

# LEARNING english

W

W

W



BBC  
WORLD  
SERVICE

**SELF STUDY**  
**HOW TO MAKE THE MOST**  
**OF YOUR STUDY TIME**

All over the world, millions of people are studying English. Some study in a school, a college or in a club. Others study at home on their own. Whatever your situation, this **Self Study** booklet is designed to help you. It is filled with ideas and helpful suggestions for making the most of your study time.

Using extracts from BBC World Service radio programmes, the booklet will help you ...

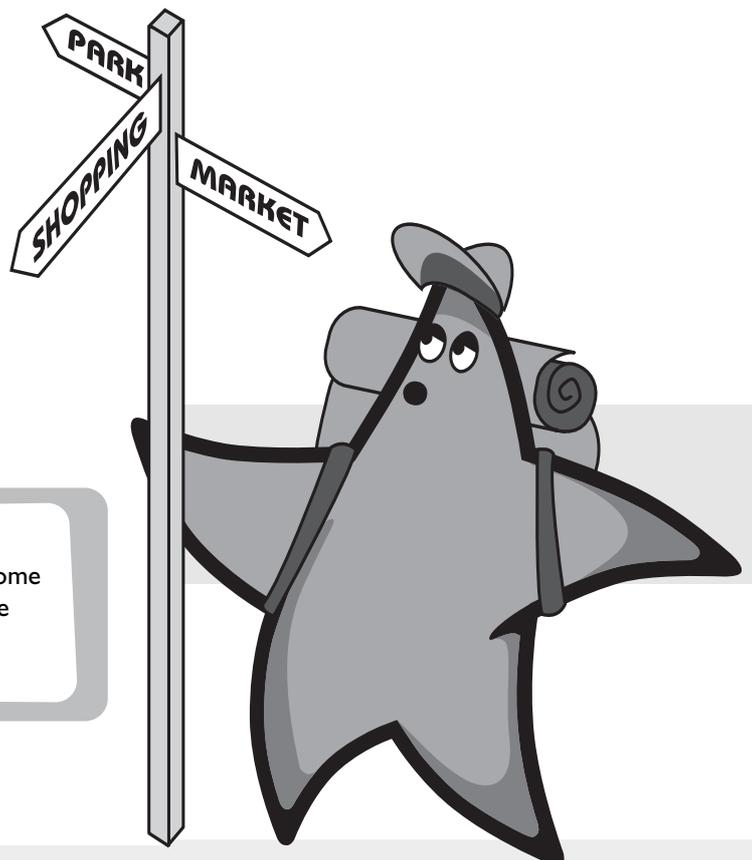
- ① access English around you.
- ② set your own goals and see your own progress.
- ③ make decisions about learning vocabulary.
- ④ make the most of your dictionary.
- ⑤ improve your pronunciation.
- ⑥ make the most of the books you have.
- ⑦ use the internet to improve your English.
- ⑧ create networks of English learners in your own village, town or country.

## How to use this booklet

Each page looks at a different area related to self study. On each page you'll find ...

- a short introduction to the topic which explains why this aspect of speaking is important.
- an extract or extracts from a range of BBC World Service radio programmes related to the topic.
- a reading and a task to accompany the extract(s).
- key tips to help you improve your study skills.
- a task to help you practise what has been explained.

On the final page you will find a glossary explaining some of the words and phrases in the booklet. Words in the glossary are in bold and italic (*like this*).



## ① Accessing English around you

When you are studying alone, what is the best way to find sources of English to help you learn the language? Of course, you listen to BBC World Service radio and you may have textbooks to help you. But where else can you find English if you don't live in a country where English is a first or main language?

The BBC World Service radio programme, **Going Global**, looks at English from an international **perspective**. In the following extract, Philip Ryle, a teacher at King's College at the University of London, gives his advice on finding English around you.

**Before you read the extract** Are there any English-language newspapers or magazines published in your country? Can you name them? Where can you buy them?

*When you are living in a country where English isn't used as the first language it can sometimes be difficult to find interesting English texts. But in many places, local English-language newspapers are just as good – and possibly even more resourceful than 'authentic' British newspapers. Obviously, they are much cheaper because they are locally produced, but they are also more relevant to the learners because they understand the contexts of the stories and articles. Much of what we read in British newspapers is difficult for learners to understand, not because the vocabulary is difficult but because they don't have all the background information which they need to understand it fully.*

1. What are the two advantages which Philip sees in learners reading locally-produced newspapers?
2. Why can articles in British newspapers be difficult for learners to understand?

Apart from local newspapers and BBC World Service, you may be able to find lots of other sources of English around you. Think about ...

**English language films** You may be able to see English-language films on TV or at the cinema. If you watch English films with **subtitles**, try to close your eyes from time to time to avoid reading the text. Can you understand what you hear? Remember, this type of listening activity can be difficult at first. Don't worry – keep trying!

**Local libraries** Is there a library near you which has books in English? For example, many British Council offices around the world have lending libraries where you can borrow English-language books. If there isn't a library near you, try to organise your own with a group of friends. If each person in a group of four has a different book or magazine, it means that everyone can read four different texts!

**Notices, signs and labels** Are there English-language signs in your town? Do you buy food or things for your house which have labels in English? Try to be aware of how much written English there is around you. Can you pronounce the words on the label? Do you understand the instructions if they are written in English?

**Talks and lectures** In your town, you may have clubs and societies which give talks in English. Try to find out if there is a cultural society you can join. There may also be foreign companies which give marketing seminars or who publish brochures and booklets. For example, if you are interested in becoming a teacher, try to find out if there are any foreign educational groups working in your area. They may have talks you can attend or books you could read.

### TASK

When you next walk around your town, try to count how many signs or notices you see in English. Make a note of any words you don't know. Can you work out what they mean by re-reading the notice or sign?

## ② Setting your own goals and measuring your own progress

Studying alone can be fun – but it can also be difficult. It is often hard **to motivate yourself** when you have no-one to share your learning with, and it is very hard to see how much progress you have made.

We spoke to Beth Neher, an English language teacher trainer in London, to find out what advice she could give to people studying alone.

**Before you read the extract** What do you find easy to do in English? What is most difficult for you? What would you like to be able to do by the end of next month?

*I think the biggest problem for any language learner is that of being able to see the progress they are making. In some situations, it is easier. For example, if you come to the UK and you don't speak English, you can see when you have made progress. Suddenly, you understand someone when they ask you a question, or you can ask for something in a shop or understand articles in the newspaper. Obviously, it's much more difficult when you are learning English in your own country. So, I think that the most important things for learners to do is to set themselves both long-term and short-term goals. A long-term goal could be to pass an international English exam at the end of the year. A short-term goal could be, for example, to learn a song by heart or to be able to understand the news headlines by the end of the month. In both cases, the goals need to be realistic and time-bound. It's pointless saying 'I want to speak fluent, accurate English in a month' if you are not near that stage. You need to be very honest with yourself about what your strengths and weaknesses are. Time limits are also vital. If you don't give yourself a time limit, your motivation can just disappear. However, if you achieve what you want within the time you set, **it can give you a real boost!***

1. In Beth's opinion, why is it easier to see your progress if you are studying in an English-speaking country?
2. What are the two things necessary for good 'goals'? Why is each important?

But how do you know if your goals are realistic? And how can you see when you've made progress? Here are some ideas to help you.

**Test your current level** What can you do at the moment? What is difficult for you? Try to find ways of testing yourself in different language areas. For example, to test your listening skills, listen to the BBC World Service news in English today. How much did you understand? 75%? 50%? 30%? Make a note of how well you did in each test.

**Make your own action plan** An action plan is a list of your goals and what you are going to do to achieve each goal. So, if you understood 30% of the news programme today, your goal might be to understand 50% in one month's time. How are you going to do this? You could plan to listen to the news every day, note down words you hear often and learn them, and record the news programme so that you can listen to it more than once to check your understanding. Try to make action plans for the other language goals you've set. Remember, however, that the time limit you give yourself has to be realistic. Learning takes time.

**Test yourself at the end of your time limit** When the end of the month approaches, set aside some time to test your progress. For example, you could say to yourself 'Next Monday, I am going to listen to the news once and find out how much I understand.' Make a note of how well you did, and then make your next action plan.

**Take an international exam** It might be possible for you to take an internationally-recognised examination such as the University of Cambridge First Certificate exam. As well as helping you see your own progress, international exams are a way of showing others, such as employers, how good your English is.

### TASK

Try the task suggested above. Listen to BBC World Service news in English today to find out how much you understand. However, always take care to prepare yourself to listen. Take a few minutes to think about the news stories you expect to hear today. What vocabulary do you expect to hear? Remember that an important key to understanding is using the background knowledge which you have already!

### 3 Planning your vocabulary learning

For many learners of English, learning vocabulary can mean **learning** long lists of words **by heart**. Although this technique can help you remember words, how can you learn vocabulary so that you can use the words you learn?

In this extract from **Going Global**, Paul Roberts of the University of Hertfordshire in England talks to his students about how they can plan their vocabulary learning by choosing what to remember.

**Before you read the extract** Think about how you choose words to learn. Do you try to learn all the new words you find in a text? If not, what are your **criteria** for choosing the words you learn? Are they there same as those which Paul suggests?

*We have some words for weather here. All the phrases mean the same thing: It's raining cats and dogs; it's pouring with rain; it's raining **stair rods**; there is torrential rain; the rain is terrible. Now which ones are best for you to remember? Well, 'It's raining cats and dogs' is a nice expression – it's very funny and so it is easy to remember – but many people wouldn't understand you if you said this. Even in England, where this **idiom** comes from, people don't usually say this. If you're thinking of talking to different people – and not just people from England – perhaps it's better to say 'torrential rain' or 'the rain is terrible' because they are easier for other people to understand.'*

1. How many ways of saying 'It's raining very hard' can you find in the text?
2. Find two reasons why 'It's raining cats and dogs' isn't the most useful expression to learn.
3. What criterion does Paul suggest for making decisions about which new vocabulary you learn?

#### Choosing words to learn

Paul suggests you need to consider your listener when you choose vocabulary. Will the person listening to me be able to understand this word or phrase? There are some other criteria which can help you choose vocabulary that is **worth learning**.

**Frequency** Do you hear or read this word often? If you find that a word or phrase  **crops up**  a lot, then it is probably a useful word for you to learn and remember.

**Range** Does this word cover one very specific idea or is it more general? Remember that if a word is very specific, you may not ever have the chance to use it. For example, a catamaran is a type of boat. We can use the word 'boat' in most situations when we talk about rivers, the sea and sailing. But, because 'catamaran' is a specific type of boat, we cannot use it so often.

**Usefulness to you** If you are interested in a particular subject, then the vocabulary used to talk about that subject will be useful to you. For example, doctors find vocabulary about illness and medicine useful.

English has too many words for you to learn all of them – so you need to decide which words you want or need to learn. Try to avoid simply memorising lists. Instead, think about the context or the sentence in which you heard the word or phrase. This will help you remember how to use it accurately.

#### TASK

Look at the glossary page. Choose five words or phrases which you feel meet your criteria for 'useful vocabulary'. Think about how you could use these words to talk about something you are interested in.

## ④ Making the most of your dictionary

When they begin to learn English, many learners buy a dictionary. But what makes a good dictionary? And how can you use it best for self study?

In the following extract, Beth Neher talks about the advantages – and disadvantages – of dictionaries.

**Before you read the extract** You can find many things in a dictionary apart from the meaning of the words you are **looking up**. Try to make a list of the different kinds of information a dictionary can give you. How many of your ideas do you find in the extract?

*Dictionaries can be really useful, but they can be problematic too, particularly if the student is using a **bilingual dictionary**. As a teacher, I really dislike those new electronic dictionaries because they often give the students misleading information. For example, if a word has more than one meaning, the bilingual dictionary may make a list of possible translations and it's impossible for the student to choose which one is right. On the other hand, if there is only one meaning, the bilingual dictionary is a very quick and easy way of finding a definition. So yes, a good bilingual dictionary is fine. But I'd always recommend learners to have a monolingual dictionary, that is one where the explanations are in English too. This is because they normally give you so much more information. You can find out, for example, what part of speech a word is – a noun, a verb, etc. You can also find out where the stress is in the word and if there is anything you have to do to use it in a sentence. For example, you might learn the word 'depend' but you need to know that, in a sentence, you would usually need to say 'depend on'. For example, 'Learning English depends on a lot of factors'. And yes, you find out if a word has more than one meaning, but each one is usually given in an example sentence and so you know which meaning you're looking for.*

1. Beth mentions one advantage and one disadvantage of bilingual dictionaries. What are they?
2. Beth talks about four different types of information which you can find in monolingual dictionaries. What are they?

So how can you make the most of your dictionary to help improve your English? Here are some ideas.

**Buy the dictionary which is best for you** There are many dictionaries available and you need to make sure that the one you buy is the one you need for your situation. If you are buying a monolingual (English / English) dictionary, check that you can understand the definitions. Remember that it is possible to buy different levels of dictionaries and, if you buy one which is too complex, you are unlikely to use it. Also, think about where you are going to use the dictionary. For example, if you study on the way to work or school, a large, heavy dictionary is not practical because it will be too heavy to carry.

**Double check definitions** If you use a bilingual dictionary, try to remember to check meanings twice. Look up the English word and find the word in translation in your own language. Then look up the translation which the dictionary has given you. Is it the same as the English word you looked up originally? This is especially important if your dictionary gives you more than one possible translation of an English word.

**Use your dictionary to correct your grammar** Remember that most monolingual dictionaries give you information about the grammar of words. For example, they will tell you what the past tense of a verb is or which preposition is needed if you want to use the word in a sentence. Use your dictionary as a source of information about grammar and pronunciation as well as to help you with the meanings of words.

### TASK

Write down five words which you have learnt recently. Try to make sure that you have a mix of types of words (nouns, verbs, adverbs, etc). Now write five sentences. Each sentence must contain one of your new words. When you have written your sentences, look up each word in the dictionary. Check ...

- your understanding Did you use the word correctly?
- your spelling Did you spell the word correctly?
- your grammar Did you write an accurate sentence for each word?

## 5 Improving your pronunciation

When you speak English, which is more important – correct grammar or good pronunciation? Many teachers will tell you that pronunciation is more important. This is because, when someone listens to you, they can understand what you want to say even if you make mistakes. However, it is more difficult if the listener cannot understand your pronunciation.

So how can you improve your pronunciation if you study alone? **Going Global**, the BBC World Service programme which looks at the development of English as a global language, spoke to Dr Jennifer Jenkins from King's College in the University of London.

**Before you read the extract** Think about your own pronunciation of English. Which aspects do you think are important? What sounds do you find difficult to say?

*I would suggest that there are four important things to focus on if you want to improve your pronunciation. First of all, it is important to be able to make the consonant sounds – the vowels are not as important. But don't worry about the 'th' sounds as in 'think' and 'this'. People will understand you even if you can't say these sounds. Secondly, you need to pay attention to groups of consonant – consonant **clusters** – at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of words. So you need to make sure, when you refer to the place 'McDonald's' that you say 'McDonald's'. Next, although the quality of vowel sounds isn't so important, you need to try and get the difference between long and short sounds, like the difference between 'live' and 'leave'. Finally, focus on getting the stress right. Remember that the main stress – or loud sound – falls on the most important word or words for your message.*

1. According to Dr Jenkins, what are the four most important things to try to get right to help improve your pronunciation? Try to say this in your own words.
2. **a, e, i, o, u** are all \_\_\_\_\_ . **b, c, d, f** are examples of \_\_\_\_\_ .

So, if you would like to improve your pronunciation, try to focus on the four areas which Dr Jenkins suggests.

**Consonant sounds** Which English consonant sounds are difficult for you to say? Try to be aware of which sounds can cause problems for you. Why are they difficult? It may be that you are not accustomed to making the shape of the sound with your mouth. Try to work out how the sound is made by repeating it to yourself.

**Consonant clusters** Are there groups of consonant sounds in English words which you never find in your own language? Try to identify which consonant clusters are difficult for you – then try to say this combination of sounds to yourself.

**Long or short vowels?** The length of a vowel can make a big difference to the meaning of what you say. For example:  
Long vowel: leave When do you leave? Short vowel: live Where do you live?

**Find the stress** If you put the stress in the correct place in a sentence, you can overcome many of the problems with individual sounds. This is because the listener will hear the words which carry the message of what you want to say – and won't notice some of the other problems. To find the stress, think to yourself 'Which words are most important for the message to be understood?'

### TASK

#### Long or short vowels

The pairs of words in the list below have similar vowel sounds. The main difference is that, in one of the words, the vowel is longer than in the other. Can you identify which one is l-o-n-g and which is short in each pair?

- a) foot / food      b) cart / cat      c) sit / seat

#### Find the stress

This task will help you to identify stressed words. Listen to the BBC World Service news headlines. As you listen, write down the key words you hear. If you have a cassette recorder, you could record the headlines and replay them to check your answers.

## 6 Making the most of the books you have

If you are studying English on your own, you may not have access to many English language textbooks. However, with a little imagination, it is possible to use the textbook in ways which will give you lots of language practice.

In this extract from **Going Global**, presenter Susan Fearn gives you some advice on making the most of an English language coursebook.

**Before you read the extract** If you have a textbook, look at the contents page. What different topics does it cover? Make a list of the different subjects which the book helps you to discuss.

*In a **monolingual** class, all the students share the same language and obviously all the students are familiar with their own society. This can sometimes have an advantage – for example, it makes it easier for the teacher to provide explanations of difficult vocabulary – but it can sometimes seem that the students have no need to speak in English, since everyone speaks the same language and shares the same culture. So one activity which can encourage students to have a greater awareness of their own society in relation to others is to consider what international visitors would need to know. But the students must go into detail, explaining exactly what the visitor needs to do. For example, if the topic of the textbook unit is ‘travel’ they might consider what a visitor would need to take to be able to travel round their country or region. This sort of thing can start with a conversation or a roleplay and go on to be a project involving writing.*

1. Susan identifies one main advantage and one main disadvantage of monolingual classes. Can you find them?
2. She gives one main suggestion for adapting material in the coursebook. What is it?

So, one idea for making the most of your textbook is to imagine you have to tell someone from another country about your own country, using the topic and the vocabulary in the book. Here are some more ideas.

**Use the pictures before you read the text** Many textbooks have pictures to illustrate the ideas and vocabulary in each unit. Before you look at the explanations and exercises, try to describe the pictures. If you do not know the exact words for the things in the pictures, can you describe them in another way?

**Teach yourself then test yourself** If your textbook contains exercises, don't write your answers in the book. Instead, write your answers on a piece of paper. After a few weeks, go back and try the exercise again. How much can you remember?

**Use BBC World Service** BBC World Service broadcasts programmes on many different topics. Why not look for programmes which discuss the same topics as those in your textbook? For example, if the topic of work appears in your textbook, why not listen to **Get That Job** to test your vocabulary and understanding? Try to record programmes which match your textbook. That way, you can have a listening and a reading library.

### TASK

Look at the BBC World Service schedule showing programmes for the next few months. Which programmes match the topics in your coursebook?

## ⑦ Using the internet to improve your English

We know from the letters and emails we receive here at the BBC that many listeners have access to the internet. The internet, perhaps more than any other learning tool, has had a huge impact on language learning. It is now possible to access authentic English language material in many parts of the world. So how can you make the most of the web to help your English studies?

Here, Beth Neher gives her advice for learners who want to use the internet to improve their English.

**Before you read the extract** Do you have access to the internet? If you do, which sites do you find most helpful for your English study? If you don't, can you imagine how you could use the internet to help you learn English?

*Obviously, the internet has created a revolution in language learning. Now more people than ever before have access to English language material, 24 hours a day. However, the world wide web does have its disadvantages for learners. I think the very fact that there is so much can make finding useful and relevant information very difficult. There's a lot of useful stuff on the web, but also a lot of **trash**. So you really need to find a way of **weeding out** what is relevant to you. Also, many of the English language learning sites I've looked at are very repetitive. They provide some worksheets to complete but they don't necessarily help learners understand English better or think about how to use the grammar they are practising in a meaningful way. However, as a teacher, I think the greatest advantage which the internet can give to learners is to communicate with others – in chatrooms, for example – and to work with real, authentic texts such as online newspapers. It's possible for online work to be interesting, creative and really meaningful.*

1. Beth mentions two problems which can occur when you use the internet to help you learn English. What are they?
2. Find two things which you can do to help with your English studies.

So what are the best ways of using the internet to help your English? Here are our top tips!

**Log on to the BBC Learning English website!** The BBC website has an area especially dedicated to English learners. As well as information about programmes, you will find learning resources such as worksheets and help with vocabulary. There is also a chat area where you can chat online with listeners in other countries. Finally, you'll find links to other websites which can help you. The address is [www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish)

**Use your search engine** If you want to find other sites, think about the words you need to use in your search engine. For international search engines, try typing in the letters EFL (English as a Foreign Language) or ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) followed by what you are interested in (for example, EFL grammar). This will help you find sites which are especially dedicated to English learners.

**Access authentic material** Most newspapers, magazines and TV and radio stations now have their own websites. So, if English language newspapers are expensive in your country, why not access them via the internet? Remember to limit your reading. Choose one or two articles or pages which you find interesting, print them out and study them in more detail when you aren't online!

### TASK

Log on to the BBC Learning English website. Leave us a message telling us what you think of the Self Study booklet.

## 8 Creating networks of English learners

Learning English on your own can be a difficult task. Studying grammar and vocabulary and listening to the BBC can help you understand what you hear and read, but, for most learners, the most important goals are to speak and write English well. And, in order to do this, you need to communicate with other people. So how can you do this if you are studying alone?

In this extract, Karen Adams, writer of BBC World Service Learning English booklets, gives her advice on how to go about creating networks of learners who can communicate with each other.

**Before you read the extract** Think about your own situation. Are any of your friends or members of your family learning English? Do you ever practise English with them?

*One of the most important things in successful language learning is getting over the fear of communicating with others in the foreign language. It's not unusual to find learners who have been studying English for many years but who find it almost impossible to have a conversation. This is usually because, when they learnt English in school, the focus was on learning grammar and vocabulary – and learning it perfectly. Making mistakes was seen as 'bad' and it is often this fear of making mistakes which means that they are too frightened to use the language which they know. In the BBC World Service English Club, we encourage learners to overcome their fear by forming networks or 'Learning Circles'. These 'Learning Circles' can have as few as two members – two friends or members of the same family – or they can be large clubs. The most important feature about them is that they encourage people to communicate in English – to talk about things which interest them, without being embarrassed about making mistakes. But Learning Circles needn't only focus on speaking. You could have a Learning Circle of penfriends who all write letters to each other. The most important thing is that it is what they say or write to each other which is important – not simply the grammar or vocabulary they use!*

1. In Karen's opinion, what is the biggest **obstacle** which learners have to overcome when they are learning a foreign language?
2. What is the main aim of Learning Circles? How many people do you need to form a Learning Circle?

What are the best ways of creating opportunities for communicating in English?

**Start an English Learning Circle** Ask your family and friends if they would like to spend some time speaking in English. Arrange a regular time each week which you set aside for talking in English. This could be after your favourite BBC World Service programme. Talk about what you understood, what you thought of the programme – and find out what the others thought.

**Make contact with learners in other places** Do you work for a company which has offices in other towns? Does your school have contacts with other schools in your region? Why not find out if people who are working or studying in these places would like to communicate with you in English? This could be by letter, on the phone or in person.

**Start an international network** If you have a friend or family member who lives in another country, he or she might know people who would like to write to you, or to your Learning Circle. Remember, when you are communicating with someone who doesn't speak your language, you really need to speak English!

### TASK

Start your own Learning Circle today! Design a poster (in English), asking if anyone would like to join an English Learning Circle. Decide on a time and place for your first meeting and put this on the poster. (Try to make this a public place which everyone will know). Put the poster in the most appropriate place, for example in your school, your office or in your street.

# Answer key

## ① Accessing English around you

1. They are cheaper than imported newspapers and the stories are more relevant because they are about local issues.
2. To understand the stories, you need a lot of background knowledge. You may not have this if you don't live in the country where the newspaper is produced.

## ② Setting goals and seeing your progress

1. Because you begin to be able to do practical things, like understand what you hear and buy things in shops.
2. 'Good' goals need to be realistic and be set for a limited time.

## ③ Planning your vocabulary learning

1. 5: It's raining cats and dogs; it's pouring with rain; it's raining **stair rods**; there is torrential rain; the rain is terrible.
2. Many people wouldn't understand this if they heard it; it's old-fashioned – people in Britain don't usually say this.
3. Choose words which other people will understand when you use them.

## ④ Making the most of your dictionary

1. Advantage: they can be quick and easy to use. Disadvantage: if a word has more than one meaning, it is difficult to work out which meaning is the one you need.
2. You can find ...
  - what part of speech the word is (noun, verb, etc.).
  - how to say the word (word stress).
  - how to put the word into a sentence.
  - explanations of different meanings of the same word.

## ⑤ Improving your pronunciation

1. a) Focus on consonant sounds, but don't worry about 'th'.  
b) Try to make all the sounds in a consonant cluster.  
c) Think about the difference between long and short vowel sounds.  
d) Focus on putting the stress on the words which carry the meaning in your sentences.
2. a, e, i, o, u are vowels.  
b, c, d, f are examples of consonants.  
Long vowels: food, cart, seat  
Short vowels: foot, cat, sit

## ⑥ Making the most of the books you have

1. Advantage: It is easier for the teacher to explain things if everyone shares the same first language. Disadvantage: Because everyone speaks the same first language, they do not need to speak English to each other.
2. The students should look at the theme of the textbook unit – for example, 'travel' – and consider what an international visitor would need to know about travel in the students' country.

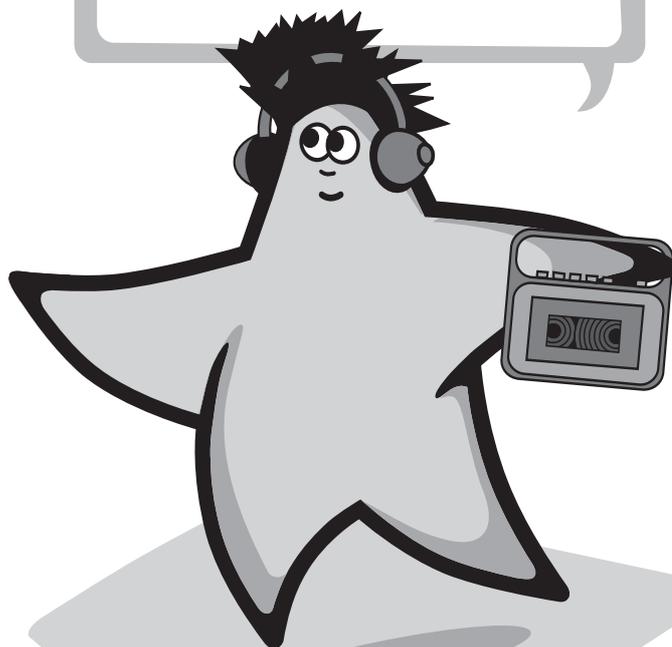
## ⑦ Using the internet to improve your English

1. It can be difficult to find what you are looking for. Some sites are not very useful.
2. You can use chatrooms to communicate with other learners. You can access English language newspapers.

## ⑧ Creating networks of English learners

1. Fear, and especially fear of making mistakes.
2. The main aim is to communicate with each other in English. You only need more than one person to form a Learning Circle.

For more self study tips and techniques, tune in to **Where There Is No Teacher** on BBC World Service radio.



# Glossary

## Accessing English around you

### **perspective (noun)**

point of view. When we describe something from the learner's perspective, we look at it from his or her point of view.

### **subtitles**

The text of a film or TV programme written on the screen. So, you can listen to the film and read the subtitles at the same time.

## Setting goals and seeing your progress

### **to motivate someone to do something**

to give someone the encouragement to complete a task

### **to give someone a boost**

if something gives you a boost, it makes you feel happier and more optimistic

## Planning your vocabulary learning

### **to learn something by heart**

to learn something by saying it to yourself over and over; to memorise

### **criteria (noun: plural)**

the principles or standards you use

### **criterion (singular)**

making a judgement about something. For example, your main criterion for choosing to remember a word might be 'Is it useful for me?'

### **stair rods**

metal strips which attach a carpet to steps or stairs. 'It's raining stair rods' gives us the idea that the rain is so heavy that it looks like long pieces of metal.

### **an idiom**

a phrase or saying which you cannot understand by looking at the individual words. 'It's raining cats and dogs' is a very old-fashioned British idiom meaning 'It's raining very hard'.

### **something is worth doing (to be + worth + verb + ing)**

when you tell someone that something is worth doing, you are recommending it to them. For example, you can say that a book you like is worth reading or that your favourite film is worth seeing.

### **to crop up**

to appear unexpectedly

## Making the most of your dictionary

### **to look up a word } (phrasal verb)** **to look a word up }**

when you look up a word, you consult a dictionary to find the meaning. You can also look up an address in an address book or look up a telephone number in a telephone book.

### **bilingual dictionary**

a bilingual dictionary is one where the word to be explained is in one language and the explanation is in another.

So if your English dictionary gives explanations of English words in your own language it is a bilingual dictionary.

From 'bi' meaning 'two' and 'lingua' meaning 'language'.

## Improving your pronunciation

### **cluster**

a group of things which are closely connected. For example, a consonant cluster is a group of consonants which appear together in a word – and can sometimes be difficult to pronounce!

## Making the most of the books you have

### **monolingual (adjective)**

single language. For example, a monolingual group of students is one where everyone has the same first language or mother tongue.

## Using the internet to improve your English

### **trash (noun)**

rubbish

### **to weed something out (from)**

to look for and find something from among other items.

For example, you can weed out vocabulary which is useful for you by going through your dictionary. It can also be used to describe the process of identifying and pulling out negative things from a positive group.

## Creating networks of English learners

### **obstacle (noun)**

an obstacle is something which prevents you from reaching a goal. This could be a physical thing – for example, if you are walking home there could be an obstacle in the road (for example, a fallen tree or a large puddle of water). However, obstacles can also be psychological. In this case, fear is the obstacle which can prevent learners from speaking English.