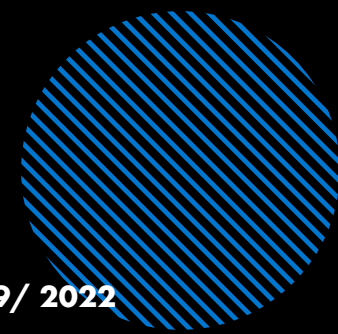


INNER CIRCLE
SEPTEMBER



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This month

Do You Know What You Want
From This Language?

innovative LANGUAGE.COM

WELCOME BACK TO THE INNER CIRCLE

Welcome back to the Inner Circle. Last time you learned about the importance of taking breaks, and how to make progress while having fun. Last month, I also had just come back from vacation, and I missed my August goal.

But after my break, I was well-rested and ready, and the good news is... I hit my goal for September. I'm up to ten minutes of conversation, with three months left in the year.

I want to ramp up my progress, maybe even going beyond fifteen minutes by the end of the year. How?

Let's get into this Inner Circle.



HOW TO MAKE LANGUAGE PROGRESS WHILE HAVING FUN

The main theme of today's Inner Circle is specificity and knowing what you want. Here's a question. Was there ever something you really wanted to buy when you were a kid, something you had to save up for? Was it a special treat? A toy? Think about something you saved for and got.

I'm betting the main reason you were able to buy it is because you knew exactly how much you needed to save up. You kept the number in your mind, and could see your savings getting close to it. It was just a matter of time until you saved up for it.

This kind of specificity is a powerful way to reach almost any goal. And also why in every Inner Circle episode, we talk about setting small, measurable goals. It's much easier to reach a goal like five or ten minutes of conversation in your target language than something like "I want to be fluent."

That's because you define the progress; you know exactly what you want. In the case of a special toy, you needed to save a certain amount. With language, it could be 5 minutes of conversation, or learning 100 words in a month.

This month I went for ten minutes. I wanted to be able to talk about my vacation with my teacher in Hindi. I also wanted to talk about the flights and the airports. So, I was specific about what I wanted to learn. From there, it was a matter of learning enough words for these topics. So I defined what progress would look like for me: speak at least two more minutes of conversation. How? By being able to talk about those two specific topics. I did HindiPod101 lessons, I learned words around those topics, I practiced with my Premium PLUS teacher. By the end, I was ready for that conversation goal.

A goal like “be able to talk about my trip” is much easier to reach than “I want to speak more Hindi.”

It all goes back to being specific and knowing what you want, which sounds simple but it’s a bit of an advanced tactic.

You may wonder, if it’s so simple, why isn’t it for beginners?

It’s because it’s a tactic you grow into with experience. Just think about how people usually learn. For example, in school classes. Students come in, they listen, they take notes, they leave, they pass the class, then forget everything afterward anyway. It’s a passive approach to learning.

It’s not too different from language learning. Most people will download an app, watch a YouTube video, or buy a book and passively go through it.

And that’s not bad, it’s actually normal. That’s how we

all learn as beginners. We don’t know enough about the language, so we have to take a backseat.

Unless you’ve had some experience or naturally know exactly what you want, it can be hard to “know what you want” from the topic you’re learning. You’d always have to look out for things you want to accomplish with the language. You’d have to stop and think for yourself. A bit much for someone just starting in a language.

In my case, I know what I want out of the languages I learn. I want to be able to talk about my family, where I’m from, what I do, and have conversations at restaurants. I always start from those when I learn a new language.

I also have a specific list of tactics.

1. I always prepare a list of questions for my teacher ahead of time, even if I can’t think of a really good question. I think it would be a waste not to ask or get something clarified.

2. Any time I learn a word or a grammar pattern, I always try to ask what the opposite of it is. I learn two things at the same time.
3. I always keep a list of grammar points or words I'm not confident about, just so that I can practice them whenever I can.
4. I always look for new topics to talk about and write them down.
5. I'll also visit restaurants where the staff speak the language.

I'm sure there are more tactics that I'm missing but the point is... on top of the lessons, I have my own list of things I want to do.

It's a bit like learning an instrument to play a specific song, or programming to build a specific app.

That's a powerful way to learn because you want to accomplish something specific.

But again, this kind of approach is not something all beginners can do. It's definitely something you can develop over time.



HOW TO APPLY THIS TACTIC

One of the best ways to make progress in your target language is to define what that progress is, and be super specific about it. For example, learning 100 words in a month, speaking two minutes in your target language, or mastering a specific grammar point so you can use it freely in conversation.

Because you have a specific goal or number, you know exactly what to look for, whether it's reaching 100 words or two minutes.

That's why we recommend you set small, measurable goals every month. You can just as easily apply it to your day-to-day learning as well. Your daily goal might be to practice a grammar point, or spend ten minutes on the alphabet.

But the tricky part is that you need to stop and think about what you want out of the language. You always need to be on the lookout for new goals and things to do.

That's what separates beginners from more experienced learners. Experienced learners tend to know what they want out of the language. They know their strengths, weaknesses, and which specific points they need to focus on.

Whereas beginners don't know enough to ask questions like this. And that's okay. This skill is developed over time.

But if you want to get started, here are a few things you can do.

One: Set a small measurable monthly goal, just like I do every month. I started off with one minute of conversation by the end of January, two minutes by February, and so on.

Two: Ask questions and note down specific points you don't understand. The fact is, with language, you'll always come across words or grammar patterns that you don't quite get. Note them down and ask questions whenever possible. This will help you come up with specific items you'd want to tackle or master within the language. And you can always ask us questions in the comments section of the lessons, or your Premium PLUS teacher if you're a Premium PLUS member.

Three: Similar to the second point, if you're learning with an actual teacher, always prepare a question to ask, even if you can't think of a good one. This gets you in the habit of being proactive and looking for specific points you want to learn, clarify or practice. You can always ask about examples for a grammar point, or which phrasing is most natural.

Four: Take some time to think about what you'd like to accomplish specifically with the language. For example, if you're learning for travel, then you give yourself specific goals like learning how to ask about prices or how to ask for directions. It doesn't have to be anything big. In fact, the smaller and more specific it is, the better. For example, how to introduce yourself in your target language. You might even realize you don't know how to do something you want to do, like talk about your family in your target language. So come up with a specific step - being able to say how many family members you have.

This point is something you'll need to do often: stopping to think about what you want to be able to do with the language and coming up with specific goals for yourself. This is what separates the experienced learners from the beginners. (Just think, how often do beginners say, "I want to learn to say I have 5 family members in <target language>" on their own volition? Not often.)

Five: Look for lessons that cover the topics you want to talk about inside our lesson library. For example, Survival Phrases lessons cover travel, and the Top 25 Questions lessons cover the most common questions for conversations. The 400 Activities lessons teach you to talk about your day.

Now let's talk goals, and my small, monthly, measurable goal for next month. I'm going to aim for 12 minutes by October 31st.

Let us know your goals at
inner.circle@innovativelanguage.com.

Stay tuned for the next Inner Circle.