

Skills 360 – Making the Most of Personal Learning (Part 1)

Discussion Questions

1. What are the different things you do to study or practice English?
2. What aspect of English would you most like to improve?
3. What do you find are the best online resources for studying English?

Vocabulary

To get down to something – to begin doing something seriously or with great effort; “As soon as this meeting is finished, I really need to get down to work on that proposal that’s due next week.”

To make the most of something – to use an opportunity or situation for maximum benefit or result; “Tom schedule a lot of presentations because he wanted to make the most of the brief sales trip.”

Keen – if you are keen to do something, it means you want to do it very much or are very interested in it; “Young people who are keen to get into advertising should talk to different people in the field and develop their creative skills.”

To tune in – to watch or listen a radio, television, or online broadcast; “Millions of people tuned in to the TV news to watch the President’s address to the nation.”

To go on about something – to talk a lot, even too much, about something; “Jenny dislikes staff meetings because her manager always goes on about a lack of morale.”

To jog someone’s memory – to make someone remember something; “Seeing the old photos jogged my memory of my years in Amsterdam.”

To feel free – when we tell someone to feel free to do something, we are telling them to not feel hesitant or shy about doing it; “Well George, I really hope you enjoy your stay in San Francisco. If there’s anything at all you need, feel free to ask me.”

To look up – to search for something, especially a piece of information, in a book or online; “If you don’t know a person’s telephone number, you can look it up in the phone book or online.”

To devote – to give an amount of time to something; “Nick devotes one day every week to checking in on his regular clients.”

Whatever works for you -

To attain – to reach a certain level or degree; “Lawyers are expected to make a lot of personal sacrifices if they wish to attain a high position in their firm.”

personal learning plan

To suit someone – to be appropriate or a good match; “Tammy has a fashion consultant that gives her advice about what type of clothes and makeup suit her best.”

Gads – a lot; “Amazon.com has gads of books on every topic you can imagine.”

To take it up a notch – to increase the amount or intensity of something; “In his speech, Grant told the salesmen to take it up a notch so that the company could beat its targets.”

To keep in mind – if you keep something in mind, you remember or remain aware of it because it is important; “When you write your C.V., keep in mind that managers have very little time to read a lot of detailed information.”

Up someone’s alley – if something is up your alley, it means you like it, you are interested in it, or you are good at it; “I jumped at the promotion because being a supervisor is right up my alley.”

To mix it up – if you “mix it up,” you make sure you have variety in what you are doing, often to keep things fresh and unpredictable; “We decided to mix it up this month and hold our staff meetings at the local bar.”

To hone – to sharpen, as a knife or a skill; “Nora honed her presentation skills by practicing for hours on end in front of a mirror.”

Transcript

Hello everyone, Tim here with another Skills 360 podcast. Hope you had a fantastic summer and now you're feeling refreshed and ready to [get down to](#) work. We've got a great lesson today on [making the most of](#) personal learning.

And here's some good news for everyone interested in personal learning: the Skills 360 podcast is now available as its own channel in iTunes. Just head over to the BEP or myBEonline websites for the free subscription links.

Okay, now I mentioned personal learning. And I'm guessing that if you're listening to this, you must be a pretty motivated learner. Am I right? You are [keen](#) to improve your language ability, your communication, and your overall business skills. And you've decided to [tune in](#) to a podcast to do those things. That's great. But does it stop there? Is that *all* we have to do? No, Not if you want to make good progress, so lets look at some ideas to make the most of your personal learning.

Let's start with goals. Now, I [went on](#) a lot about goals and how to achieve them in a previous episode of Skills 360 series. Anyone remember what makes a good goal? Well, in case you don't recall, let me [jog your memory](#): goals should be SMART. That's S-M-A-R-T. And what do those letters stand for? S is for specific. M is for measurable. A is for attainable. R is for relevant. And T is for time-sensitive. So make your goals specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely. If you do, they're SMART goals. [Feel free](#) to [look up](#) our previous episodes, if you want more on setting and achieving your goals.

Now, your goals can be big or small. [Whatever works for you](#). I mean, one of your goals could be to [devote](#) one hour every day to studying English. That's pretty straightforward. Or your goal could be to develop your skills enough to [attain](#) a high score on an English test such as TOEIC or BULATS. Achieving a goal like that will most likely mean you will have to set many smaller goals (to achieve it).

Great. Now your goals can be a part of something bigger, part of what we call a [personal learning plan](#). To create a personal learning plan, you need to sit down and figure out what your strengths and weaknesses are, which skills you want to develop, how much time you have, how much money you can commit, and what exactly you want to accomplish. Then you can create your plan. This will help put some method behind what you're doing.

The word "personal" is very important. Your learning should [suit](#) you, your interests, your schedule, your abilities, and your SMART goals. There are [gads](#) of online tools that can help you do this. You can use bookmarking tools like Delicious, social networking tools like Google Plus, as well as YouTube and SlideShare. In fact, if you think about the online tools that you use for business, communication, and entertainment, these are probably all useful in building a personalized learning plan. If you want to [take it up a notch](#), you can try the new "Course Builder" tool on mybeonline.com.

All right, now one thing to **keep in mind** is variety. Variety in what? Variety in everything. You should be varying your type of input, the source of that input, and the difficulty of your input. Your type of input could include both reading and listening, as well as vocabulary work and grammar, if that's **up your alley**. The source of your input could be radio, television, podcast, newspapers, and face-to-face interaction. And the difficulty could range from materials created specifically for language learners to those targeting native speakers. In a word, **mix it up**. Listen to some of my 360 shows, work on a couple of BEP podcasts, then **hone** your listening with CNN or BBC. Then maybe switch over to some Video Vocab lessons and read some business reports from Bloomberg or CNBC. You get the idea.

Another point I want to make about your input is that it should be relevant and interesting. I mean that it's relevant to you personally and your job. Studying what is *not* relevant or interesting will make you bored. And being bored will make you unmotivated. What you study truly has to be useful.

Great. Remember to set SMART goals, and build a truly personalized learning plan that has a variety of input that is both interesting and relevant to you. Keep those things in mind and you'll be on the road to success.

That's all for today. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at the myBEonline.com website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a complete transcript. Next week, we'll look at how to maintain your progress and keep on track with your personalized learning plan. So long. And see you again soon.

Review

1. What is NOT a part of SMART goals?
 - A realistic
 - B measurable
 - C time-sensitive
 - D specific
 - E attainable

2. Why does Tim mention tests like TOEIC and BULATS?
 - A to recommend a worthwhile objective to studying English
 - B to advocate the use of standardized testing
 - C to give an example of major goals
 - D to suggest a good way of measuring your English ability

3. Tim refers to a systematic method behind your studies as a _____.
 - A personal learning network
 - B personal course builder
 - C personalized learning plan
 - D personalized study tools

4. The talk mentions variety of a few different aspects of your input. Which ones? (check all that apply)
 - A source
 - B relevance
 - C difficulty
 - D organization
 - E rhetorical purpose
 - F type
 - G topic

5. According to Tim, the ultimate result of using materials that are not relevant or interesting to you is...
 - A decline in ability
 - B loss of motivation
 - C wasted time
 - D slow progress

Review Answers

1. What is NOT a part of SMART goals?
A realistic
2. Why does Tim mention tests like TOEIC and BULATS?
C to give an example of major goals
3. Tim refers to a systematic method behind your studies as a _____.
C personalized learning plan
4. The talk mentions variety of a few different aspects of your input. Which ones? (check all that apply)
A source
C difficulty
F type
5. According to Tim, the ultimate result of using materials that are not relevant or interesting to you is...
B loss of motivation