

Skills 360 – Making the Most of Personal Learning (Part 2)

Discussion Questions

1. Do you have a regular schedule for studying English?
2. How can you know whether you're improving your English skills?
3. What are your greatest personal motivators for studying English?

Vocabulary

FYI – FYI is short for “for your information;” we use this expression when we want to give someone a bit of extra information; “We’ve scheduled a meeting for Thursday at 10:00 am, and FYI: the CEO will be there.”

To maintain momentum – keep doing something at the same pace or intensity; “Pfizer had a good start to the year but failed to maintain momentum into the fourth quarter.”

To stay on track – to successfully continue according to a plan or timeline; “Okay Tom, you’re really going to have to work hard if we want this project to stay on track.”

To come up with – to think of or create a plan or idea; “The Internet consultants came up with a great way for us to drive more traffic to our site.”

To stick to a plan – to continue following a plan; “I found it hard to stick to the plan of my speech because the audience kept interrupting with questions.”

To fit something in – to make time in a schedule for something; “I called the dentist for an emergency appointment and he said he could fit me in at 3:00.”

Chances are – it is likely that; “I’d like to go for dinner, but chances are I’ll have to work late that evening.”

To go nuts – to become excited, angry, upset, or crazy; “When my computer screen suddenly went blank, I went nuts trying to figure out what the problem was.”

Cup of joe – cup of coffee, informally; “Hey Rob, Stan and I are heading downstairs for a cup of joe. Wanna join us?”

Second nature – if an action is “second nature,” it means it has become a habit that we do without thinking; “After years of experience as a corporate trainer, public speaking was second nature to Gladys.”

Reinforce – to make stronger with extra support; “To reinforce any skill, you simply need to practice over and over again.”

To track / assess progress – to watch how something develops or proceeds; “A good manager will track new employees’ progress to make sure they are learning the position correctly.”

To break something down into – to reduce something to smaller parts; “To explain the manufacturing process to the visitors, the line manager broke it down into five stages.”

To stay on track – to maintain progress; “If we want to complete the plans this week, we’ll have to stay on track.”

Carrot – a potential reward that motivates people to do something; we often use this expression along with “stick,” which is a potential punishment that motivates people to do something; “An extended Christmas holiday was the carrot that management held out to employees so that they’d finish the big project on time.”

Milestones – Milestones mark significant achievements along the path to achieving a goal or completing a project; “We’re going to be in big trouble if we don’t reach the first milestone this week.”

To give a spark – a spark is what may start a fire, so if something gives you a spark it means it motivates some activity; “Gerald became quite lazy at work and there seemed to be nothing we – or his manager – could do to give him a spark.”

To cash something in – to exchange something for its stated value; “After a couple of hours at the poker table, I cashed in my chips and went home.”

Roadblock – obstacle, or something that gets in the way of doing something; “In many Asian companies, not knowing English can be a major career roadblock.”

To flounder – to experience difficulty, frustration, or confusion; “I thought I would enjoy a position in marketing, but I floundered and asked to be moved back to sales.”

Flesh and blood – a living human being; “It has become increasingly difficult to get a flesh and blood customer service representative on the phone when you have an inquiry.”

To pour in – to arrive in great numbers; “After we outsourced our customer service, complaints began pouring in.”

Transcript

Welcome back to the Skills 360 podcast. My name's Tim, and today we're going to look at some more tips and ideas for making the most of your personal learning.

And FYI: listening to Skills 360 just got easier. Yes, this podcast now has its own channel on iTunes. If you don't already subscribe, visit BEP or myBEonline for the free subscription links.

Okay, so last week I talked about setting yourself up with a system of personal learning. Today, I'm going to be talking about maintaining your **momentum** and **staying on track**.

All right. You've set some goals, found some resources, and **come up with** a plan for your personal learning. How are you going to **stick to** that **plan**? One of the greatest things you can do to **maintain your momentum** is to establish a *routine*. If you keep thinking that you'll study if and when you get the time, or if you just try to **fit in** some listening practice every now and then when you get 20 minutes of free time, **chances are** you won't achieve your goals. You'll **go nuts** with frustration. You need to be regular. This usually means studying at the same time every day. Whether it's on your commute, over your morning **cup of joe**, or part of your evening routine, doing it the same time every day will help make it a habit. It will become **second nature**, just like brushing your teeth.

Part of your routine should include a regular review of what you've already done. There's nothing worse than putting in the work to learn something and then forgetting it a short time later. In last week's episode we talked about variety, which means the *breadth* of input. But you also need *depth*. So don't forget to look back and **reinforce** what you've already studied.

Now, remember in our last episode I talked about setting goals... SMART goals? Well, as you work toward those goals, you need to **track or assess your progress**. Are you actually coming closer to reaching your goals? Assessing your progress could involve **breaking** your goals **down into** stages. Reaching those stages means making progress. This could also mean keeping a careful record of what you do and what you *can* do. You will be able to look back through your record and see how far you've come. Another way to track yourself is to use our BuddyBucks system on mybeonline.com. What are BuddyBucks? Basically, they're points that you earn for *participating* and learning. The more BuddyBucks you earn, the more progress you're making. It's a great way to see how much you're getting done.

But tracking your progress is not always enough to keep your learning **on track**. You might need to dangle a **carrot** in front of yourself. I'm talking about rewards, which are closely related to motivation. You have to feel like you're getting something for your hard work. You can certainly set different kinds of rewards for yourself for achieving certain **milestones** or reaching certain goals. For short-term goals, it could be something as simple as a cup of coffee. For larger goals, it could be a movie or concert or even a weekend away. And this is another way that BuddyBucks might help **give you a spark**. When you earn enough BuddyBucks, you can **cash them in** for access to more Business English Pod resources. Or access to human resources... by that I mean teachers... which brings me to my next point.

Sometimes learners encounter [roadblocks](#) when they have difficulty in their studies or can't find answers to their questions. When this happens, some people [flounder](#) or become [dejected](#). But you don't have to. Someone has the answers to your questions, and you don't need to suffer in silence. I'm talking about teachers. Get help when you need it! If you're not taking a class and don't have a [flesh and blood](#) teacher to help you, then go online. Post your questions to popular forums and watch the responses [pour in](#). Or connect with a teacher online for one-on-one help. How or where to find a teacher? We'll, we'll have answer for that soon, so keep your eyes on [myBEOonline.com](#)

Great stuff. That's all for today. I'd like to wish you the best of luck in your journey of learning. Take good care of your motivation and you'll do great. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at the [myBEOonline.com](#) website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a complete transcript. So long, and see you again soon.

Review

1. Tim uses several expressions to mean "continuing to follow a plan." Which of the following is NOT one of them?
 - A stick to a plan
 - B stay on track
 - C come up with a plan
 - D maintain momentum
2. What does Tim mean when he says that studying will become "second nature?"
 - A It will become easier.
 - B It will become habitual.
 - C It will become a lower priority.
 - D It will become more difficult.
3. According to Tim, what will give *depth* to your studies?
 - A Reviewing regularly.
 - B Finding a great variety of input.
 - C Tracking your progress.
 - D Setting clear goals.
4. Which of the following may be part of tracking or assessing your progress? (check all that apply)
 - A reinforcing what you have already studied
 - B using the BuddyBucks system on myBEonline.com
 - C using new ways to motivate yourself
 - D writing down what you study
 - E breaking your goals into stages
 - F taking a standardized English test
5. Tim mentions a movie and a concert as...
 - A ... appropriate rewards for short-term goals.
 - B ... good sources of authentic English.
 - C ... examples of large rewards.
 - D ... useful distractions from the stress of studying.
6. Put the words in the correct spaces:

dejected

flounder

roadblocks

When learners encounter _____, they may _____ or become _____.

Review Answers

1. Tim uses several expressions to mean “continuing to follow a plan.” Which of the following is NOT one of them?
C come up with a plan
2. What does Tim mean when he says that studying will become “second nature?”
B It will become habitual.
3. According to Tim, what will give *depth* to your studies?
A Reviewing regularly.
4. Which of the following may be part of tracking or assessing your progress? (check all that apply)
B using the BuddyBucks system on myBEOonline.com
D writing down what you study
E breaking your goals into stages
5. Tim mentions a movie and a concert as...
C ... examples of large rewards.
6. When learners encounter **roadblocks** they may **flounder** or become **dejected**.

Online Practice

Click the “Launch” button to open the **online practice:**

