

LEARN THE LINGO

Is no comprende a common phrase when you're trying to speak a foreign language? There's no need to fret - by taking things step by step, adding it to your lifestyle, you can pave the way to fluency even as an adult...

Have you ever been abroad and wished you could order a coffee without a language barrier?

You've tried your best to remember the few words of French, German or Spanish that you learnt many moons ago - but as soon as you start to say them out loud, you get tongue-tied.

The server looking at you with a puzzled smile as you try your best to say milk without confusing it for a similar word...

It appears that you may not be alone.

Out of the 67 million people who live in the UK, only 36% of adults can speak more than one language fluently,

according to Preply.

So when it comes to learning a language, it's a given that most of us are actually in the same boat.

But what's the best way to learn a language as a beginner? And is it something we can still achieve as an adult? Or has that ship sailed a long time ago?

'Adults have spent years developing a mind system that's great at organising information,' Esteban Touma, language teacher at Babbel, reveals.

And that is something we can certainly relate to - having to balance bills, work, school, dinner, the food shop, our hobbies - the list goes on... 'This makes us really, really



Say bonjour to a second language!

Only 36% of adults can speak more than one language

effective at learning a lot of new things, but not languages,' Esteban continues. 'It's hard to break with the rules of that system, but that's exactly what you need to do.'

For as the saying goes - practise makes perfect - learning something new isn't impossible, it's all about breaking habits and remaining open-minded, rather than shutting the idea down.

Even if it does sound completely daunting at first. 'Children are able to stay open-minded and their cognitive function is wide

open, this is why it is easier for them to pick up a new language,' Esteban explains. 'However, the good news is that learning a language isn't really that hard if you're open to opening your mind.'

'But it does take dedication and motivation,' Esteban says. Learning a language isn't just something that you will be able to pick up in five minutes - it will take practise, a routine and you will need to fit it in to your lifestyle. But this hobby can leave your brain ticking and has the potential to open more doors for you as a result.

Only, how do we fit learning a new lingo into our already busy routine? Or how do we motivate ourselves to believe that we have the capability to make such an achievement, before we dive in headfirst?

There may be more barriers than we thought - so where do we start?

'When getting started with learning a new language, it is important to make sure that you can fit it into your daily routine, so that you can learn in manageable chunks,'

Esteban advises.

'A great way to do this is by embracing the fact you can learn in lots of different ways, such as using audio, writing things down, playing videos.'

'This might be using a platform, like Babbel, to take a few minutes of lessons each day via your phone or by listening to a podcast for language learners during your commute, such as *Parlez Away* or *A Zero To A Hero*.

'If you want to stick with a new project, fitting it into your existing routine is the most reliable way to structure your learning. 'Dedicating all of your free time to a new hobby but only for a short while may result in short-term benefits, but it's not realistic to keep up this kind of effort in the long-term,' Esteban continues.

And with at least 480 hours of practise needed to reach an advanced level in a foreign language, according to Language Course UK, it's certainly something that you

will need to stick with.

Plus, the majority of adults will not be able to learn a language full-time, so it can take a few years to get a fluent status - but that shouldn't be something to put you off.

Luckily, there are some tips and tricks, plus plenty of free online resources that can allow learning in manageable chunks.

'One tip is to watch kid's movies or shows you're used to, but in the language that you want to learn. Since you know what's going on and the language is pretty simple, it's an easy way to learn at an entry level,' Esteban explains.

So if the kids watch *Peppa Pig*, why not try changing the setting to French with English subtitles?

Or you could watch the soaps in another language, such as *EastEnders* - imagine Phil and Kat shouting at one another in Spanish!

It may sound funny at first, but it's a good way to get used to common phrases and you may actually surprise yourself with how much you know.

Also, in no way is learning a race - just think, we had to learn English from a baby and we even make mistakes now - so don't put too much pressure on yourself!

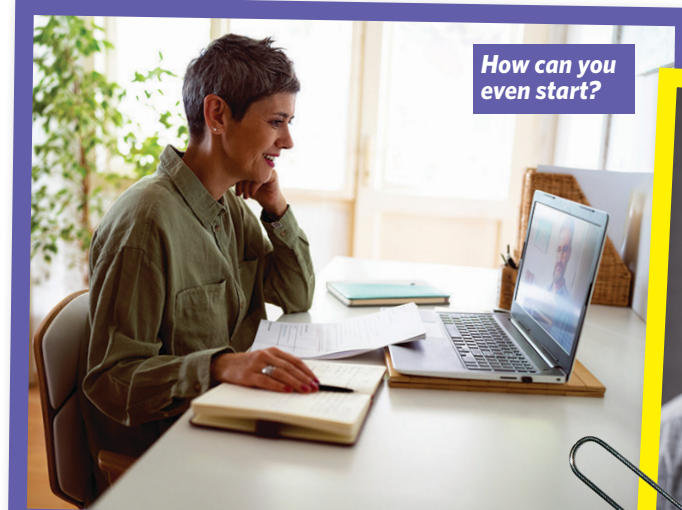
And not only can learning a language help you develop your social skills, but it can also improve your brain health, too. Being bilingual has proven to

improve the mass of grey matter in the brain, showing signs of a healthier mind and learning a language as an adult has also been found to prevent dementia for up to five years, according to Cambridge University.

So, there is no better time to start learning a language. Say bonjour confidently with no strange looks - ca la vie!

• Please visit: babbel.com

Did you know that learning a language can prevent dementia?



How can you even start?



Esteban Touma

GIVE IT A GO

Melanie Gizzi, 41, from Abergele, decided to take a brave leap of faith to do something new...

Looking down at the homework on the table, I felt an overwhelming sense of guilt.

As much as I wanted to try and help my daughter Amelia, now 11, make sense of her schoolwork - I couldn't even work out what it was saying.

Living in Wales, with my mum Gaynor, now 64, fluent in Welsh, too, I'd managed to pick up a few phrases over the years. And knowing that my dad Steve, 67, had even learnt Welsh when I was little, I looked up to him as inspiration for learning.

I knew that I wanted to be able to support Amelia in the best way that I could, which caused a lightbulb moment for me...

With an email offering a year of Welsh lessons for half price jumping into my inbox, I had disregarded it at first - but looking at it once again, at the end of last year, I had to get involved.

At first, Amelia was a little embarrassed when I told her about what I was doing - and I was nervous, too.

However, packing my bag and beginning my Welsh learning journey in January this year, the nerves quickly faded away.

The class consisted of 10 learners from the ages of 40 to 73 and I felt right at home.

Hearing Welsh and already having a bit of a foundation, the basics all came flooding back to me.

It was a big commitment, every Tuesday morning for three hours, but I loved the

support and community aspect that came from the group - even when we don't have lessons, we still meet up over a cuppa to speak some Welsh, too.

My husband Heath, 54, was a bit sceptical about me taking lessons because of how much time I would need to take off work as a self-employed life coach.

But when parents evening came around and I could understand what Amelia's teachers were saying, he was impressed with how much I had managed to learn already.

He even tries to get on board nowadays, picking up odd words and phrases.

Learning a language takes time, but I feel empowered that I can use these skills in my daily life and support my daughter in the process.

My youngest Freddy, three, is starting school in September and I'm sure he will learn Welsh at home!

You can go at your own pace, even if it's two minutes while the kids are in bed, it really is worth it for that sense of achievement.

Rhowch gynnig arni - give it a go!

• To see more from Melanie please search: [omgfabulous](https://www.omgfabulous.com) on Linktr.ee



What are you waiting for?

Dysgu Cymraeg!