

Giving advice on language learning problems speaking learner training/ language of advice, recommendations and suggestions

Ask your partner for advice on using and learning foreign languages such as English, respond positively or negatively to their suggestions, discuss for longer if you like, then take turns doing the same with other language learning issues.

Suggested topics

- accuracy/ making mistakes
- business English (meetings, negotiations, etc)
- comprehension
- exam/ test
- formal language/ being polite
- functional language (apologising, thanking, etc)
- grammar (tenses, articles, prepositions, etc)
- listening (to the radio, to music, exams, to presentations, etc)
- pronunciation (difficult sounds, intonation, etc)
- reading (the newspaper, websites, work documents, etc)
- social English (small talk, inviting, etc)
- speaking (fluency, accuracy, telephoning, teleconferences, etc)
- travel English (in hotels, taxis, airports, etc)
- vocabulary (idioms, phrasal verbs, slang, etc)
- watching (movies, TV programmes, etc)
- writing (emails, reports, etc)

Useful language for asking for advice

- Can you suggest anything?
- Do you have any ideas?
- Do you have any recommendations?
- Do you know any suitable...?
- How can I solve this problem?
- What can I do about it (do you reckon)?
- What do you recommend?
- What do you think I should do?
- What would you do (in my place/ if you were in my shoes)?
- What's the best solution?
- What's your advice?

Useful language for giving advice/ suggestions/ recommendations (with strongest top/ most positive top)

- You have no choice but to.../ The only option is to...
- You absolutely must.../ I can't recommend... enough./ If there is one thing that I recommend/ that you should do, it's...
- You really must.../ I think you'd love.../ I reckon... would definitely be your kind of thing./ If you like..., then you'll love...
- You'd better... (or you'll regret it/ or...)/ The sooner you... the better.
- (Whatever you do,) don't miss.../ don't forget.../ You must...

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- I strongly/ highly/ thoroughly recommend.../ You really should...
- ... works every time./ You won't regret...
- You should.../ You ought to...
- My advice would be.../ My (personal) recommendation is/ would be.../ I (would) (personally) recommend...
- I find that (just)... works for me./ ... tends to work.
- If it was me/ If I were you/ If I were in your shoes/ If I were in your place/ If I was in that situation, I would...
- I (would) suggest...
- Try...
- You should probably...
- It's (well) worth thinking about...
- How about...?/ What about...?
- Have you thought about...?/ Have you considered...?
- Perhaps you should consider...
- You might want to think about.../ It might be worth thinking about...
- You could...
- I'm not sure that you should.../ I wouldn't (necessarily/ really) recommend...
- I don't think (that) you should...
- If I were you, I'd avoid.../ I'd be in no hurry to...
- You can forget about.../ Don't bother.../ Avoid...
- You definitely shouldn't...

Useful language for responding to advice (most positive top)

- Of course. I can't believe I didn't think of that myself.
- That's a great idea. I'll definitely do that./ That's an excellent suggestion. I'll do exactly what you said.
- That seems like a good idea. I'll give it a try.
- You are probably right. I'll give it a go.
- That's not a bad idea. I'll try my best to do that.
- Hmm. That might be worth thinking about.
- That might work. I'll consider it.
- I'm not so sure that's a good idea (because...)/ I'm not sure that would work (in this case) (because...) Can you suggest anything else?
- Are you sure (that's a good idea)? Don't you think that...?
- Do you really think so? I would have thought that...
- Actually, ... already. (Do you have any other ideas?)

When you run out of ideas or when your teacher tells you to, do the same with specific problems from below, starting with any which you really want to hear your partner's advice on.

Specific problems to ask for advice on

Speaking

1. "I pause too long before I speak"
2. "I don't have any opportunities to speak outside the classroom"
3. "I can talk about most topics, but I don't know what to say in social situations like welcoming people or dealing with complaints"
4. "By the time I think of what to say, the conversation topic has changed"
5. "I get stuck when I am speaking because I can't remember a word or don't know how to say things in English"

Vocabulary

1. "I try to learn vocabulary, but I have always forgotten it by the next time I hear or read that word"
2. "All the idioms I learnt at school and from the radio are old fashioned and no one ever really uses them nowadays"
3. "The vocabulary I learn from watching/ reading ... is totally useless in the rest of my life"

Listening

1. "I would understand what people say if it was written down, but I still can't understand them when they are speaking"
2. "I can't understand BBC radio at all"
3. "When I watch a TV programme in English, I just read the subtitles and so don't really learn anything"
4. "I miss what people say because I'm still thinking about the last thing which was said"
5. "I have to attend English meetings and teleconferences but can only understand about 50%"
6. "I have problems understanding a/ an ... accent"
7. "I get tired when I have to listen to English for a long time and so my comprehension gets worse and worse over time"

Accuracy

1. "I understand the grammar in the textbook and I can do written grammar exercises, but I still make lots of mistakes when I speak"
2. "Most people I communicate with are also non-native English speakers, so I pick up their mistakes"
3. "I keep making the same mistakes"

Writing

1. "I don't know when I can start using someone's first name and other informal language when I am emailing them"
2. "It takes me a long time to write emails"

Reading

1. "I read too slowly"
2. "I have problems finding the place in the text where the answer is"
3. "Newspapers and English novels are too difficult for me"
4. "I read quite a lot in English but it doesn't seem to be helping improve my level"
5. "I usually give up before I reach the end of a book or magazine"

Specific advice

Choose some advice from below and say why you think it's a good idea, including what parts of your English you think it can help. Listen to your partner's reaction, discuss for longer if you like, then take turns doing the same.

1. Have you thought about looking for some films from that country?
2. How about borrowing a graded reader from the British Council lending library?
3. I recommend buying an Intermediate level dictionary and ignoring all words that aren't in it.
4. I would suggest forming a study group to practice free conversation in English
5. I wouldn't worry about it. The most important thing is to read something that you find interesting.
6. If I had that problem, I'd read about the topic in English before listening to the programme
7. If I was in your place, I'd read BBC news instead
8. If I were you, I'd read a whole page before going back and using a dictionary
9. If it was me, I'd buy the DVD and watch it with English subtitles
10. In my experience, keeping a vocabulary list and ticking off words you know works really well
11. It's best to memorize sentence starters like "In my opinion" and "If you ask me" and use one even before you have decided what to say
12. My advice would be to read about the story in your own language first
13. My suggestion is to choose one grammar point to work on and concentrate on not making mistakes with just that one thing when you are writing and speaking
14. One idea is to try and predict what is in the text before you read it
15. Reading the whole text quickly once through before I look at the questions always works for me
16. Why don't you try learning some slang instead?
17. You could try taping a piece of paper over the bottom of your TV screen
18. You should probably fill the thinking time with phrases like "Let me see" and "Hmm, that's an interesting question"

Are there any things above which aren't good ideas? Why do you feel that way?

Underline the useful language for giving advice above.

Brainstorming stage

First of all without any help, brainstorm suitable phrases into the categories below.

Useful language for asking for advice**Useful language for giving advice/ suggestions/ recommendations (strongest/ most positive top)****Useful language for responding to advice (most positive top)****Mixed answers**

Use the phrases below to add at least two more phrases to the right places in each of the categories above.

- (Whatever you do,) don't miss.../ don't forget.../ You must...
- Actually, ... already. (Do you have any other ideas?)
- Are you sure (that's a good idea)? Don't you think that...?
- Can you suggest anything?
- Do you have any ideas/ recommendations?
- Do you know any suitable...?
- Do you really think so? I would have thought that...
- Have you thought about...?/ Have you considered...?
- Hmm. That might be worth thinking about.
- How about...?/ What about...?
- How can I solve this problem?
- I (would) suggest...
- I don't think (that) you should...
- I find that (just)... works for me./ ... tends to work.
- I strongly/ highly/ thoroughly recommend.../ You really should...
- If I were you, I'd avoid.../ I'd be in no hurry to...
- If it was me/ If I were you/ in your shoes/ in your place/ If I was in that situation, I would...
- It's (well) worth thinking about...
- I'm not so sure that's a good idea/ that would work (in this case) (because...)
- I'm not sure that you should.../ I wouldn't (necessarily/ really) recommend...
- My (personal) advice/ recommendation is/ would be.../ I ('d) (personally) recommend...
- Of course. I can't believe I didn't think of that myself.
- Perhaps you should consider...
- That might work. I'll consider it.
- That seems like a good idea. I'll give it a try.
- That's a great idea. I'll definitely do that./ That's an excellent suggestion. I'll do exactly what you said.
- That's not a bad idea. I'll try my best to do that.
- Try...
- What can I do about it (do you reckon)?
- What do you recommend?/ What's your advice?
- What do you think I should do?
- What would you do (in my place/ if you were in my shoes)?
- What's the best solution?
- You absolutely must.../ I can't recommend... enough./ If there is one thing that I recommend/ that you should do, it's...
- You are probably right. I'll give it a go.
- You can forget about.../ Don't bother.../ Avoid...
- You could...
- You definitely shouldn't...
- You have no choice but to.../ The only option is to...
- You might want to think about.../ It might be worth thinking about...
- You really must.../ I think you'd love.../ I reckon... would definitely be your kind of thing./ If you like..., then you'll love...
- You should (probably).../ You (probably) ought to...
- You'd better... (or you'll regret it/ or...)/ The sooner you... the better.
- ... works every time./ You won't regret...

Change partners. Give advice using the topics below, see what your partner's (real) reaction is, discuss for longer if you like, then do the same with other topics below.

Suggested advice

- apps
- children's...
- club/ society
- comedy
- conversation exchange
- copy and paste
- (English-English/ electronic/ online/ speaking/ learner's) dictionary
- digital voice recorder
- DVD
- English subtitles
- flashcards
- foreign pub
- free conversation
- graded readers (= easy readers for language learners)
- karaoke
- language exchange
- lists of useful words/ phrases
- lyrics
- memorising...
- (500) most common words
- newspaper
- notebooks
- online chat
- online translation
- phrase book
- podcasts
- proofreader
- radio programmes
- reading for pleasure
- record...
- rehearse (in your head/ out loud/ in front of the mirror)
- re-watching
- self-study books
- Skype lessons/ Skype teacher
- speak to yourself
- volunteer
- website

When your teacher stops you, ask about any topics above you aren't sure about, want real advice on, etc, discussing them as a class each time. Then together write a top ten most useful language learning tips, including strong advice when suitable.

Compare with another group.