

Lesson 3. Ways to keep motivated when you are learning English

A couple of years ago, I started going to a gym because I had some health issues. I had zero training experience.

As it is a municipal gym everyone gets a table of exercises; but the trainers don't do any follow-up.

After my second year at the gym I can say that I have been very successful at keeping motivated. I continue to train almost every day even though I haven't had a trainer and I have very little time.

What keeps me motivated?

One: the fact that I have had some health issues. As I know that exercise is good for my health I keep doing it.

Two: surprisingly, a fellow who trains every day. He seems very fit and he certainly is very persistent. I don't really know him and I have talked to him very few times, but he is always there training and trying harder and harder.

The mere fact that he's there makes me think: Ok, he must be there training so I'll go there today. I'm able to do the same.

These two factors are also true for learning English.

If you really need to it's so much easier to learn than when you don't. And if you have someone next to you who's better than you at learning English and keeps doing it you will probably do the same.

Let's summarise these ideas and some others to keep you motivated.

1) Look for an external motivation and describe it to yourself.

a) I want to find a job and I will only get it with a better English level.

b) I want a promotion and I will get it if I show my boss how much better my English is.

c) I want to earn more money and I will get it by working on my own and using English as the main communication language.

2) Combine learning English with your hobbies

- If you like listening to music, listen to your favourite music with subtitles. Here you have [a website](#) where you can do this.
- If you like reading, fill your house or smartphone with graded readings. Listen and read at the same time. Dubbuk is a perfect solution for this purpose.
- If you like painting, join an online painting class in English, or look for information about painting in English.
- If you like football, watch football in English or, better, look for all kind of information about football in English newspapers and on the internet. Here you have [a video](#) in English explaining football for beginners. It might be a little difficult to follow but as you probably know the subject, you are going to immediately pick up some words. And if you watch it many times it will be easier and easier.
- If you are into politics, you can read [El País in English](#). The advantage is that you should normally be able to find the same piece of news in Spanish and if you already know the topic because you have read about it, it's going to be much easier to remember the vocabulary.
- If you like cooking, watch cooking videos in English and learn all the terminology in English.

3) Look for people who are studying English and have positive energy to share

As in the example of the man I met at the gym who was very perseverant, if you find people who study harder than you and enjoy studying, you should follow them.

It doesn't necessarily have to be someone that you know physically, I can also be someone on the internet; another student or a teacher.

Youtube is the perfect place to find these type of people. Not long ago I found [an exchange student from Finland](#) who speaks English like a native after living in the US for only a year. Amazing.

She can be a great source of inspiration for you too. If you prefer British English, look for a similar student in the UK.

4) Make studying English a habit

This is a very powerful tool because if English is habit, that is to say an activity that's integrated in your life, you have no opportunity to procrastinate, you just study every day at a certain time.

Let's see how this works.

If you don't want to eat chocolate, rule number one, don't leave it next to you.

The opposite is also true, if you do want to do something, put it next to you.

It's very simple psychology.

If you have scheduled your English study time when you wake up at 7am, every day at 7am you listen, read or write in English, without giving yourself the opportunity to decide whether you should or shouldn't do it. You just do it.

5) Identify why you can or won't do it

This is a very important task you ought to do.

You can't fight an enemy that you don't see it.

Many times when we don't want to study a subject it's because something is too difficult or too boring or simply not interesting for you.

- If it's too difficult the trick is to make it much easier.

For example, conditionals are difficult to master, especially the third conditional.

You must find the best explanation on the internet on conditionals. The best is not necessarily the most popular, but the one that you understand the best. Once you find that explanation, divide it into chunks and learn step by step.

- If it's too boring trying to learn that specific subject:

a) Create or find a specific game to learn the boring subject. You can Google the game by putting "subject" + "game" + "English". For example, [here you a game to learn verb tenses](#).

b) Listen to music you really like when trying to learn the boring subject. Of course, you won't be able to do this for practising your listening, but you can use it to learn "the passive form" for example.

The idea is to get as much dopamine in your brain as possible, and music does this trick. Dopamine will make the task of learning less painful.

- If you are not interested, try to think hard on how to make it more interesting.

For example, imagine you are going to need to know a specific structure or task at an interview for a new job, or at a presentation you're planning to do soon.

This specific structure that is not interesting for you, will become interesting because you'll need it to survive.

Being motivated to learn English all the time is key to becoming an advanced student of English, that's why I have dedicated this whole lesson to motivation.

Now I would like you to think about the following:

- Why are you studying English?
- How can you make studying English much more fun than it actually is?
- How can you make studying English a habit?
- What things are very boring or not interesting for you to study? Vocabulary? Verb tenses? Idioms? Phrasal Verbs?
- How would you make the subjects that are boring more interesting?

Homework:

Now, let's see how motivated you are.

Learn these idioms for tomorrow.

- Every cloud has a silver lining
- Cut corners
- Hit a nail on the head
- I feel under the weather
- Hit the road

Look for the meaning of these idioms in Spanish and learn sentences with them.