chance to recalibrate, commit what you have researched to memory, and also have your first opportunity to actually use the language that you have learned.

Remember, if by today you haven't got a good grasp of the expressions that you learned today and yesterday.

GIVE IT A GO:

Find a local restaurant or grocery store run by speakers of your target language. If you live in a larger city, you should have no problems finding one nearby. Go treat yourself to a tasty dinner, or some foreign snacks and don't forget to greet the clerk using the expressions you've learned!

You might feel awkward at first, but I guarantee that their reaction will be worth it! If you visit the store regularly enough, it'll also become a great motivator to keep learning. There's no shame in starting your introductions by saying, "By the way, I've started to learn your language. Would you mind if I said a word or two to place my order?"

If you live in a more remote area, find a Facebook group for learners of your target language and introduce yourself there instead. A simple

“Hello! My name is _____. What’s your name?” is enough :)

Another option is to post on a language exchange group, and offer to buy a cup of coffee and a cake to a native speaker in return for helping with your translations and perfecting your pronunciation.

No matter what you do, make today the day when you actually use the language that we’ve built up over these past two days.



DAY 4

Deflections and interjections

YOUR VOCABULARY IS STILL VERY LIMITED, SO THERE WILL BE COUNTLESS SITUATIONS WHERE YOU'LL HAVE NO CLUE WHERE THE CONVERSATION IS GOING, OR HAVE NOTHING INSIGHTFUL TO SAY.

What most textbooks will teach you to handle such situations is to reply that you do not understand the question, or ask for help translating your thoughts. While this is certainly very useful for you personally, incessant questions can completely kill the vibe for everyone else.

So, while you should always clarify questions that may have lasting consequences, in most casual situations it's often more appropriate to let it go. It just doesn't matter if you don't understand everything.

Below are some great ways to deflect difficult questions and encourage others to continue talki. This will not only give you more time to reflect your position on the issue, and more information to work with, but will also make you appear like a good listener, and a great conversationalist!

1. MIMIC

Repeat what the other person said, with a question mark in the end. For example:

Lucy: I love the tiramisu in this restaurant.

You: Tiramisu?

Lucy: Yes, the tiramisu here is so tender, and with just the right amount of mascarpone. Almost as good as the tiramisu I had in Cetara.

You: Cetara?

Lucy: A cute little village in the south of Italy. I went there on holiday

last summer and it was an absolutely unforgettable experience.

You: Unforgettable experience?

This can go on virtually forever, and without using a single word beyond what Lucy has told you, she'll walk away with the feeling of having had a wonderful conversation with someone genuinely interested in what she has to say.

2. INTERJECT

It's in your interest for each response to go on for as long as possible, for Lucy to open up to you, instead of returning the question you'd never be able to answer yourself.

Make it clear that you're paying attention, and are interested in what Lucy has to say. The simplest way to do that is to nod and maintain eye contact, but ideally, you should also employ interjections to encourage her to go on.

TO DO:

Find out what the most common and useful interjections are in your target language. In English, some common examples would be 'um,' 'uh,' 'mm,' 'eh,' etc.

3. DEFLECT

Eventually, you will get asked a question that will be difficult to brush off with a simple 'mm.' If you're in a group of friends, the best way to deal with this situation is to forward the question to someone else. For example:

Lucy: Seahawks are going to take the title this year, right?

You: [*clueless about Japanese baseball*] Mark, what do you think?

Mark: Um, eh, I haven't really been in the loop recently.

The beauty of this method is that Lucy still receives a meaningful answer

to her question, just not from the person she asked it to. Of course, this works especially well if the person on the receiving end is an expert on the topic, or at least has the linguistic skills to muster a reasonable answer on the spot.

TO DO:

Find out how to say “What do you think?” in your target language.

4. PROD

Sometimes you’ll fall down on a single piece of vocabulary within the question, or you won’t even quite catch the theme of the question. You can try asking a question which will make your partner expand on what they are asking, which will give you another chance to catch what the theme of the question is.

Lucy: Where can I get more RAM around here?

You: Why are you thinking of doing that?

Lucy: Well my computer is so slow, I read on the internet it’s the cheapest way of speeding it up.

Without having any idea what RAM is, we’ve made Lucy expand on what she’s saying, and we’ve managed to get the keyword ‘computer’, meaning that if we knew of any computer shops in the area, we could send her in the appropriate direction.

TO DO:

Find out how to say “What for?” and “Why are you thinking of doing so”.

5. BLUFF

If no one else is available to answer the question, and the topic is clearly casual enough not to lead to any irreversible consequences, the final tip is to try and get the feel of the expected answer from the other party, based on their intonation or facial expression, and then confidently an-

swer it with a Yes, No, I think so, or I'm not sure.

TO DO:

Find out how to say "Yes," "No," "I think so," "I don't think so," and "I'm not sure." last summer and it was an absolutely unforgettable experience.



DAY 5

Studies and occupation

TODAY MAY FEEL MORE LIKE STUDYING, SINCE WE'RE GOING TO BE DOING WHAT USUALLY APPEARS IN THE FIRST FEW CHAPTERS OF A LANGUAGE TEXTBOOK, AND MAKE SURE THAT YOU CAN INTRODUCE HOW YOU SPEND YOUR TIME TO OTHERS.

People love categorizing each other into groups and character types. Whether that's good or bad, useful or misleading, some of the most common questions you'll hear will be about your studies, profession, age and nationality. The order and type of questions will vary from country to country, but you're bound to have to discuss at least one of these on a regular basis.

It's a very tall order to learn the major professions in any given language, and since the latest trend in job titles is to make them even more obscure, it's probably not going to help too much anyway unless you happen to chance across somebody with a traditional vocation.

So, your task for today is a simple one:

TO DO:

Find out how to explain your major, your profession, and ask others about theirs. Hint: here too, a simple "And you?" is all it takes! You don't even need to understand what they do exactly... Simply show some excitement in return. Most people seem to think their job is exhausting, so finding out how to say "wow, that must be tough" is usually a safe bet.

DAY 6

Age and hometown

TODAY IS A AN EXTENSION OF WHAT WE DID YESTERDAY, IN BUILDING UP A SOLID ARSENAL OF SELF-INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL TO EQUIP YOU TO ANSWER THE INEVITABLE QUESTIONS THAT YOU WILL GET WHEN MEETING PEOPLE FROM A NEW CULTURE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

In some cultures, asking someone's age is impolite, especially if you are talking to a woman. In others, it's the first question you will get in order to figure what register to use from there on.

In some countries, your ethnic origins or geographic hometown are of no importance. In others, they define you as a person, and people are expected to be proud of their origins, passionately defending the superiority of their people.

To avoid getting into trouble, or offending your new friends, today's task consists of two parts: one cultural, and one linguistic.

TO DO:

1. Search online and ask on HiNative what topics are fair game, and what's best to be avoided in your initial introduction.
2. Find out how to tell your age and hometown, and ask others about theirs. When answering where you're from, try not to stop at 'Buffalo' or 'France,' but expand it with a simple, witty comment about the place. For example: 'Normandy, home of the Camembert.'

DAY 7

Practice break: Call the radio

TIME TO HAVE SOME FUN WITH OUR NEW FOUND LANGUAGE ABILITY.
THIS TIME WE'RE GOING TO GET OUR FIVE MINUTES OF FAME.

By now, the hope is that you'll be immersed enough in the culture of your target language that you'll already have researched some of the native TV and radio stations, many of which will be available for free online. Why not try [TuneIn](#), which has live radio streams from hundreds of countries. Music programmes are of course the easiest to get your ear tuned to, but why not challenge yourself with a talk programme, just to get accustomed to the sound of the language?

TO DO:

If you're adventurous enough, find a music radio station with call-in music requests. Give them a call, quickly introduce yourself, and mention the song you'd like to hear next. You may want to find out how to say "I'm learning the _____ language." and add it to your introduction.

Alternatively, make a YouTube video with a short self-introduction and send us a link at hello@edulift.co - we'll give you some tips, and if you're up for it, share it on Twitter!

DAY 8

Favourite food and drink

MANY PEOPLE FALL IN LOVE WITH A COUNTRY'S CUISINE BEFORE THEY FALL IN LOVE WITH THE LANGUAGE, AND THE SAME MAY WELL BE TRUE FOR YOU.

Chances are, your first casual conversation will happen in a bar or restaurant, or at least move there by the end of the day. Learning some basic expressions to order food, let others know your preferences, and comment on their choice will go a long way to get you through the evening.

Food related expressions can be divided into three categories:

1. ORDERING

The most important set of expressions is of course related to ordering, and among these expressions, the most useful to a language learner by far is "What do you recommend?" No longer do you have to worry about a foreign writing system, nor the risk of getting a "we don't serve this after eleven" in reply. Simply ask your friend or server what their recommendation is, and let them worry about the rest.

Of course, if you have allergies and do not eat some food for other reasons, it's good to learn how to say "I don't eat ____" and "I can't eat this," to avoid a bad surprise!

TO DO:

Find translations of the following expressions in your target language:

- What do you recommend?
- I'd like to order ____ / I'll have ____

- I don't eat ____

2. APPRECIATING

Once the food is on the table, it's polite in most cultures to have a comment on its taste. A simple 'Delicious!' will suffice in most situations. For extra points, learn some expressions to comment on what a great choice the others made.

TO DO:

Find translations of the following expressions in your target language:

- This tastes great.
- You made a great choice!
- That looks very tasty.

3. DISCUSSING

Now that you've appreciated the food you're having, this is a great opportunity to move the conversation beyond the venue, and discuss your favourite foods and drinks, or specialities from your country.

You could of course have this conversation before you order, but I prefer to wait to prevent others from recommending foods that are too similar to what I'd have at home, or worse yet, suggesting that we move to a different place, better adapted to my supposed preferences.

TO DO:

Find translations of the following expressions in your target language:

- My favourite food/drink is ____
- What's your favourite food/drink?

DAY 9

Making a compliment

NOTHING CAN BRIGHTEN THE ATMOSPHERE MORE THAN A TIMELY, GENUINE COMPLIMENT. AND THE BEST PART IS THAT A SIMPLE ‘_____ IS BEAUTIFUL,’ ‘I LOVE YOUR _____’ OR ‘YOUR _____ IS COOL’ IS USUALLY ALL IT TAKES.

Through the conversation, try to be attentive to what the others wear, the accessories they might have, or maybe their phones and other gadgets. When you notice something genuinely interesting, look at it for a few seconds, then use one of the expressions above. Depending on the situation, and your relationship with the other person, you can also touch or pick up the object to have a closer look.

TO DO:

Find translations of the following expressions in your target language:

_____ is beautiful

I love your _____

Your _____ is cool

DAY 10

Ask and offer help

FROM LITTLE HICCUPS LIKE SPLITTING THE BILL OR FIXING A BROKEN BRACELET, TO BIG ASKS DURING REAL CRISES, IT'S VERY LIKELY THAT YOU'LL COME ACROSS SITUATIONS WHERE YOU NEED TO ASK FOR HELP, OR CAN OFFER HELP TO OTHERS.

Next time you notice the person you're with looks concerned, keeps losing focus on the conversation, or has a more obvious, visible problem you could help them with, start with a simple 'May I help you?', and you might just save the day. Bonus points for offering help to people outside of the group you're with. Your friends will appreciate how attentive you are, and step in quickly to help the person in their native language.

TO DO:

Find translations of the following expressions in your target language:

- May I help you?
- Could you help me please?

DAY 11

Practice break: Help a stranded tourist

STRANGERS ARE JUST FRIENDS THAT YOU HAVEN'T MET YET, AND WHAT BETTER WAY TO MAKE A NEW FRIEND THAN TO HELP A TOURIST IN YOUR COUNTRY THAT'S IN NEED?

Whilst some tourists may have their own itineraries, and would rather be left alone, the vast majority would be glad of some assistance. This is a great opportunity for you to show off your city, and to help out some visitors at the same time!

If you're taking this seriously, you could even volunteer your time at a museum, visitors information center or even at your local transport hub. Many such organisations have official programmes where you will be given some training, a uniform, and plenty of opportunity to interact with foreign people.

TO DO:

Go into a touristic part of your city and try to spot speakers of your target language who look stranded or confused. Make sure not to assume their nationality based on looks alone, instead looking for clues in the language of their guidebook, or simply overhear what they're saying. Approach them politely with a "Hello! Can I help you?" in English, or your mother tongue may be appropriate before you can confidently switch to their language.

DAY 12

Find out the zeitgeist

A VERY EASY WAY TO STRIKE UP CONVERSATION IS TO TALK ABOUT THE LATEST GOINGS ON IN THE COUNTRY OF THE LANGUAGE YOU'RE TRYING TO SPEAK.

You're not yet quite at the level where you can have a discussion about news, politics and current affairs yet. However, if you find out what the latest music, social media and video trends are, the chances are you can enjoy whatever the latest craze is with your new friends, and you'll never need to speak English to enjoy it!

You can while away the hours with new friends watching YouTube videos and listening to your favourite playlists without having to use much of your foreign language at all. Yet, in the process, you'll build friendships, and generate lots of opportunity to say the few phrases that you do know!

TO DO:

Head to the YouTube homepage of the country of the language you are studying, and find out what's hot—the 'popular' section is a great place to start. It's no problem at all if you watch with subtitles.

DAY 13

Show off

A REALLY GOOD WAY TO GET PEOPLE TO FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR PERSONALITY IS TO SHOW OFF SOME SPECIAL SKILLS OR TALENTS THAT YOU MAY HAVE.

Today, we're going to focus on the vocabulary that is relevant to your unique passions and abilities. It doesn't have to be in any great detail—just enough to communicate what it is that makes you interesting.

If you can juggle, find out how to teach the basics in your second language. If fishing is your thing, learn the vocabulary for the core bits of fishing equipment. Do you sing well? Learn a song in your target language!

TO DO:

Find out how to communicate your passions in your target language. YouTube instructional videos may be helpful for this.

Find translations of the following expressions in your target language:

- Hey, can I show you this?
- Would you like to try?
- Wanna have a go?



DAY 14

Your first chat chat!

CONGRATULATIONS! You made it through 13 CHALLENGING DAYS OF PREPARATION, AND YOU'RE NOW READY FOR YOUR FIRST REAL CHIT CHAT!

FIRST CHIT CHAT:

Find native speakers of your target language and join them for a drink or a dinner.

Some ideas for finding someone to talk to:

- Do you have a friend who's a native, even if you normally speak English with each other? Ask the friend to invite his or her native friends for a meal, ideally at a place serving cuisine from their country. That will encourage them to use their native language and teach you about their foods and culture.
- Many universities organize casual language exchange nights on a regular basis, usually open to outsiders. There's a risk that conversation will devolve back into English after a few drinks, but the events tend

to otherwise be very welcoming to beginners.

- Know a casual restaurant or bar where speakers of your target language tend to hang out? Have a drink, and if you notice a lone customer or a group that seems to be open enough for you to join in, walk up and talk to them!
- If you're religious, find a local place of worship that caters to expats from your target country and join them in prayer. If you hang there for a while after the service, you're sure to find people to interact with.

Just because you'll be speaking in a foreign language, it doesn't mean that you shouldn't have a great time. You will be nervous, but if you smile and look around, it will help you to relax and enjoy the moment. After all, it's your big day, and you want to drink it all in!



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