How to Build a Self-Study Language Plan That Lasts Twelve We

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A practical 32-step guide to studying a language on your own: choose an observable goal, shape twelve weeks you can actually keep, fill four repeatable weekly slots, measure progress without discouragement, and decide what happens after week twelve.

Choose a Goal You Can Observe

1. **Write one thing you want to be able to do**
   Write one thing you want to be able to do.
2. **Name the situation and the people in it**
   Name the situation and the people in it.
3. **Say honestly where you are starting from**
   Say honestly where you are starting from.
4. **Pick one main course or book, not five**
   Pick one main course or book, not five.
5. **Add one source of real language at your level**
   Add one source of real language at your level.
6. **Decide where new words will live**
   Decide where new words will live.

Shape Twelve Weeks You Can Actually Keep

7. **Choose four fixed weekly slots**
   Choose four fixed weekly slots.
8. **Write a ten-minute minimum version of each session**
   Write a ten-minute minimum version of each session.
9. **Leave one slot deliberately empty for catch-up**
   Leave one slot deliberately empty for catch-up.
10. **Split the quarter into three four-week blocks**
    Split the quarter into three four-week blocks.
11. **Write one checkpoint at the end of each block**
    Write one checkpoint at the end of each block.
12. **Put the end date on the calendar**
    Put the end date on the calendar.

Fill the Four Weekly Slots

13. **Make one slot for new material**
    Make one slot for new material.
14. **Make one slot for retrieval, not rereading**
    Make one slot for retrieval, not rereading.

15. **Make one slot for listening or reading real material**

    Make one slot for listening or reading real material.

16. **Write or say a short piece every week**

    Write or say a short piece every week.

17. **Keep the output in one dated folder**

    Keep the output in one dated folder.

18. **Mark two things to fix, not twenty**

    Mark two things to fix, not twenty.

19. **Use a minimum version on a difficult week**

    Use a minimum version on a difficult week.

Measure Without Discouraging Yourself

20. **Tick the four slots, not your mood**

    Tick the four slots, not your mood.

21. **Keep the weekly output pieces and compare them**

    Keep the weekly output pieces and compare them.

22. **Note which slot keeps getting skipped**

    Note which slot keeps getting skipped.

23. **At week four, change one variable**

    At week four, change one variable.

24. **If the material is too hard, step down a level**

    If the material is too hard, step down a level.

25. **If it is too easy, add a real constraint**

    If it is too easy, add a real constraint.

26. **Keep a note of questions that keep returning**

    Keep a note of questions that keep returning.

Decide What Happens After Week Twelve

27. **Try the task you wrote in step 1**

    Try the task you wrote in step 1.

28. **Write down what worked and what did not**

    Write down what worked and what did not.

29. **Choose the next task, not the next twelve weeks**

    Choose the next task, not the next twelve weeks.

30. **Keep the slot anchors and the minimum versions**

    Keep the slot anchors and the minimum versions.

31. **Retire the materials that never got opened**

    Retire the materials that never got opened.

32. **Add a person when you are ready**

    Add a person when you are ready.

Sources

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