

How to learn a language in under 24 hours

1. Pronunciation

Learning the pronunciation and writing system of the target language is always the necessary first step before starting to speak. If the target language has an unfamiliar writing system, try to find resources that use a transliterated writing system, like 'pinyin' for Mandarin Chinese. Listening to audio can be helpful to learn accurate pronunciation.

2. Pronouns

Pronouns are used in almost every sentence. Learn the most important declensions, which are usually the nominative (subject pronouns), accusative (direct object pronouns), and dative (indirect object pronouns). To save time, focus on the most important pronouns, which are usually 'I', 'you', and 'it'.

3. Top Verbs

Mastering the most important verbs (auxiliary/modal/handle) will allow you to converse in any context.

TOP 10 VERBS IN ANY LANGUAGE:

to be, to have (to)*, to want*, to need*, to be able to*, to go*, to know*, to do, to understand, to think/believe

4. Important Irregulars

Learning all the exceptions to all the rules is not reasonable. Therefore, only learn the irregular conjugations for the most important verbs in the most important tenses. This principle also applies to other rules/exceptions. Do not learn them unless they will be used frequently.

5. Tenses / Moods

Only learn the most important tenses. Present tense is by far the most important. Other tenses may be learned quickly given the language. For example, some languages use the infinitive as the imperative, or use a single word to signify the future tense. Only focusing on the conjugations for 'I', 'you', and 'it' can save time. Other tenses/moods are not needed for basic speech.

6. Word Order

Learn the word order for the 3 most important simple sentences: declaratives, negations, and interrogatives. If it is different, learn the syntax for handle verbs, and using conjunctions like 'but' and 'because' to join two simple sentences.

7. Interrogatives

Learn the basics: who, what, where, when, why, how, how much. Some language may have other interrogatives - only choose the most relevant ones.

8. Articles and Nouns

Learn how to use nouns. This may require learning articles. Articles are more complicated in some languages than in others, but they are important omitting or misusing articles in a language that has articles can result in foreign-sounding speech. Ex. "I go to restaurant to eat sandwich."

9. Possessives

Possessive adjectives are very useful. Focusing only on "my" and "yours" can save time.

10. Demonstratives

Both demonstrative adjectives and pronouns are important. Learning these will enable useful sentences like "I want that" or "I want to go to this place".

11. Other Useful Words

These include the basic 'yes'/'no'; conjunctions like 'but' and 'because'; indispensable prepositions like 'to', 'in', 'for', and 'from'; adjectives like 'also', 'a lot', and 'very'; and the numbers.

12. Top Nouns

Learning nouns is the lowest priority because they are easy to learn. With a simple dictionary app, you can look up any noun you want. It is hard to generalize what the most important nouns are because this will depend greatly on the context and situation of the learner. For example, a student would want to learn words like 'university' and 'student', whereas a businessman would want to learn words like 'meeting' and 'business'.

This guide describes what I believe are the 12 most important areas of focus (ordered by importance) when attempting to learn a language in a short amount of time. Although most of the relevant information can be summarized on 1-2 pages, it is useful to learn about these 12 areas in a bit more detail from some language learning resource. Also, since such 1-2 page language guides that cover all 12 of these areas practically don't exist, you will almost definitely need to use different sources to learn about these topics.

Learn Quechua in under 24 hours

Pronunciation notes: Vowels are identical to Spanish. Consonants are identical to Spanish, except for some exceptions: “ll” is pronounced as “ly”. “q” is a “k/g” sound made in the back of the throat (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voiceless_uvular_stop). “kh”, “ph” and “qh” are aspirated consonants. “k”, “p”, and “q” are ejectives. The “k” sound is a click-like sound, just like the hard “ck” sound at the end of the word “click”. The “p” sound is the hard “p” sound at the end of the word “pop”. Look up bilabial, velar, and uvular ejective on Wikipedia. Stress is always on the penultimate syllable.

Pronouns:

	English Subject	Subject
singular	I	noqa
	you	qan
	he	
	she	pay
plural	we (inclusive)	noqanchis
	we (exclusive)	noqayku
	you	qankuna
	they	paykuna

Top verbs:

to be	kay
to have	tiaj/tiyapuy*
to want	munay
to need	necesitay
to say	niy
to understand	jap'ekay
to speak	parlay
to do	ruway
to like	gustaway
to eat	mikhuy
to return	kutiy
to come	jamuy
to arrive	chayay
to learn	yachashay
to be able to	atiy
to know	yachay
to start	qallariy
to go	riy

If you are unsure as to how to say any verb, it is common to use the Spanish verb. For example “to study” may be said as “estudiy”.

Word order:

- Declarative:** Subject + Object + Verb.
 - Negations:** “mana” and “-chu” sandwich the verb. Ex: “I don’t want” = “Mana munanichu”.
 - Interrogatives:** Same as declarative, but add “-chu” to the end of the verb. Ex: “munankichu?”
- NOTE: Subject pronouns are usually omitted, especially “it”. Ex. “Noqa munani” → “Munani”

Tenses:

- Present progressive:** add “sh” before the present tense endings. Ex: “I am doing” = “ruwashani”.
- Past:** add “rqa” before the present tense endings
- Imperative:** use the infinitive

Top Verb Conjugations:

English	to speak	to have
Infinitive	parlay <i>Past tense</i> <i>Future tense</i>	tiyapuy
singular	noqa parlani <i>parlarqani</i> <i>parlasaq</i>	tiyapuwan
	qan parlanki <i>parlarqanki</i> <i>parlanki</i>	tiyapusunki
	pay parlan <i>parlarqan</i> <i>parlenqa</i>	tiyapun
plural	noqayku parlayku <i>parlarqayku</i> <i>parlasqayku</i>	tiyapuwayku
	noqanchis parlanchis <i>parlarqanchis</i> <i>parlasunchis</i>	tiyapusunchis
	qankuna parlankichis <i>parlarqankichis</i> <i>parlarnkichis</i>	tiyapusunkichis
	paykuna parlanku <i>parlarqanku</i> <i>parlenqanku</i>	tiyapunku

Demonstratives:

this	kay	that	chay
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ser vs. estar:

Spanish uses these two verbs to mean “to be”. In Quechua, “kay” is “ser” and “kashay”, the present progressive form of “ser”, can be used to express “estar”.

Interrogatives:

who	pi	why	ima rayku
what	ima	how	imayna
when	mayk'aq	how much /many	machka
where	may		

When not used as interrogatives, add a “-chus” after the interrogative.

Particles:

Quechua is an agglutinative language, which means that instead of using prepositions or conjunctions, particles are often added to the ends of words to make them longer and change the meaning.

-chu	question/negation particle	-rayku	Because of
-man	to	-lla	Softening particle
-ta	Direct object	-raq	Still/yet
-		-paj	In order to
kuna	Plural	-pis	Also
-pi	In	-manta	From
-wan	With/indirect object		

Possessive Adjectives:

Add the following suffixes to the noun.

my	-y	our (exc.)	-yku
		our (inc.)	-nchis
your	-yki	your (pl.)	-ykichis
his/her	-n	their	-nku

Some important words:

a lot	ashka	now	kunan	because of that	chay-rayku	hello/how are you	imaynalya
a little	pisi	no	mana	food	mikhuna	here/there	kaypi/chaypi
all	tukuy	only	-lla	good/well	walej	yes	Arí
already/yet	-ña	water	yaku	bathroom	baño		

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How to use this guide

This guide provides the vocab and grammar fundamentals needed to start speaking. Now you need to train your muscle memory and creative ability to form sentences: Take any one of the sample sentence structures from above (or make your own), and repeat out loud until it sounds fluent. Then gradually substitute in different nouns, verbs, and pronouns to develop your creative ability and functional understanding of syntax, all while repeating each sentence until it sounds fluent. Using just the information on this sheet, you can create hundreds of sentences by substituting words and combining sentence structures. Look up other nouns, adjectives, and verbs on your own and substitute into the sentence structures from above to make even more sentences. In the example below, the bolded text develops muscle memory through repetition while the underlined parts develop your syntax understanding and ability to form sentences on your own. Don't read from the paper (except the 1st time), and aim for fluid speech without pauses or hesitations. **If what you say doesn't sound fluent, say it again and again until it does.**

I want to go to the store.

I want to go to the bank.

I want to go to the restaurant.

I need to go to the store.

I have to go to the store.

I should go to the store.

I don't want to go.

She doesn't want to go.

We don't want to go.

Notes