

# SMARTER

# Language Goals

*Set yourself up for success in 4 easy steps.*



Language Coaching, Meta Learning  
& the French Touch



# Step 1: Your language dream

If there was no limit, what would your goal be?

Picture yourself having achieved your goal. What are you able to do in the language you have learned?

In this step, do not wonder whether or not achieving the goal is possible for you (hint: it certainly is, even if you doubt it), just care about formulating what you would like to be able to do with your ideal language skills, and write it down.

**Here are some examples, to give you inspiration:**

Read Japanese manga in Japanese.

Travel in France and get by in all typical traveling situations

Work for a German company where I have to read and write emails, and attend conferences in German.

Be able to have everyday conversations in Spanish

Ideally, I would like to ...

**Note:** Do this with one language at a time. If you study more than one language, do it for each language individually.

# Step 2: Identify core skills

## Now you know what you'd like your ideal level to be. So how do you get there?

Many students waste a lot of time and energy because they believe they *have to* do things which turn out to be totally irrelevant to their goals. If you do a lot of grammar exercises, you will become very good at... doing grammar exercises. Whether or not these exercises help you in your study depends on what you are trying to achieve. So, identify the skills that *you* need to work on.

Go back to what you wrote in step 1 and find the key words. Look for words such as « speak », « write », « read », « listen », « conversation », « vocabulary », « grammar ».

If you find those words, it means you will have to work on those specific skills. Write them down below.

### My core skills are:

It's unlikely that you wrote the words « vocabulary » and « grammar », however you still might need to work on those skills in some cases.

- Vocabulary : define which area of language you need to learn: everyday vocabulary? Traveling vocabulary? Work- or study-related vocabulary? Once you know, plan to study these areas of vocabulary, and ditch the rest.

### Areas of vocabulary I need to focus on:

- Grammar: Are grammar skills really required for you to reach your goal? Unless you need to write a lot in your target language, good grammar skills are probably not required. For example, if you're a traveler, bad grammar doesn't matter, as long as you get your point across.

### Do I need good grammar skills?

# Step 3: Set intermediate goals

## Here is where the rubber hits the road.

So, you have your final goal (step 1) and you know what skills you need to develop to get there (step 2). Now, what do you *actually* need to do? You can only develop a core skill by working on it. Other activities might give your core skill a boost, but you will never be able to speak until you actually speak, or to read until you actually read. Now, of course you can't go to a native speaker and just have a fluent conversation with them. If you could, you wouldn't need to study. But here is the key:

## What can you do now to get closer to your goal ?

This will be different depending on your goals and your current level. Here are some examples:

**Goal:** fluent conversation

**What you can do now:**

- Have a very basic conversation with someone who speaks both your target language and your native language (friend, language partner etc.) or with a study buddy.
- Learn relevant vocabulary and prepare sentences for your next conversation.
- Record a small video of yourself speaking in the target language for one or two minutes.

**Goal:** read books in your target language

**What you can do now:**

- Read just one page
- Read a book with many pictures
- Read a book in easy language (made for students)
- Read a bilingual book (a book featuring the same text in two languages: one language on the left page and another one on the right page)

**My goal:**

**What I can do now to get closer to my goal:**

# Step 4: Make your goals S.M.A.R.T.E.R.

What makes the difference between a good goal which inspires you to reach it, and a bad goal which doesn't motivate you?

**The good goal is S.M.A.R.T.E.R:**

**Specific** – « Improve my French » is way too vague. « Become able to have effortless every-day conversations in French with my partner » is a much more specific goal. Be as specific as possible when defining your goal.

**Measurable**— If your goal is to « improve your French », how do you know that you have achieved it? Is it when you learned 10 more words? When you stopped making a mistake you made? When you can think entirely in French?. A goal such as « Become able to have effortless every-day conversation in French with my partner » is easy to measure: either you can speak with your partner in French with no effort, or you can't. Make sure you can know easily whether you have reached your goal.

**Achievable**— Set a goal which you can reach. This is particularly important when setting intermediate goals (step 3). Learning a language is a big challenge. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and just give up. Avoid this by setting realistic, achievable intermediate goals. If you are confident that you can achieve your goal, the odds of you achieving it are much higher. Set goals which you know you can achieve.

**Relevant**— Step 2&3 in this ebook are here to ensure that your goals are relevant. Don't set a goal just to set a goal. Make sure to set a goal which is a milestone on the way to your ideal language level (step 1)

**Time-Bound**— A goal without a deadline is just wishful thinking. If you want your language dream to become reality, you have to get moving at some point. The sooner the better. Deadlines inspire you to take actions. Set a big goal (step one) and then set achievable goals for this month, for this week and for today. Put them in your calendar and get to work.

**Evaluated**— After the deadline is reached, look at your goals again and determine if you have reached them. If you have, it's awesome. Set new goals to keep it up. If you haven't achieved your goals, find out why. Was there a problem with the goals themselves? Maybe they were not achievable. Or maybe you found that they were not relevant or that the deadline was too tight. Figure out what went wrong and reajust your goals.

**Readjusted**—Goals must be readjusted regularly. You need to make sure they stay up-to-date, specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and that they have realistic deadlines, so you can keep moving. Don't forget to

# A few more tips

Those four steps are all you need to get the perfect goals. Here a few details you should also take into account.

## Describe your target level:

I would advise against using words such as « **intermediate** », « **advanced** », or even « **fluent** ». Those words have very little meaning of their own, and different people understand them differently. Instead, define concretely what those mean for you. If your goal is to be « **fluent** », describe what you will be able to do when you are fluent. It can be helpful to describe also what you don't need to be able to do: do you want to be able to read books about neuroscience, for example? Or any book at all?

Similarily, **don't use terms such as B1, B2, C1**, unless you know precisely what they mean. If you need to define your current level or a target level on this scale (to take an exam for example), [I am happy to help you do that](#).

If nobody requires you to use this scale and you don't know it well, there is no need to use it.

## Evaluate your work capacity wisely:

Goals need to be **achievable**. Easier said than done.

We tend to underevaluate what we can achieve over a long period of time and overevaluate what we can do in a short period of time. Concretely, this means two things:

- **In step 1**, we all have a tendency to downscale our expectations, doubting that we have what it takes to reach our dream goal. It is important to describe your dream goal without taking what you think you can do into account. **Assume you have no limits.**
- **When setting short term goals** (next page), **we all have a tendency to think we can do more than we will actually be able to do.** If you have ever managed a project, you know that most of the time, they take much longer than we originally assume. When we start learning a language, we are highly motivated and we think we can get a whole lot of language learning done in a month. But then life gets in the way, or the language turns out to be harder than expected, and we can't help feeling disappointed at missing our goals. If this happens to you, don't feel bad. It happens to me too, sometimes. It is very hard to stop ourselves from the tendency to put too much on our plate. Don't forget to evaluate and readjust your goals. **With experience, you will learn to know how much you can really get done, and setting goals which are challenging yet achievable will become easier and easier.**

# My goals!

It's your turn. How are you going to rock your language learning?

**This month, I will...**

**This week, I will...**