



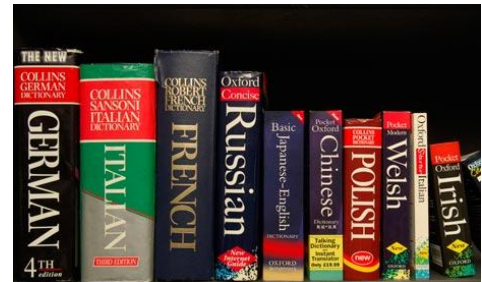
ENGLISH 4 LIFE

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So You Want to Speak Great English?

Suggestions for Making It Happen

By Sheri Summers



Attending classes, although a huge step in becoming proficient and fluent in English and is extremely important, it is only one part of your English education. To become proficient in English you have to *take responsibility* and *be active* in acquiring it. You have to live and breathe English. How well you succeed is really up to you. Here are some suggestions for making English your own.

Think of English as more like an art than a science

Many people study English as if it were a math or science. They often feel they are trying to solve a problem. Yes, you can study rules, but there are often more exceptions to the rules than there are rules. This doesn't mean you should study them, but *language is living*. It breathes, it moves, it grows, it changes. You have to learn to live it, to feel it in your soul. You have to make it your own. It has to become a part of you. It has to feel natural.

Don't hold on to your dictionary so tightly

Your top priority in learning English should be to think in English. Our brains slow down when we are constantly translating English to and from our language. The first thing you should do is stop translating new words you hear directly into your native language. Most people immediately go to their electronic dictionaries when they come across something new. Don't do it! Try this instead:

1. Try to understand the new word or phrase from context. The words and ideas around them should help you make a good guess. If you still don't understand...
2. Ask someone to explain what it means in English. If you still don't understand...
3. Consult an English-English dictionary*. If you still don't understand...
4. Consult a dictionary in your own language.

* I recommend using a paper English-English dictionary. Many teachers have noticed that their students remember words much longer when they are forced to search for them in the dictionary. Also, dictionaries in book form generally give more detailed examples than electronic dictionaries.

Keep a list of new words and phrases in your own notes

Make your own vocabulary lists and review them often. Write sentences to help you remember what they mean. Use these new words and phrases in conversations and writings whenever you have a chance. The more you use the words, the more they become your own.

Surround yourself in English

Listen to radio in English; watch TV and movies in English; read newspapers, magazines, books, and the internet in English; join a class, club, or any gathering that is conducted in English. The important thing is that you are around English as much as possible. When you spend time living a language, it comes to you more naturally like it does for a child.



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