

How to set good language learning goals

(set yourself up for success with these 6 prompts!)



#1 Lay out your “When, Where, and How much” plan

Fill in the blanks:

- On a normal week, I can realistically commit _____ hours to my language learning.
- The best times for me to learn are _____.
- The best places for me to learn are _____.

Pro-tip: Do you anticipate having trouble fitting your language learning into your busy schedule? Take advantage of the Mango’s app’s Autoplay feature, which allows you to learn in audio-only mode. Without the restrictions of having to look at your screen, your best time and place for language learning could actually be in your car while driving or while taking a walk in the park!

#2 Consider your susceptibility to these 2 unhelpful mindsets

Which could you see yourself falling into? (*Select all that apply*)

You feel like if you never end up sounding like a native speaker in the language, then you’ll have failed. *Psst* - if this sounds like you, try to reflect on *why* you feel you need to sound native. Truth is, unless you’re training to be an international spy, you’ll probably be fine with communicative competence. Oftentimes, perfectionism can keep us from realizing we’re actually en route to meeting our practical goals.

You consider your errors and mistakes in the target language as signs that you’re failing or as evidence that you’re not smart enough. *Pro-tip:* making mistakes and forgetting are both actually crucial learning landmarks and can facilitate your proficiency game long-term. To read more about this, check out Chapter 2 of Ben Carey’s 2015 book *The Surprising Truth about How We Learn*. And a personal note: it’s really easy to feel stupid when you can’t communicate a reasonably simple thought. *Why can’t I tell this barista I want a small coffee?!* But just keep in mind - that frustration is a sign that you are on the right road. You’re testing your limits and on the way to breaking through them.

Neither of these apply to me.



#3 Reflect on how you'll avoid these 4 unhelpful patterns



Which of them could you see yourself falling into? (*Select all that apply*)

You overestimate how much time you can actually commit to your learning goal. Then you get frustrated when you haven't been able to maintain it. You end up feeling guilty about it, and that stalls your momentum. *Psst* - this is why setting realistic goals is so important.

You keep saying "I need to wait to use the language in public or with real people until I'm just a little better." Before you know it, it's been a year and you're stuck in your head, not making any real progress. *Friendly reminder:* It's never too early to start producing in your target language. The next one is related...

You rely too heavily on passive (instead of active) learning strategies. *More context:* Passive learning strategies include things like skimming grammar notes in a textbook, listening to vocabulary words on repeat, and reviewing old example sentences. Active learning strategies include tasks like reading a story you've never read before or producing your own original sentences aloud. If you rely too heavily on passive study strategies, you can fall prey to the Fluency Illusion. And if you want to learn more about it, [check our blog about it!](#)

You're convinced you need to find interruption-free pockets of time to focus fully on language learning. But life keeps coming at you with interruptions. You end up getting frustrated and give up. *Pro-tip:* "Building routines but embracing disruptions" is the mindset you want for successful language learning. Recent research from cognitive science suggests that interruptions can actually boost your recall of the learning content. It's called *incubation* - and you can actually use it to your advantage. If you want to read more about it, check out Chapter 6 of Ben Carey's 2015 book *The Surprising Truth About How We Learn*. *Pro-tip:* If you have 3 minutes until your next meeting, you could work your way through a bit of a Mango lesson on your smart phone and your exact spot will be saved for when you come back. If you find yourself in a checkout line at the grocery store later that day, you may go 2 more minutes into that same lesson. By the end of the day, you will find that you literally squeezed one or more lessons into the "cracks in your day."

None of the above applies to me.



#4 Describe what “success” and “failure” look like for you



Imagine yourself exactly 1 year from today. What does success and failure look like for you, for each of the skills shown in the table below? For example, your best case for reading might be “Read a news article and understand 60% of it” and a worst case might be “Read a news article and not be able to get even the main gist.” The Most Likely Case column might be “Read 3 articles/week and understand about 40% of each article on average.”

Skill	Best case	Worst case	Most likely case
<i>Reading</i>			
<i>Writing</i>			
<i>Listening</i>			
<i>Speaking</i>			
<i>Cultural competence</i>			

#5 Keep yourself motivated and accountable

What is your main reason for learning this language? With that primary motivator in mind, what are 2 actionable things you can do to keep yourself motivated and stay accountable to your language learning goals?

- _____
- _____

#6 Speak your loftiest long-term goals into existence

Describe your ultimate vision for yourself upon achieving your loftiest language learning goals. Be sure to narrate in the present tense. What will you be able to do? Accomplish? Experience? Communicate? Explore? Dream big. *Pro-tip:* Print this page out and set a reminder to read your answer to this question aloud once a month to keep it present in your mind.

