DynEd®

How to Study DynEd

Student Guide

Contents

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Study Guide

DynEd courseware is designed to help you acquire the target language in a natural but accelerated mode of learning. It represents a significant advance over traditional English language learning materials. As with any new set of tools, however, teachers and students alike need to develop techniques and strategies for using it most effectively. This **Study Guide** offers suggestions for how to study most effectively.

Neuroscientific Background

What is Language Learning?
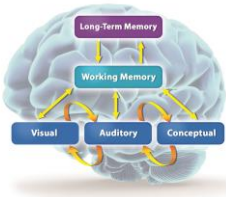
Learning involves changes in your brain. Electrochemical changes and new connections between neurons must occur for learning to take place. Just as when you are working on your computer, if you don't save your work it will be lost. Saving data in the brain involves changes in the brain. Some of these changes happen quickly, and some of these changes happen over a period of days or weeks.

Language Learning is Skill Development

Learning a language is like learning how to play a musical instrument. Frequent and effective practice is the key. The skills of listening and speaking, in particular, require speed. When you listen or speak, you have very little time to process the language, much less time than when you read a text. There is no time to 'remember' a word or rule. It must be automatic. To develop this automatic ability, practice and repetition are essential, and without using text as a support.

What is Memory?

There are different types of memory. Some things you remember just long enough to accomplish a short-term task, such as repeating a list of words or sentences, and then it is forgotten. Many language students study vocabulary words and sentences and memorize them. However, without repeated use of the words and sentences over a period of time, this kind of learning quickly fades. Research shows that long term memory takes time to develop. Short, frequent sessions over a period of several days or weeks are the best way to study and develop your language skills. Constant review should also be part of your practice strategy. In this sense, going slow, with lots of repetition and review, is the best way to learn quickly.

The Importance of Recording/Playback

One very important advantage of multimedia study is the possibility to activate many parts of your brain at once. A famous neuroscientist said: "Neurons that fire together, wire together." After you have studied a lesson to the point where your comprehension is good, you should begin to practice saying each sentence. Use the microphone to record your voice. Then *compare* what you said with the native speaker model. Compare your speed, stress and intonation, and pronunciation. This type of practice activates the phonological processor in your brain and helps to develop both automaticity and long-term memory. At least part of every study session should include several minutes of this very important *focused practice*.

The Danger of Using Text Support

Listening and reading use very different pathways in the brain. The best way to develop listening and speaking skills is to *not* rely on text. Using text as a support interferes with the development of listening and speaking skills, which need to be developed first. When studying a lesson, try not to use the text support until after you have developed your ability to understand and repeat the key sentences. Research indicates that using the text support too soon *slows down* your listening and speaking development – even though most students think that using the text is an effective way to learn. It may be comfortable, but it isn't effective.

The Importance of Practice

Studies of the brain and long-term memory formation show that repetition is very important to skill development. Listening and speaking abilities are skills, not knowledge. Skill development requires effective practice, and this practice must be done on a regular, frequent basis. To develop listening and speaking skills, you must be able to decode language automatically, without thinking or memorizing. Your brain is designed to do this, but only if you *practice*, *practice*, *practice*! Good luck.
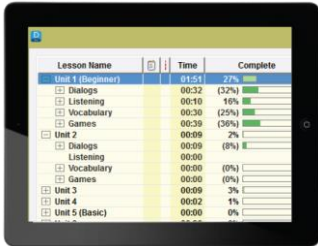
How to Reduce Study Time

Research shows that regular, frequent study sessions reduce total learning time. Studying and reviewing parts of a lesson several times a week is more effective than studying just once or twice a week. Three 45-minute study sessions are more effective than one three-hour session. Study sessions that are too long are generally inefficient and counterproductive.

Best Study Practices

Effective Study Sessions

The most effective study sessions are a mix of activities and lessons. Spending too much time on an activity or lesson in a single study session creates boredom and inattention. You need to be focused. Generally, most students should change activities or lessons several times in a study session. In some lessons, focus on listening comprehension. In other lessons, focus on speaking practice. Some lessons should be done *every day* until you have mastered them or can summarize the entire lesson without any effort. This develops confidence and automaticity.

Progress and Review
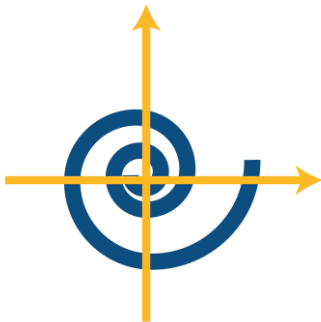
*What about that Unit you studied 3 weeks ago? Is it finished?*

No, it isn't finished. You should review it and be prepared to use that language at any time. Your teacher should ask you to review it often, and class activities should assume you can understand and express the information modeled in that unit even 2 weeks from now. It isn't going backward – it's going forward by building a real skill! In this sense, going backward can help you go ahead even faster! Learning a language isn't learning one thing and then going on to another. It's building on what you know and using it *all*, in an expanding spiral.

Slow is Fast

The biggest mistake learners make is trying to finish each lesson quickly. This fails to build the foundation and confidence necessary to improve listening and speaking skills. If you go through each lesson several times on many different days, practice speaking, and review often, your overall progress will be much faster and your test scores will improve. If you don't do this, you will quickly forget what you have learned. The old-fashioned way of studying is slow and ineffective. Remember: *Practice Makes Perfect*

Understanding is Only the Beginning
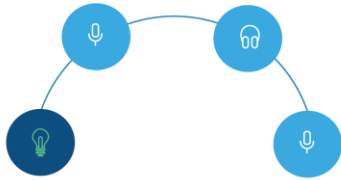
Once you understand a lesson, you should go through it and practice speaking the sentences. Record 5 or 10 sentences in each study session and compare your recording with the native speaker model. This kind of intensive practice will help you master the language and build your fluency. If you don't do this, your speech will be slow and halting. Please practice each lesson until you can say the sentences quickly and with confidence.

Practice is Boring

Yes, repeating things can be boring. But how can you learn a new skill without practicing? It requires discipline and determination. If you practice effectively, you will be able to listen and speak with ease, building from simple communication to complex communication. This takes time. But the more you practice, the less time it will take.

To make practice more interesting, try to use the new language to express things about your own life, job, or interests. The language models in DynEd courseware are very general. If you master them, they will help you communicate about yourself – and doing this will improve your vocabulary. Reading and writing exercises that extend the topics and themes of this courseware are effective ways to increase your vocabulary.

My Speech is Slow and Halting

If your speech is slow and halting in class, it's because you haven't yet mastered the language in the lessons. Go back, review, and *practice* saying the sentences every day. Then you'll speak with more confidence in class. If your oral presentation was good, but slow and halting, do it again in another week. Make it better. It isn't going backwards. It's the way to go forward.

The 4-Skills Path

Language learning is most effective if you begin with listening, move to speaking, then extend the language by reading and writing, each time adding new vocabulary. These skills reinforce each other.

Personalization and Language Extension

The language models in the courseware are very general. They provide a framework for English that is very powerful and should be *mastered*. As you learn and master the language in the courseware, it is important to transfer and extend it to your own life and situation. This will give the language life and make it more interesting to you. Classroom activities should help you do this. Exchange information with other students. This is also where you will learn new vocabulary and useful expressions that will add to the framework presented in the courseware. The course, the classroom, and your life need to work together.

Language Models

The conceptual underpinnings and grammar of English are like the trunk and branches of a tree. The vocabulary and expressions are like the leaves on the tree. As the branches are *exercised*, they become 'sticky' and new vocabulary items have a place to go. Without the branches, the leaves are easily forgotten and drop away, just as a file on a computer which has a disorganized file structure can be difficult to find. Language items must be properly tagged in order to be remembered quickly. Mastering the language models in DynEd courses, along with classroom support, will support new vocabulary and lead to long-term learning at a much faster rate than traditional approaches. Memorizing lists of vocabulary words and idioms is generally an inefficient way to learn a language – though this is the traditional method that many people expect to use – and it's one reason why learning a language takes so much time.

Optimum Placement Level
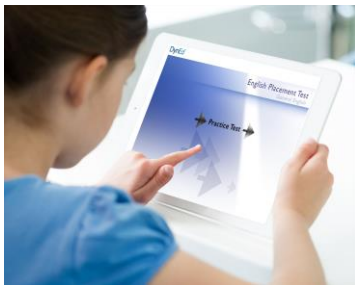
After taking your Placement Test you will be placed in lessons so that you are at an optimal learning level. This means that the material will not be too difficult or too easy. What you know will help you guess or fill-in what you don't know. You should try to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words and grammatical patterns *without using text*. If you cannot do this, you have been placed at a level that is too high. If you are placed at the right level, you should also review material from lower units to confirm your level and to reinforce what you already know. Please remember that mastery and automaticity are your goals – not just comprehension. Understanding is not enough. Operational ability means automaticity. This is true for most skills, and is especially important for listening and speaking skills. The result will be to develop your *confidence* to use English.

Student Practice Summary

Effective and frequent practice is the key to language learning. Short, frequent sessions are generally more effective than longer, infrequent sessions, because fatigue and other factors lead to inattention. More frequent study reduces the *total* time required to move from one language level to another. Ideally, students should use the program on a daily basis, in 25~45 minute sessions, and meet with a class and/or teacher once or twice per week. This model is similar to how students learn to play a musical instrument: Periodic meetings with a teacher or group, supported by daily practice sessions.

The amount of time and effort required to complete a particular lesson depends on level, language background, and whether the course is used as the main course or as a course supplement. Students should go through each lesson in the following ways:

1. Preview; where they gain an overview of the lesson and general meaning *without* using the text;

2. Comprehension, where they understand the content in increasing detail and confidence, repeating each sentence as many times as is necessary;

3. Language Focus, where they check the text and glossary entries as needed. At this stage, students focus on the grammar and structure of the sentences., as well as new vocabulary;

4. Language Practice, where they say each sentence or word, *record* it and *compare* it with the model;

5. Review, where they regularly go over the languages that they have previously practiced;

6. Intermittent Review, where they periodically return to the lesson to confirm their mastery of the material.

In one study session, students should work on parts of several lessons, and *not* be restricted to just one lesson (see *Learning Path*). It is better to work through a lesson in a series of shorter sessions spread out over several days than spend a large amount of time in a single study session.

> Note: To improve listening skills, students should *not* rely on text too early. When the text is visible, the listening process is completely different. Students should *not* look at the text until *after* they have listened to the language several times. If the material is too difficult to be used in this way, they should work with less advanced material or review previous Units.

The Shuffler™ Level and Completion Percentage

The *Completion Percentage* is shown in the *Student Records*. It is also shown by *meter icons* that show under the Unit [icon] buttons when the mouse moves over the Student Records meter icon on the main menu screen. This indicates how effectively the student has studied and practiced each lesson. For more detailed information, please see the *Records Manager Guide*. In general, students should attain an 80-85% *Completion Percentage* in each lesson. This will ensure that they are going through each lesson several times, repeating and recording sentences, and moving from comprehension and practice to mastery. These steps lead to acquisition and long-term learning.

To assist students in reaching the goal of communicative competence, the *Completion Percentage* sets completion goals based on the following study activities: sentence repetitions, voice recording attempts, use of the glossary, shuffler level, and the number of questions which are answered correctly.

Intelligent Tutor

Many students feel ready to stop an activity when they 'understand' it. However, effective language learning should be approached as a skill to be acquired, and not merely an 'understanding' of grammar rules and vocabulary. The development of communicative competence and language automaticity requires regular focused practice through a cycle of preview, comprehension, practice, and review – and this over an extended period of time.

DynEd's *Intelligent Tutor* analyzes the study data for each student and class, including Completion Percentages, study frequency, test score levels, and usage of features such as voice record, and makes recommendations for improving study practices. This feature is a real time-saver for teachers and should be consulted on a regular basis. For more information about the *Intelligent Tutor*, please consult the *Records Manager Guide*.

Using the Courseware

DynEd's courseware has been designed for ease of use by students and teachers. Nevertheless, before students begin to study on their own, it is important to introduce the basic functions of the program and to give suggestions about how best to study. For additional information, please consult the ***User's Guide***.

The DynEd Control Bar

The *Control Bar* appears at the bottom of the screen in each lesson and allows students to:

- Exit from a lesson
- Pause the program
- Record and playback their voices
- Repeat individual words and sentences
- See the written text and access the Glossary.

Learners use the **Control Bar** to control the pace and focus of their learning experience. When first using the program, click the buttons and explore their functions. Here is a description of the function of each of the buttons:

When you want to hear something again, use the *Repeat* button. You can listen to each sentence or question as many times as you'd like.

Click on the *Pause/Play* buttons to stop for a short time or if you need time to answer a question. When the *Pause/Play* button is flashing green, the program is paused and will not go to the next sentence. Click the *Pause/Play* button again in order to continue.

Whenever you click on any *Control Bar* button, the *Pause/Play* button will begin to flash and the program will pause until you click on the *Play* button again.

To see the spelling of a word or group of words, click on the *Text* button. If you click on a highlighted word, you will see a *Glossary* screen.

The *Voice Record* button lets you record your voice. Click it to start recording and *again* to stop the recording.

Then click on the *Voice Playback* button to listen to the recording. You can then compare your voice with the model by using the *Repeat* button.

Use the *Exit* button to leave a lesson at any time.   You can then choose another lesson or quit the program completely.

The *Rewind* button allows you to go back in the program one frame at a time, for example to hear a previous sentence

Use the *Fast-Forward* button to move ahead in a lesson one frame at a time. You cannot fast-forward through an exercise or comprehension question. The program will pause until the question is answered.

When it is your turn to make a choice or to speak, the *Timer* will begin to time down.

If you don't understand an English sentence, click on the *Translation* button (if available). You will see the same sentence translated into your own language.

Pull Down Menus

The DynEd pull-down menus are at the top of your screen: *Options*, *Speech Recognition*, and *Help*.

Use the *File* menu to change from one course to another.

Use the *Options* menu to:
- View Student Records
- Access the Glossary
- Adjust the volume on your computer
- Increase or decrease the pause between sentences

Student Records

The Student Records show the time spent in each lesson, the number of study sessions, the Completion Percentage, Quiz and Test scores, and the Shuffler Levels. Teachers can access the Student Records through the Records Manager.

Glossary

This provides alphabetical access to the Glossary screens for this course. You can also access the Glossary through the highlighted text whenever it occurs in a lesson.

Levels

This allows the user to set or view the levels of the following controls:

Volume: The Volume settings enable the user to control the volume of the audio, as well as for sound recorded using the *Voice Record* feature.

Pause Length: The language of the courseware is natural language spoken at a normal pace. Students can, however, adjust the amount of time between each sentence. A longer pause gives students more time to process the sounds they have just heard and to access comprehension aids (repeat, translation, text on) if necessary. A shorter pause more closely approximates natural speech and provides more of a listening challenge.

Speech Recognition

Help screens for Speech Recognition are available through the Speech Recognition pull-down menu at the top of the screen. Detailed instructions are also available in the Study Guides.

Help Screens

Use the Help pull-down menu at the top of the screen. For bilingual versions, the Help screens are available with native language support.

Changing Courses or Modules

Go to the *File* pull-down menu at the top of the screen. Click on *Change Course* to switch from one course to another without having to exit the program. In some courses, such as *Let's Go* and *Dynamic Business English*, you can also change Modules or Units by clicking on *Change Module/Unit*.

Student Learning Path

Many students feel ready to stop an activity when they *understand* it. However, that is when real language learning begins. Language skills such as listening and speaking need to be *mastered through practice.*

Teachers should instruct and coach the students how to go through the lessons**,** not once or twice, but multiple times. The following learning sequence is recommended:
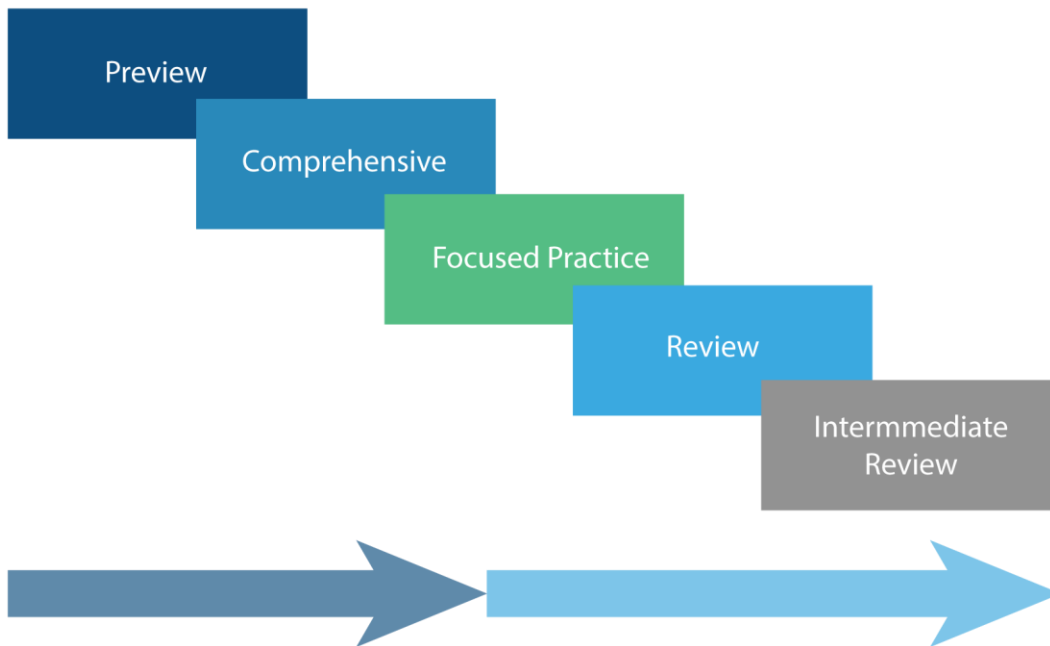
1. Preview; where students gain an overview of a lesson and its general meaning *without* using the text;
2. Comprehension, where students understand the content in increasing detail and repeat each sentence as many times as is necessary;
3. Language Focus, where students check the text and glossary as needed. At this stage, students focus on the grammar and structure of the sentences, as well as new vocabulary;
4. Language Practice, where students say or paraphrase each sentence, *record* it and *compare* it with the model. This is *very important to ensure long-term learning.*
5. Review, where students regularly go over the lessons that they have previously practiced;
6. Intermittent Review, where students periodically return to lessons to confirm their mastery of the material.

In addition to effective practice, students need to use their study time so that they are fully engaged. This means breaking up the time into shorter time segments, generally 4-6 minutes long, and varying the kind of activities they are working on in a study session. Students should not, for example, spend 30 minutes previewing one day and then 30 minutes reviewing another day. The activities need to *alternate* in each study session. In addition, students shouldn't spend the entire study period on one *lesson*, but should do several lessons in parallel. For example, in a 40~50-minute session, students can do parts of several lessons or units.