

How to plan
LANGUAGE
LEARNING
TIME



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Introduction + disclaimer

This guide has been written by a person who aspires to be extremely organized but fails at least 50% of the time, nobody is perfect.

So don't be harsh on yourself if you can't find time to dedicate to language learning: if not now, maybe you will be able to do it in a few weeks or months, don't give up just because you don't have time now.

While I'm no time management expert, I do read what experts say, I try to apply what I think could work for me and I experiment a lot.

This is actually my first suggestion before you even open your planner: we all have different lives, different schedules, different learning techniques so take what you need and discard the rest. If some of my recommendations resonate with you and you think they are doable: try them.

I have thought of as many situations as possible, drawing from both my experience and my students' experiences but this is not a tailor-made guide for categories of people. You will not find specific advice for moms, solopreneurs, working students, etc. Instead, you will find a process that you can adapt to your own situation. And since you will be building a system based on your needs and schedule, you'll make a more efficient use of your learning time.

One last thing to keep in mind before you start: consistency wins over quantity.



STEP NUMBER 1

Set aside some time to sit down and thoroughly analyze your schedule in daily, weekly, monthly increments.
What to look for:

- + Time slots when you are absolutely free: no work, no family, nothing
- + Time slots when you can be alone either inside the house or office, and outside (more on this in the next steps)
- + Time slots that can be repeated throughout the week, even at different hours
- + Time slots that are of a defined duration: 15 minutes, 30 minutes 1 hour, etc. (more on this in the next steps)



STEP NUMBER 2

Now that you have a better idea of how many times a day/week/month you can dedicate to language learning, you need to make them real: take a planner/calendar and mark the time slots.

A NOTE ON THE USE OF COLORS, STICKERS, AND OTHER ATTENTION-GRABBING ELEMENTS:

This is a good moment to highlight your learning time so I would recommend using a color or graphic element to mark it on your calendar.

If you are familiar with digital planners you may already do that.

Visual input is very helpful both in terms of finding things easily on the planner, and of building a healthy impatience for that moment when you can finally study your favorite language.



STEP NUMBER 3

Now that you have all your time slots sorted out you will be matching them with the different learning activities that are part of your language routine. This is the most important step, the core of everything. Here is where you align your time availability with your mental space and energy and with the different learning activities you have planned.

- + Reading takes time and focus so plan it for a time when you can really be focused and your attention level is high. Also, you will need to be seated and in a comfortable place if you are planning on looking words up and writing them down. So you could be at home or at the office, but you could also be at a cafe or at a library.
- + Listening can be a focused exercise too, or you can just schedule it for when you are also doing other activities: while commuting to work listen to a podcast, while folding laundry listen to another podcast, while power walking listen to yet another podcast.
- + Working on grammar exercises could be a bit time consuming, but if you plan one or two exercises at a time you can slide them in in your shortest slots.

As usual: think about you and your time when you plan. If you are tired after work, don't plan a whole hour of grammar. On the other hand, if you have a free Saturday afternoon once a month don't just schedule a fill-in-the-blanks exercise: make it a meaningful time.



STEP NUMBER
4

LEAVE SOME SPACE FOR UNPLANNED
ACTIVITIES:

- + Listen to a song in your target language while you shower
- + Cook a traditional dish following a recipe in your target language
- + Try a TV series or just a YouTube video with subtitles when you relax in the evening

