



# How to...

## DID YOU KNOW?

Rotakas, a language spoken in Papua New Guinea, has only 12 letters in its alphabet.



# Learn a new language

Expand your horizons by taking on this exciting challenge.

About 43% of people in the world can speak two languages. If you're interested in joining them, there are many benefits. "We live in a global society, and being multilingual can help us navigate and understand different cultures," says Dr. Edna Ma, author of the book *Travel, Learn and See Your Friends: Adventures in Mandarin Immersion*. These steps will get you started.

### Do some research

With more than 6,000 languages spoken throughout the world, there are many options to choose from. Any language you choose will offer characteristics that make it special. Mandarin Chinese is what's called a tonal language. That means the pitch you use to say a word can affect its meaning. Spanish has grammar rules that are very similar to the rules in English, which can make it easier for people who already speak English to learn. If you decide to study Arabic or Hebrew, you'll realize that the words are written from right to left.

### Honor your heritage

You could choose a language based on your family's background. If your grandmother speaks Italian, it could be a special way to connect with her. Even if none of your relatives speak the language, you still might like learning one that has significance for your family.

### Consider popular languages

If you choose a popular language, you're more likely to be able to practice speaking it with others. Besides English, widely spoken languages include Spanish and Mandarin Chinese.

### Find learning sources

There are many apps and online programs for learning a language. One option for beginners is the Duolingo app. After you decide how regularly you want to practice (five or 10 minutes a day is a good start), it will give you vocabulary lessons to do during that amount of time. Other programs to consider: *Languagenut*, *Petralingua*, and *Dinoling*.

### Have fun practicing

Ask an adult to help you look up music videos in the language you're studying. Turn the English subtitles (captions) on at first, then try to sing the song without them. See if your local library has children's picture books in your language. They will have simple words for you to decode.

### Chat it up

If a friend is learning the same language, arrange video calls so you can practice together. If there's someone in your community who speaks the language, your parent could arrange for the two of you to talk together.



There are more than 100,000 different Chinese characters.

## Fun facts about the English language

It's easy to take for granted the language you grew up speaking. English has an interesting history that may surprise you.



Beowulf slays the dragon.

### It's an old language

The poem *Beowulf* is one of the first important works of English literature. It was written between the 9th and 10th centuries in Old English, the ancient language that evolved into the English spoken today.



The French flag

### It's a mix of languages

About 30% of English words come from French. Latin, Dutch, Greek, and Spanish have also influenced words in the English language.



### It continues to grow

More than 1,000 words are added to dictionaries throughout the year. In a June 2020 update, the *Oxford English Dictionary* added about 400 new words, including banana bread and LOL.

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