

English Association

English is a global language. It is the most widely spoken language with about 2 billion people around the world able to speak this language fluently. English is used as the official language of multiple international organizations like the United Nations and European Union. It is also the language of technology, medicine and business. English is also required for different jobs. For example, if you wish to be a journalist, you need to be proficient in English. Having a strong foundation in English is crucial in the modern day and age.

In Queen's College, students study English as a second language. The English Association aims to promote and increase opportunities for students to use English in their school life. For 60 years, the English Association has been actively organizing activities in order to enhance students' knowledge of English under a stress-free environment.

The above is the vision and mission of the English Association. Following that, let's talk about the History of English and the English language in general.

Like most languages English has evolved through generations of speakers, undergoing dramatic changes throughout this process. While modern English shares a number of similar words with Latin derived romance languages like French and Spanish, these words were not part of English in the beginning. It was not until the Norman invasion of England in 1066, that French and Latin vocabulary was brought into English language. The first form of English (old English) was developed by a set of Western Germanic dialects brought to the British isle by the Anglos, Saxons and Jutes. Four of our days of the week were named after Anglo-Saxon gods. For example, Tuesday is named after Tiw, Germanic god of war. Later in the 8th century, due to the Norse invasion of England, Norse features were spread into English. Pronouns beginning with th (they, them, their) replaced Anglo-Saxon pronouns beginning with h (hie, him, hera). Then came the Norman invasion. French became the language of British royalty for 3 centuries. Old English continued to adapt and grow as thousands of new words flowed in, many being associated with government and laws. Words like council, govern, sovereign were brought in. This is known as the period of Middle English.

Then came the period of Early Modern. A major event during this period was the Great Vowel Shift. The pronunciation of words was greatly altered. Mid and open vowels were raised and closed vowels were broken into diphthongs. For instance, 'out' was originally pronounced oot. Modern English was heavily influenced by the invention of the word press, making books

available at a cheap price, enabling and facilitating the standardization of the English language. The King James Bible introduced brand new phrases and sentence structures. The Golden Age of English literature also introduced a huge vocabulary. These all shaped the English language we have nowadays.

People often say that English is one of the hardest languages to learn. As Cantonese speakers, we may have to agree with them. How easy it is to learn a language depends on how similar the language is compared to your native language. On average, it takes 2200 hours for a Cantonese speaker to reach language fluency in English. However, English has its own quirks that make it easier to learn than other languages in some ways and quirks that make it way harder as well. To start with, English does not have gender (masculine, feminine and neutral), with only one version of the definitive article 'the'. In German you'd have to say 'die Lampe' (die being neutral) and 'das Bett' (das being feminine), while in English you just have to say 'the lamp' and 'the bed', making it much less confusing. The grammar system in English is also relatively simple and straightforward.

There are also several factors making English really confusing to learn. One of them is pronunciation. Unlike romance languages, the phonetic pronunciation of words is not consistent. Take words that have 'ough' as an example, though, through, cough, rough, plough, bought, borough and hiccough. Although they all contain 'ough', but their pronunciations are completely different. English is also full of homophones (words that have the same pronunciations but different meanings), like plane and plain, idle and idol, peace and piece etc. This adds an extra level of complexity when trying to learn English. Synonyms can also be misleading. Though they have similar meanings, that does not mean they are interchangeable. For example, 'watch' and 'see' are synonyms, you can say that you 'watch TV' but you can't say that you 'see TV'. The misuse of synonyms of people who are learning English is quite common.

Although learning English is quite a challenging process, if you put in the time and effort you may find the joy in learning it.

Let's now have some fun of using and learning English.

Here is a wordsearch and some riddles you can try out. The answers will be at the very bottom.

The theme of this wordsearch is Spring

M S M S N X B M D B Y W S N E
 O Y P R E R S R A L V E I Y A
 S X J R E T E F F D A Z Q E S
 S F T E I H I R F S P R O U T
 O I Z Y T N E K O T U L I P V
 L E R A M T G N D N E G Y R K
 B P E H T H B H I E D N N I C
 U W W U K V T Y L S K R L S A
 Z M B T F J I N W T C Y M E W
 Q S R E W O L F I D Y Z K L W
 D B E Y Q P U Y W C F J Y D A
 U Q U F U A Y O D X A V O D A
 Y I C E Q B A Q N G T Y Y U D
 L B Y T E Z V H R A G S H P E
 Z E T F Y Y N N U B E P L V T

Blossom Breeze Bunny Butterfly Daffodil Flowers Hyacinth Kites Nest Puddles
 Season Spring Sprout Tulip Weather

1. I shave every day, but my beard stays the same. Who am I?
2. What has four wheels and flies?
3. What tastes better than it smells?
4. What is so fragile that saying its name breaks it?
5. The more you take, the more you leave behind. What are they?
6. People make me, save me, change me , raise me. What am I?
7. I am always hungry, and will die if not fed, but whatever I touch will soon turn red. What am I?
8. What has one eye but can't see?
9. What can fill up a room but takes no space.

Answers: 1. A barber 2. A garbage truck 3. Your Tongue 4. Silence 5. Footsteps 6. Money 7. Fire
 8. A needle 9. Light