

Treffpunkt Tandem

Before you start...

...think about the following questions:

- Why am I learning this foreign language?
- What are my goals in learning this language and by when do I want to reach them?
- Relating to Tandem: What goals do I want to reach with it?
- Do I have special technical language needs (law, medicine, business, etc.) that I want to fulfil by means of Tandem?
- Questions on your learning: What are my strengths/weaknesses, how/when/where do I learn best of all?
- How much time can I devote to Tandem? On which days and at which time of day am I available? How long do I want to work in Tandem?
- What are my concrete aims for this period?

The first meeting

- How often and how long do we want to meet?
- How long do we want to continue learning with each other?
- What are our specific linguistic problems?
- What are our learning aims? Are there any special situations / contexts in which we need the foreign language?
- How do we want to correct each other?
- How do we want to work (what sort of material; mainly oral or written tasks)?
- Where do we want to meet next time?

Tips for speaking and listening

- While talking in the mother tongue: Adapt the degree of difficulty to your partner's level (e.g. no complicated sentence constructions), but speak in a natural way (this trains your partner's listening comprehension) – not in simplified "Pidgin English".
- In the foreign language: Confidence is the most important! Dare to make mistakes. If you don't know a word or expression, keep speaking in the foreign language and try to work your way around it.
- Vary the topics of conversation: Don't only talk about personal matters, but also about culture, economics, politics, sports etc.

Tips for reading and writing

- Bring several different original texts (newspapers, magazines, advertisements, letters etc.) to the meetings. If you run out of conversation, these materials can provide you with appropriate topics.
- While reading, begin with a rough understanding. First try to make out the subject, the crucial point of the text. After that, you can start on the details, e.g. discuss any structures or expressions that your partner didn't understand.
- At this point try to avoid translation. Encourage your partner to explain in the foreign language what you did not understand.
- Writing: Before the meeting, write various types of text (articles, personal letters, complaints etc.) and discuss them in the meeting. Focus in particular on the specific characteristics of particular types of text, such as letterheads, salutations, typical empty phrases etc.
- A linking of listening, understanding and writing: Let your partner dictate something in the foreign language to you.

Tips for reflecting on learning after a meeting

Keep a diary where you reflect on the following questions:

- Am I on the right path to reach my stated learning aims? What did I learn in this meeting?
- What have we talked about? Have we alternated topics?
- Did we only speak? Or also write, read, and listen to something together?
- Did we work with materials? How were they? Interesting, boring, too easy, too difficult?
- Have we kept to the Tandem rules?
- How did I feel in the adviser role? Was there something I couldn't explain? Why?
- How did I feel in the learner role? What problems have come up? Why?
- How was the distribution of roles? Equal? Was one of us dominating?
- What are the goals for the next meeting? How do I prepare for it?

Meeting with your partner

- You should meet once a week (ideally for two hours) and divide the time evenly between the two languages.
- If you can only meet for one hour, devote the entire time to one language, at the next meeting speak the other language.
- Try not to mix the two languages.

Your role as a native speaker

- You serve as a model for your partner. You should, therefore, do your best to accommodate their wishes (topic, learning materials, pace of speech, etc.)
- Listen carefully and try to understand.
- Help your partner to formulate correct expressions by asking questions.
- Answer questions about everyday language and culture.
- Encourage and motivate your partner.

Your role as foreign speaker

- Define learning goals for yourself (expand vocabulary, speak fluently, gain an insight into the culture, improve pronunciation, etc.)
- Discuss your goals and preferred ways of working with your partner.

Correcting in tandem

- Only make corrections when your partner explicitly asks you to, if you do not understand something or a mistake is often repeated.
- Make corrections discretely, attentively and with consideration.

Correction methods:

- Ask if you do not understand something.
- Make a note of common mistakes and discuss them at the end of the meeting.
- Correct and repeat wrong expressions, without specifically indicating the error.
- Explicitly draw attention to a mistake.

Objectives / Learning Diary

You are advised to keep a learning diary. Keep a note of your learning goals, lessons learned, new words and moments of realization.

Peer learning

You can learn from each other in language tandem, because you have cultural knowledge and language skills that your partner wants to acquire. Give and take equally. Do this with respect and genuine curiosity.