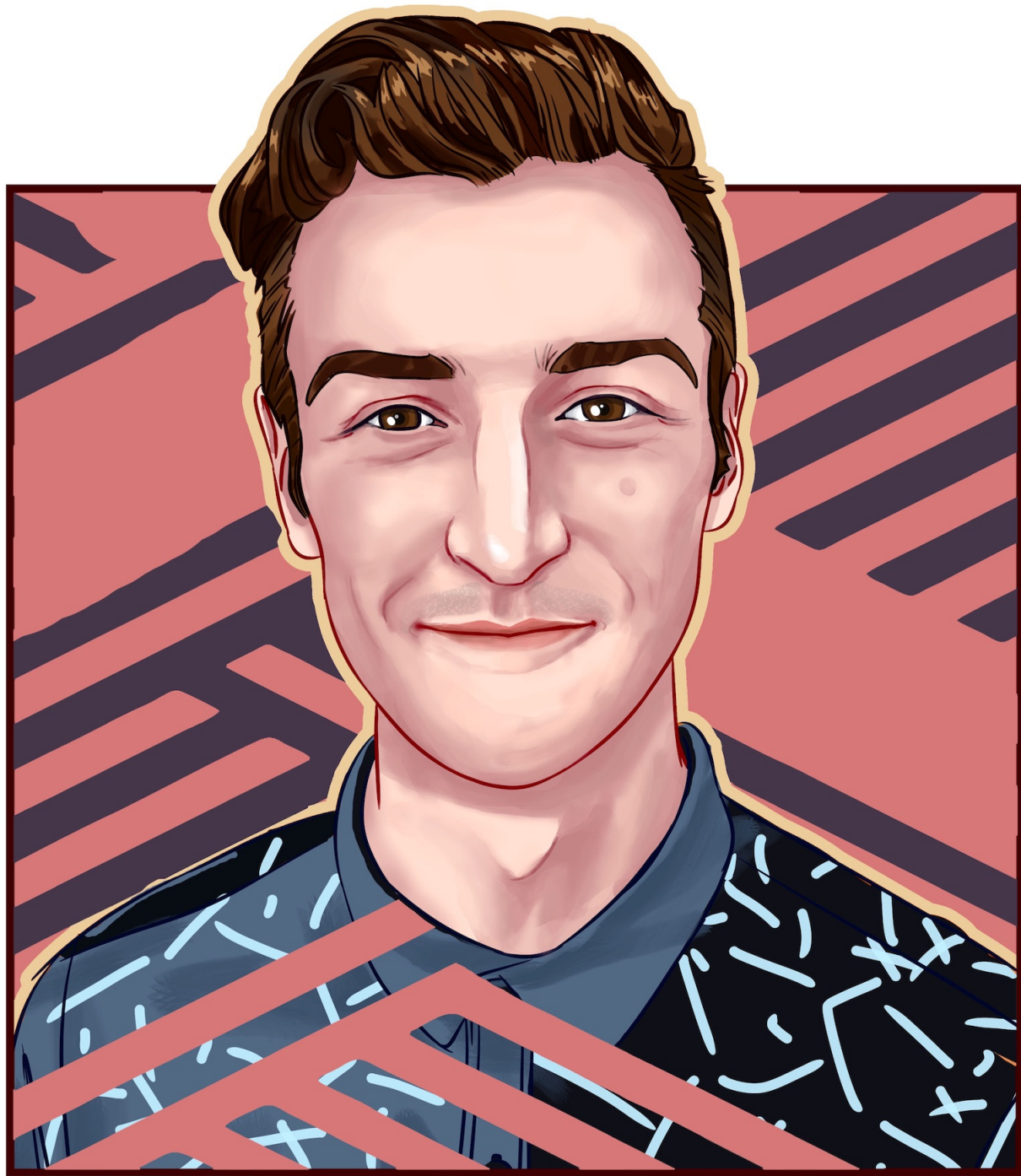


Jeremy's English Tips

Episode #9: Making new habits



Culips English Podcast

Transcript

Hello everyone, this is Jeremy and you're listening to Jeremy's English Tips, a series by the Culips English Podcast where I teach you interesting expressions or share language learning tips

Welcome back to another episode of Jeremy's English Tips. Thanks for listening today everyone. In this episode, we are going to be talking about habits, and more specifically, we will be talking about making new habits. But before we get into the content of this episode, I want to remind you that we have a study guide available on our website at Culips.com. If you head over to Culips.com you can find out how to download the study guide and follow along as you listen.

So, I'd like to start out by saying that making new habits is difficult for almost everyone.

Making new habits is difficult because following old habits is always easier. So, I have an example from my own life to share with you today. Now, I am right handed. So, I write with my right hand. I am right hand dominant, you can say. And a couple of years ago, I decided to start brushing my teeth with my left hand. I have gotten quite good at it by now, but even to this day, sometimes I still start brushing with my right hand without even knowing it. Almost subconsciously, my right hand grabs the brush, and starts brushing, and then I realize, "oh yeah, left hand." And so I switch and start brushing with my left hand. This is because I have had nearly 30 years brushing my teeth with my right hand and only two years brushing with my left hand. Our brain always prefers the easiest way to do things. So if we want to do something that is not the easiest way, then we need a little bit of willpower. That means that we need to make up our mind and commit to making a new habit in order to make a change.

Now there is a relevant saying in English that we can talk about here. It is: **you can't teach an old dog new tricks**. You can't teach an old dog new tricks. This commonly used phrase illustrates how the older a person gets, the harder it is for them to learn new things. As we get older, we become set in our ways, as people say. We have habits that we have formed throughout our lifetime. And the longer we do those habits, the harder they are to change.

Perhaps you have some experience in your life trying to make a big change with a certain habit. Maybe you or someone you know has tried to quit smoking cigarettes and has had great difficulty. This is partly because the old habit is so strong. Now, you and I are language learners, which means we are choosing to spend our time learning something new. We are doing something that is difficult for the brain, because we are making lots of new habits. Using new sentence forms, using new words, using your mouth to make new sounds, all of these things are new habits. So, as language learners, we are doing something that makes our brain more flexible. There is a term for this and it is neuroplasticity. *Plastic* meaning flexible and *neuro* meaning brain. So, we are increasing our neuroplasticity by learning language. So, you're doing a good thing for your brain.

In order to learn language more efficiently, we need to make some new study habits and integrate them into our daily lives. In order to do that, I recommend something called habit piggybacking. Now piggyback, to give someone a piggyback ride we say, means you give someone a ride on your back. For example, if you are out on a hike, and your friend hurts their ankle, you will need to give them a piggyback ride to get back home. So this term is a metaphor, meaning we need to piggyback one habit on top of another. We put a new habit on top of an old habit.

Habit piggybacking is a great way to form new habits. For example, if you want to make a habit of studying vocabulary flashcards every day, then you should pair your vocabulary study with another thing that you already do every day. For example, before you eat breakfast, you study your flashcards. Or after you get home from work, you study your flashcards. Or on your lunch break before you eat lunch, you study flashcards. In this way, you are pairing a new habit, vocabulary study, with an old habit, eating lunch, eating breakfast, brushing your teeth, etc. If you do this for a week or two, you might start to notice that your vocabulary study is becoming a part of your daily routine.

Now **my recommendation for language learners is to make a habit of doing repetitive listening and vocabulary study every day.** For language learners, making a habit of doing repetitive listening and vocabulary study is a great way to accelerate your learning. We have another episode of Jeremy's English Tips about repetitive listening, which you can check out if you are unfamiliar with what that is. But simply put, it is listening to the same piece of

content, the same audio file, the same podcast every day. So, maybe on your way to and from work or school, you can listen repetitively to a Culips podcast, perhaps even this podcast. If you make a habit of doing that, then over time you will start to see immense benefits from the practice.

It is much better to do 30 minutes a day of something small than it is to listen for 10 hours straight in one day. Our brain needs time to digest the new information we put in. So, I should also mention, **it is okay to take breaks sometimes, because the brain needs time to synthesize all the new information.** So, if you have a good repetitive listening and vocabulary study routine going and you go on vacation and break your new formed habit, you don't need to feel bad. When you come back home, or as soon as you're ready, you can start the habit again in the same way you did before. I have found in my Korean learning that taking a break of a couple weeks, or even a month sometimes, can bring immense benefits. I have noticed large improvements after taking long breaks.

So, that's it for this episode of Jeremy's English Tips. We hope you enjoyed this episode. We hope you found it helpful, and we hope that you will be able to make some new language learning habits that will bring you all the success you deserve. Thanks for listening everyone. I'll catch you in the next episode, bye!

Key points

1. **Making new habits is difficult because following old habits is always easier**
2. **You can't teach an old dog new tricks**
3. **Habit piggy-backing is a great way to form new habits**
4. **For language learners, making a habit of doing repetitive listening and vocabulary study is a great way to accelerate your learning**
5. **It is okay to take breaks sometimes because the brain needs time to synthesize all the new information**

Writing and discussion questions

1. What is an example of a situation in which you could use the saying “You can't teach an old dog new tricks”?
2. What are some of your old habits that you'd like to change?
3. What are some things you do everyday that you could “piggyback” new habits on top of?
4. What are some new language learning habits you would like to form? Why?
5. Why is neuroplasticity important for language learners?

Study challenges

1. Create a daily repetitive listening habit and stick to it for two weeks. Tell us what happened via social media!
2. Create a vocabulary study habit and pair it with one of your existing habits.

Credits

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