

Tips for Foreign Language Study

It seems like they have a different word for everything, or so you may say when your new foreign language class meets the first day. The professor is speaking in a new language, writing characters on the board, and stressing pronunciation. While learning a new language can be a daunting and challenging process, it can also be very rewarding. With these simple tips, you will be able to get the most out of your language courses at Princeton.

- **Pay very close attention during the first few weeks** of an introductory language course, even if you have some previous exposure to the language. The introductory material builds a foundation for the rest of the semester and is essential to your doing well throughout the semester and truly learning the language. The better you understand the basics, the easier it will be to keep up with the course and understand the more difficult material later.
- **Keep up with your assignments.** Language classes move at a very quick pace in college, so it is crucial to stay on top of the material. Learning a language, similar to learning math or science, is a highly sequential process. Simple daily assignments, quizzes, vocabulary, and verb conjugations are all important to the acquisition of a new language.
- **Participate as fully as possible in all class activities.** While it may seem embarrassing at times, responding to your instructor's questions, repeating sentences, or doing role-plays are all great opportunities to practice speaking skills in the new language. By participating more and not being afraid to make mistakes, you will begin to feel more comfortable speaking the language.
- **Review every single day.** Daily review for 15-30 minutes in addition to your assigned homework will ensure a solid foundation in the language and save you time as you prepare for quizzes and exams. Write down a few complete conjugations, quiz yourself on vocabulary, or practice your characters with your book closed to see if you are really retaining what you are learning.
- **Go to language tables.** The residential colleges have foreign language tables that meet during lunch or dinner. You can practice the new language in a less formal environment with fellow students, professors, and others interested in the language. Ask your language instructor when and where these are scheduled.
- **Read, speak, and listen to the language in many ways.** Listen to your language on the radio, find CDs in Mendel Music Library, or read the newspaper online or in Firestone. Change the language tracks on your favorite DVD to French for a challenge. Speak to your friends or roommates from Beijing, Munich, or Mexico City to practice conversing with a native speaker in an informal atmosphere.
- **Have fun with the language,** and practice, practice, practice!