

Why it's great to learn a second language

February 2 2018, by Julie Davis, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—Is learning a second language on your bucket list? Here's compelling evidence to get started right away.

Numerous studies at institutions, including Penn State, have found that learning a new [language](#) is great for [brain health](#). It can strengthen your [brain](#) just as exercise strengthens your muscles. And like muscles, the more you work at it, the stronger your brain gets.

The parts of the brain that develop in size are the hippocampus and areas in the [cerebral cortex](#). This growth leads to better language skills overall. So, over time, the more you study and practice, the easier learning the language becomes.

Researchers say that people who speak two languages are better able to focus on key information and filter out the rest. This helps you to prioritize tasks and manage multiple projects at once.

And there are long-range benefits, too. The onset of Alzheimer's [disease symptoms](#) can be delayed by about four years in people who speak two languages, research has found.

Once you've chosen the language you're most interested in, there are many ways to get started, from online classes to self-driven instruction. Because pronunciation is key to feeling comfortable using a foreign language, make sure that whatever technique you use includes an audio component.

Keep in mind that you need to actively practice your new language to get all the benefits—using two languages is what works the brain. So, to keep challenging your gray matter, read books and watch foreign films (no cheating with subtitles!) in that language.

If you're feeling adventurous, you might even take a trip to a country where the language is spoken and fully immerse yourself.

More information: The Learning Center at the University of North

Carolina at Chapel Hill offers many practical [principles of language learning](#) to help you get started.

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