

Improving your English

- 1 Do you think your English is improving? Compare your English skills now to one year ago. Circle the phrase that is true for you.

Compared to one year ago ...

my grammar is	worse / the same / a little better / much better.
my vocabulary is	worse / the same / a little wider / much wider.
my listening skills are	worse / the same / a little better / much better.
my reading skills are	worse / the same / a little better / much better.
my writing skills are	worse / the same / a little better / much better.
my fluency is	worse / the same / a little better / much better.
my pronunciation is	worse / the same / a little better / much better.

- 2 Read the Study tip and then answer the questionnaire. How often do you do the activities suggested? Put a tick (✓) in the column that is true for you.

STUDY TIP

As your English reaches a more advanced level you may feel frustrated that you are not making the same progress as before. To make progress at this level you need to be doing something in English in addition to your English classes. There are many ways to improve your English outside the classroom.

Activity	Every week	Every month	Never
1 I review grammar that I have found difficult and ask my teacher for complementary exercises to practice at home.			
2 I use a vocabulary app to review and extend my vocabulary.			
3 I read articles and reviews in English.			
4 I listen to songs in English with the lyrics and sing along to them.			
5 I read books in English.			
6 I watch short videos in English on the Internet about things that interest me.			
7 I watch TV series or films in English with English subtitles.			
8 I play online games in English and chat using text messaging to other players in English.			
9 I chat online with native speakers.			
10 I write in English, e.g. poetry, a blog, letters.			
11 I speak in English with friends or family outside the classroom.			

- 3 Which of the activities (1–11) in 2 will help you with these English skills (a–c)? It is possible to match more than one activity to each skill and to use each activity more than once.

- a increase your vocabulary
- b improve your listening skills
- c improve your speaking skills

- 4 In addition to the activities in 2, there are other activities that you can do to improve your English. Read the experiences of three students and answer the questions.

My English improved a lot when I started studying engineering online. I had to watch online tutorials, read articles and do coursework. There were also games and quizzes which made it fun. What I liked most was the group chatroom where I met lots of cool people and we chatted in English. It was a free course but you had to pay if you wanted the certificate at the end. I completed the course, got the certificate and my English really improved a lot.

— Eric, 16

I took my English much more seriously when I realised I needed to get an advanced certificate to enter university. I downloaded past papers of the exam and bought an advanced grammar book. I set aside a time to study every Saturday morning. I started reading the news in English every day and that helped me with more formal vocabulary. I was so proud of myself when I passed the exam this summer, and in October I'll be starting university. It was hard work but it was worth it!

— Mari, 18

I think the moment my English level jumped up was when I went to America for a summer course. I had to speak English all the time. I was more motivated because I was forced to use it in real situations: going to the shops, using transport and making friends. I kept a notebook of useful expressions and by using them regularly I soon remembered them. When I returned to my country everyone said how well I spoke, and I even picked up a slight American accent!

— Claudia, 17

Which student ...

- a was initially motivated because of a future goal?
- b focused on learning vocabulary they would need in real situations?
- c made regular study part of their routine?
- d enjoyed a specific part of the learning experience?
- e was pleased with their success even though the process was difficult?
- f was told by other people that they had improved one of their skills?

- 5 Think about your English learning experience up until now. What has caused the biggest increase in your level?

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- 6 Think about your future English learning and look at your answers in 1. What activities would help you to keep making progress in English? Complete the table with your ideas.

Skill area	Action to be taken	Date achieved