



TIPS FOR STUDYING LANGUAGES AT UNIVERSITY

Study every day

- Language classes in university are cumulative and move fast. Be sure to review at least 30 minutes every day: the material will stay fresh in your mind and you'll consolidate your learning.

Attend and participate in every class

- During class, your professor teaches the course material in a much simpler way than handouts or texts do. It's the best opportunity to learn and practice the language.
- If you're called on, answer. Even if it's wrong! Learn phrases like "can you give me a hint?" or "I'm not sure" for times when you need a little more help.

Get to know your classmates

- Participating in class can be scary, but it's a lot easier when you know who's in the class with you. Get to know your classmates. Not only will this make you feel more comfortable speaking in class, but you can also form study groups to practice outside of the class and be able to ask your classmates for notes.

Study for tests efficiently

- Make sure you know what kind of test it'll be and study for what you'll have to do on the test. If it's a listening test, practice listening. If it's a grammar test, study the grammatical structures that will be on the test.
- Make sure you can produce instead of just recognize. Unlike classes with multiple choice questions, language classes require you to produce.

Grammar

- This is essential to learning a language. You have to understand the structure of the target language, so be sure to study it.
- You can make comparisons with English grammar to help but you also need to practice the target structure (read, write, speak and listen to them).

Listening

- If you're a beginner, listen to easy language learning materials and read along.
- When you're listening to material, be sure you're doing so attentively and actively. Jot down notes while you're listening, especially on terms you didn't quite understand.

Speaking

- Study out loud and don't mumble. Practice the language even if you think it sounds weird.
- Speak up in class. Even if you're not answering the question correctly or not pronouncing a word properly, chances are your professor will correct you and notify you of your mistakes. Knowing your mistakes helps you to learn them.

Reading

- Don't translate text word-by-word. Instead, read the whole passage and try to get the meaning of verbs from context. Then, go back and look up unfamiliar words.
- Make flashcards from vocabulary that is unfamiliar to you. Do more than just translate the word into English – use it in a sentence or draw a picture to help consolidate your learning and trigger your memory.

Writing

- Although you may not be expected to write a research paper in the foreign language, you will be asked to write shorter assignments or at least an email. You should be comfortable doing this.
- Writing will require you to know the grammar and be able to understand readings. If it's an email, sometimes using colloquial language makes most sense, so practice listening to informal materials such as talk shows or radio shows.
- Have someone revise your writing and point out where you've made mistakes. If you know you've made a mistake but are responsible for correcting it, it'll help you learn the proper method.

Ask for help if you need it

- During class, if there's vocabulary or a concept you don't understand, be sure to ask. It might be important to the central context/theme of the lesson.
- Make use of your professor's office hours. This is a time to not only clear up parts of the lesson or assignment you don't understand, but also a chance for you to converse in the language outside of lecture.

Read, speak and listen to the language in many ways

- Listen to the language you're studying on the radio, find CDs, or read the newspaper online. You can watch children's shows or read children's literature as well.
- The U of T Media Commons in Robarts Library might be a good place to check out.

Attend language tables

- There are lots of opportunities to converse in and practice your language on campus! Just ask your professor to give you more information on these conversation cafes.
- You can also check out departmental websites: the French Department, for example, has links to the Multimedia Laboratories in Carr Hall.

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