

## Adult Language Learning Success

Learning a language as an adult is challenging - and that is a useful plus. Have you heard the phrase, "Use it or lose it"? Language learning challenges your brain, which helps keep it active and vital.

Exercising your body requires consistency, dedication, work and repetition. It can be a fun social activity as well. Exercising your mind is the just the same.

### Repetition

You have many years of English use under your belt. Over those years you have repeated English words, sounds, grammar and concepts so many times that you can now speak English intuitively. Today may be the first time you've heard Gaelic. Repeating over and over what you learn in class is essential for you to grasp the language. Repeat Gaelic in the car on the way to work. Repeat Gaelic while you clean the house. Repeat Gaelic while you're exercising at the gym or on a walk. Repeat Gaelic over and over to your pets - they don't care if you make a mistake and they'll love you for the attention. Repeat, repeat, repeat.

### Group Practice

Sometimes we need to do things in a solitary environment so we can focus on the activity or topic at hand. Ultimately, however, language is about recording and communicating information TO OTHER PEOPLE. Group practice outside of class is important for building confidence in using what you've learnt. Learn the language with a family member so you can practice at home. Find people in the class who live near you and get together between classes at a coffee shop. Unless you have a photographic memory, you won't be able to learn a language with just the time spent attending class.

### Daily Exposure

Downsizing, rightsizing, working longer hours, taking care of loved ones who need help - everybody's lives are getting busier. It's so easy to put off classwork to the last minute. Don't! Break up tasks into small, manageable bites and spend 15-20 minutes a day working on them. A little bit of exposure every day is not only a great time management skill but is an effective way to learn a language. Make concerted effort to do this and soon it will become habit.

### Language and More

Language exists to communicate information between people. However, you have to have something to talk about! We live in a world of activities, music, history, literature and poetry, and we can talk about all of these in Gaelic! Expand and reinforce your language skills by including your musical, historical, and other interests in your language learning. It will help keep you interested and energized.

### Set realistic goals, track your progress and reward yourself.

Gaelic is not the enemy, impatience is. If you are a native speaker of English, can you say that you know everything there is to know about it? Probably not. So don't expect that you will master Gaelic in 8 weeks. Make realistic goals that you are likely to achieve. Keep a journal or a collection of your old worksheets or practice notes. Go back and review them so you can witness your own progress and develop a feeling of accomplishment. When you master a topic that was difficult for you, reward yourself.

### Don't worry about making mistakes or what you don't know.

As adults, we've worked hard to achieve success in our lives and like to appear as such - especially in front of strangers in public. Frequently this results in people clamming up in

class, rather than taking chances. Be confident and bold by using what you've learnt so far. Rather than being frustrated that you can't say everything that you can think of in English using Gaelic on the first day of class, stick with what you do know. You'll get to the complex thoughts if you give it enough time and dedication.

**Gaelic is not English with a different vocabulary!**

The phrase "lost in translation" exists for a reason. The rules of language exist to facilitate effective communication but we are communicating concepts, not language and its rules. Alphabets, grammar, usage, and pronunciation are not the point - they are the means. The journey that you are undertaking is how to use the tools of the language to communicate what concepts you want to communicate.

**If language is only a tool to communicate, then why learn Gaelic?**

Some people are interested in learning the language because they are interested in languages. Others because of their heritage and they want a connection to their ancestors. Others have no reason at all - they just thought it would be an interesting thing to do. Language is a window into a culture and its unique worldview.

But think for a moment about an archaeologist excavating a site of historical interest and discovering an arrowhead, which is a kind of tool. You could just recognize that that you've found an arrowhead and stop at the tool's function. Or you can start asking more questions - such as, "What is this made of?" If you find that it's made of a material that isn't found in the area, you might ask, "Where did this come from?" "Who made this?" "Who used this?" "Why did they make it to look like this?" Soon you begin to realize that tools are windows into the lives of those who made and used them. Just as tangible tools are windows into people's physical worlds, language is a window into the minds of those who use the language and the way they see the world. This is why we teachers spend a lot of time and our own money working to preserve the language of the Gael.