

Strategies for Success

Always review what you learned in class that day.

This will help you catch anything you're not sure about and that you might want to bring up with the teacher. If you only review just before an exam, you might not have time to ask your questions. Plus, reviewing each day will mean you'll go into the next class much better prepared. You'll know more and will be able to participate more, and you'll definitely get more out of that class.

Exaggerate.

You are training your mouth and vocal chords to produce new sounds and a little exaggeration in the beginning will help you do that.

Don't try to translate everything.

It's possible to understand what you're hearing without knowing what it means in English. Plus, translation slows you down. For each sentence you try to translate you will miss hearing another. Eventually you want to be able to think in Spanish and translation will prevent this happening. Also, some things can't be translated literally and trying to do so will make Spanish harder to learn and use well.

Guess

This is a really important strategy. Perhaps you only understood one or two words in a sentence. Don't be afraid to guess the rest from the context or by looking to see how your classmates respond. If you make a mistake, no harm done. Making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process. Rather make them in class where they don't count than in the exam where they do. Also, remember that your brain is helping you make sense of what you're learning. When asked a question, at least try to answer, even if you feel unsure. You may well respond correctly. Sometimes we know things without even being aware that we do.

Study combinations of words

Don't try to memorize lists of words without relating those words to others. Study nouns with their articles so you remember their gender. Study verbs with nouns so you can more quickly produce sentences and become more comfortable with idiomatic expressions.

Push yourself

Try to respond to questions as completely as possible. The more often you say something, the easier it gets to say. Don't limit your practice time in class to yes/no or one-word answers. The only person you're short-changing is yourself.

Could you please repeat that?

Sometimes, when someone asks us a question, we choke. Don't hesitate to ask the person to repeat the question. You may just need a bit of time to process.

Persevere

If you ask a question and aren't understood, try again, don't just give up. Imagine you're in a Spanish-speaking country and you really need an answer to solve something urgent. You wouldn't give up after the first try, would you?

Learn to catch your own mistakes

You will start to develop an ear for Spanish and will begin to hear when you make a mistake. Feel free to correct yourself. We do this in English all the time.

Edit your work

Always read over your written work before handing it in. It's so easy to make silly mistakes. Take the time to correct them.

Read Aloud

Before handing in a composition, try reading it aloud. You will be surprised at just how many errors you will catch that you wouldn't have noticed when reading over your work silently. Practice your pronunciation by reading aloud any articles or stories you've been asked to read for homework. This will help you train your mouth to make the necessary sounds. Plus, sometimes we remember words better if we've actually said them.

You're not alone

Review for tests with a classmate. Not only does it help to say things out loud, but

working together simulates the classroom environment, allowing you to practice conversations. This, in turn, gives your words a useful context and is far more helpful than reading over lists of words. And start studying for your tests at least one week in advance. Just reading over the material the night before isn't going to help you.

Record useful vocabulary

Keep a notebook or online list of words, phrases and expressions you want to remember. Make a habit of reviewing these notes at least once a week. So often we either ask for or look up words and within hours (sometimes even minutes) we've forgotten them again. Decide whether you want to record this information alphabetically or by topic. Find a system that works for you. (We recommend recording this vocabulary using Quizlet.com which allows you to practice actively with this material.)

Study Actively

Reading through your notes or the textbook is not sufficient preparation for a test or exam. You need to test yourself on the information and your ability to use it. Visit our WebCT site for some useful websites where you can apply what you have learned and receive immediate feedback. Make use of the review sheets, consult with your professor about anything that seems unclear, study with friends, practice producing full sentences. Above all, make sure you don't leave your studying to the last minute and definitely get a decent night's sleep before the test. You need to be able to think clearly to do well.

Use your dictionary intelligently.

When you look up a word in the dictionary, make sure you check that you have the right context. Don't just use the first word you see or you could end up informing everyone that you are a ceiling fan for the Red Sox or that your commander is biology.

Laugh a lot.

As you learn a language you will make lots of mistakes. Everyone does. So long as you learn from these mistakes, no harm done. The more you stress out over every little mistake you've ever made the harder you'll make it for yourself to learn. Plus, you'll find that your teachers have very fond memories of those students who said their mothers were good kitchens or who asserted that, in summer, they like to wear watermelons on their feet.

Useful Websites

www.quizlet.com

Free site that allows you to make your own flashcards and provides fun ways to test yourself. A *really* good way to learn vocabulary.

www.conjuguemos.com

This site allows you to practice with verb conjugations and is a great way to get to know your verbs. You may create an account free-of-charge. When you open an account include our school ID of 6918 and select your professor from the list that will appear.