

How to improve your English?

Do you always wonder why there is so much fuss about getting the nuances of grammar and vocabulary right? Then, this article is for you!

Getting a good command over English or any language for that matter, is not a child's play. The language teacher used to point out so many things for just one single sentence that we'd feel it's better to keep mum. But a sound knowledge of English is imperative in today's global village. Here are 5 aspects which you need to master to gain good hold over the language. Though I know most of us don't want to take the trouble of mastering all of them but at least have to be acquainted with them. What are they? Here is the list...

Read - Yes read. I am pretty sure you did not expect the first point to be anywhere near that gruesome exercise of reading. But yes, that's the first one. Reading helps. Not just because it makes you very strong content wise. But because it gives ground to the words that you hear others say often. The other day I came across one of my friends who is a glaring example of this. He mistook 'hats off' for 'head soft'. The reason being that he had only heard the word being uttered by others.

So, reading gives you ample opportunities to make your knowledge bank sound. Curious ones may also encounter the origin of the words and the reasons how such phrases were coined. For beginning, pick up something that interests you (Don't always stick to Archie or Playboy :)). Start with some light hearted stuff and then move on to something more meaningful.

Vocabulary - Oh, come on! I don't expect you to be a walking dictionary or thesaurus. But your vocabulary must keep you in such a situation that you don't fall short of words. Equally important is the right usage at the right time.

Two days after Mr. A's sister tied the knot with a charming guy, Mr. A's friend called him up to ask whether he'd be able to accompany her to a movie the next day. Mr. A replied, "Sure, I can as the marriage is over". The next question the friend popped was, "WHAT! Is she divorced?"

And to complete the story, let me tell you she wasn't. Mr. A should have said 'the wedding is over' and not 'marriage'. Such is the power of words.

Grammar - The most feared aspect - Grammar. It is something many of us love to hate. Hey, don't make that face. It is not that bad! Going wrong with this can completely change the meaning sometimes. What comes to mind when you see this in a jobs classifieds section on a website?

Wanted: A caretaker for a dog who does not smoke or drink.

(Lucky man to have got a teetotaler dog!)

Being grammatically wrong leaves a bad impression. Can you afford to let it happen?

Formation - 'Hi, I am Jack. I am 29 yrs old. I live in Germany. I work in a library.'

Our hypothetical person Jack sure has communicated about himself, but such short sentences do not make a very effective monologue and abrupt the flow of language. Neither oversimplify nor make the language too abstruse.

Now, have a look on this.

'It's my desire to take into consideration your need for support to which I wish to extend all possible cooperation'

Umm...yes it's over now. More than the length of the sentence what must be bothering you is its meaning. Its meaning is plain and simple - 'May I help you?'

Sentences that tend to be too short or too long should be avoided. The average length of a sentence should be 14-15 words.

Speaking - All the above mentioned points are important, no doubt. But those all were the means to achieve the end - expressing yourself. Muster up confidence and start speaking. Pay enough attention to your vocabulary, grammar, sentence formation, but simultaneously keep talking. There is no better way to learn than to take it head-on. The words you utter our hesitatingly will become the foundations of your stupendous oratory one day.

Now, you must be thinking that these are not mere five points, it's an exhaustive list! Harry S. Truman said - "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts." Make all your efforts worthwhile.

Just these points to be taken care of and you are all set for your tryst with English. All the best!

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