

Improving Listening Skills

1. Concentrate on the message being communicated, not on individual words.
 2. Check other clues like gestures and the context of the message.
 3. Pick out key words that convey the message.
 4. Listen for cognates: Spanish words that sound like their English counterpart, usually with the same meaning.
 5. Use lab tapes at home and in lab.
 6. Learn questions in Spanish to ask to clarify meaning such as: Would you repeat that? and Speak more slowly, please.
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Learning Vocabulary

1. Imagine a picture image or action scene in your mind of the Spanish word; don't just think of the word in English.
 2. Use the vocabulary word in a sentence; context imprints the meaning better than a single word translation.
 3. Make your own flash cards with the Spanish word on one side and a picture (or the English word, when unavoidable) on the other side.
 4. Make your own mini dictionary by copying the vocabulary list in English on one side and in Spanish on the other. Self test yourself by covering up each side (make sure you can go from Spanish to English and from English to Spanish.)
 5. Take advantage of every opportunity you have to use the words talk to yourself in Spanish, talk to your classmates, use the lab tapes, and of course doing the homework every night.
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Speaking Skills

1. Concentrate on the message you want to convey and do not worry about every little word or grammar error.
 2. Find someone to practice dialogues with outside of class so you can hear yourself speak in a natural conversation.
 3. If you don't have a conversation partner, talk to yourself in the mirror (or while getting ready for school, cooking dinner, walking to class etc.)
 4. Participate actively in class (volunteer, be a leader in group work). The more you try to speak in Spanish the easier it will become, just like any skill.
 5. Attend the weekly Spanish-speaking meals sponsored by the department, where we hang out and chat in Spanish without worrying about grammar!
 6. Find a native speaker who's learning English and have a conversation exchange.
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Understanding and Using Grammar

1. When you feel lost, get help as soon as possible. Visit your professor's office hours or go to the language lab for free (yes, free) tutoring.
 2. Reading the rules helps, but actually using the grammar structures in sentences is more important. (This is the purpose of the homework.)
 3. Self-test when learning new verb tenses or moods by using substitution drills. (I *live*, you _____, he _____, etc.)
 4. Homework is NOT busy work. It is the chance for your brain to use new structures or vocabulary so that it will become more natural for you to use the material correctly.
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Reading for Content and Information

1. Before you begin to read a selection:
 - a. Skim the article to get an idea of what the topic is.

- b. Read the titles of sections and the first sentence of each paragraph.
 - c. Finally, read the selection concentrating on the main message and information.
 2. As with the other learning skills, rely on the context to help you understand.
 3. Don't look up every word you don't know in the dictionary. This will bog you and make you lose sight of the main ideas of the passage.
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Keeping Up with the Class

1. Find a partner in your class who you can call in case you are absent so that you know what you missed.
 2. Remember, get help at the first sign of trouble your professor cares about your progress.
 3. Learning Spanish is a building-block process. What you learn one day (and one semester) builds on what you learned the day before. It essential to keep up, and remember #2 above!
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Gaining Significant Proficiency

1. As with any skill (playing the trumpet, dancing, programming a computer etc.), there is no substitute for repetitive practice. You learn how to play a trumpet by spending a lot of time blowing on the horn, not by reading books about playing trumpets. Likewise, you will learn Spanish by **USING** it in the classroom, doing the homework, and in any other opportunity that arises.
2. If you are serious about learning Spanish (a skill that is becoming more and more valuable in the workplace), start looking into the various opportunities during the summer or academic year to live in a Spanish-speaking country. Immersion in the culture and language is quickest, most fun and sometimes the most life-changing way to learn a language. Your professor can direct you to the appropriate offices and programs.