To know how to learn Spanish, it is important to realise that learning Spanish (or any other language) requires familiarity with pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and cultural contexts. In this article, author Nageeb Gounjaria gives some tips on how to learn Spanish language by mastering these 4 essential features of language learning.

1 Self-study, join a class or hire a private Spanish tutor.

Self-study through audios and videos is helpful, especially for learning basic Spanish vocabulary and grammar. However, they have their own limitations for teaching more advanced skills.

Learning Spanish in a classroom with a teacher remains more effective than self-learning, especially in small group situations. The teacher can provide cultural contexts that are an indispensable part of language learning, besides being able to simulate realistic daily life situations. But students need to have realistic expectations; it is not always possible for a teacher to cater to the individual needs of students in a group setting.

Learning Spanish with a private tutor is the best, tried and tested option for those who can afford it. Preferably an experienced Spanish tutor with the skills to teach Spanish as a Foreign Language and one who shares a similar language with you. Not only you'll spend less time looking up difficult words in the dictionary, you will also, through cross comparison, understand Spanish grammar easier and faster. Most importantly, you will have someone who can guide you, motivate you, and share with you all the shortcuts so that you don't reinvent the wheel.

2 Memorise the gender of Spanish nouns at an early stage.

In Spanish, all nouns are either masculine or feminine; there is no neuter gender. Native speakers generally learn which words are masculine and which ones are feminine from childhood, through trial and error, and getting corrected in the process.

For those learning Spanish as a foreign language, learning the gender of individual words can be a daunting experience and it can take you a lifetime! Fortunately, there are some general rules that can teach you to make out the gender of Spanish words with about 90% accuracy. Learn these rules to save yourself time and future mistakes.

3 Build on what you already know.

A lot of Spanish words are similar in spelling and meaning to English (they are called cognates) due to their Latin origin. By knowing these cognates, you can easily transfer and simply add a Spanish pronunciation to them. You will have loads of Spanish words that you never thought you knew and which you can put to immediate use.

4 Find a logical approach to learn Spanish easily.

If you are not a young learner, it is easier to learn Spanish by using a logical approach - mainly through an intelligent organisation of information and memorisation techniques.

5 Create your own Spanish vocabulary notebook.

It helps to create your own Spanish vocabulary notebook. You can organise new Spanish words that you learn under related Themes (e.g. Food) and further categorise then into People (chef, camarero), Nouns (bebida, pan), Adjectives (delicioso, crujiente), Adverbs (bien, mucho) and Verbs (comer, beber). For an easier retrieval of information, you can number all the pages in the notebook, and create an Index containing a detailed list of the Themes with page numbers next to them.

6 Set some milestones and take a Spanish Proficiency Test.

Learning Spanish for fun is exciting, but many give up along the way, especially when they hit a wall. To keep track of your progress and measure yourself at an international level, it is good to take a Spanish proficiency test such as DELE, D.I.E, BULATS or ACTFL. Taking any of these Spanish proficiency tests at various stages of learning will give you more confidence to keep learning and improving.

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