

News & Announcements

Spring Workshops

Smart Tutor Referrals is presenting three great workshops for students this spring:

- ▶ **Study Skills for Academic Success**
2.5 hours
Learn the skills and how to apply them.
- ▶ **Essay Writing**
2.5 hours
Learn to structure writing.
- ▶ **Provincial Exam Prep**
2.5 hours
If you know how to prepare for and write exams, your confidence and results will improve!

For dates, times, rates or more information on workshops, visit us online, contact us via telephone, or register directly through Pearkes or Juan de Fuca Recreation Centres.

Vancouver Island Children's Festivals

March 13-17, 2006 SpringBreak Festival of the Arts for Teens
There is a great selection of workshops and activities for teens. As well, the festival is hosting an Island Wide competition open to Grade 7 to 12 students. There is \$6,600 in cash prizes to be won! Plus, the winners have their work exhibited, published or produced. See more details at www.springbreakfestival.com

May 10-13, 2006 Vancouver Island Children's Festival in Nanaimo, BC
This year's children's festival is chock full of workshops, activities, competitions, presentations and entertainment. All hosted and presented by pros from the world of theatre, film, television, music and fine arts. For more details visit: www.childrensfestival.com

Secrets to 2nd Language Fluency - Listening

by Maureen Bouey

Maureen Bouey has been an ESL teacher for a number of years. She is also co-author of an ESL textbook with Dahlia Miller of Smart Tutor Referrals.

"Minds are like parachutes. They only function when they are open."

Sir James Dewar, Scientist (1877-1925)

If you want to speak a second language fluently, you first must:

LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN,

and then...

LISTEN SOME MORE!

This is the first thing you do when learning a new language – and it is essential to good speaking ability.

Are you surprised? Well, it's really true; the more you listen, the sooner you will be a fluent second language speaker. Lots of listening will also lead to a better (more "natural") accent.

Many students wonder how listening can help one become a better speaker.

Well, how did you learn to speak your own first language? When you were a baby, did your parents sit down with you and begin to explain the basics of grammar in your native language? Did they try to teach you to read or write when you were still crawling around on the floor?

Of course they didn't! They just talked to you, and to each other, and to lots of other people.

And what did you do? You listened.

Sometimes you listened passively, and sometimes you listened with conscious effort, paying attention to the sounds, rhythms and patterns of speech that were all around you, and trying to understand.

The important thing is, you were immersed in your language – in other words it was all around you. You were like a fish swimming in water.

For a couple of years, you continued to listen. Then, eventually, (probably somewhere around the age of 2) you started to speak. Everyone got very excited of course, including you - but remember - by that time, you had been listening for a very long time!

First you listened; then you spoke. "Obviously," you say? Yes, but it's a very important relationship. Let me tell you a story.

Once upon a time, there was a quite extraordinary Japanese man who was a contemporary of Albert Einstein's. (As it happens, they were also good friends.)

In the 1930's, this remarkable man discovered what he called "the mother tongue" method of learning. In his book *Nurtured By Love*, Shinichi Suzuki explains how he came to understand how people learn language. It suddenly occurred to him one day that all Japanese children can speak Japanese! Of course this seemed obvious to everyone, and some people looked at him oddly when he announced this. But what he really meant was that human beings have a natural ability and a "talent" to learn a complicated and difficult language – just by listening to it!

About Us

Our Mission Is:

- ▶ To provide top quality, flexible learning support and service to students and parents of students through:

Superior private tutoring matched specifically to each student's needs.

Stimulating workshops building skills in a practical and creative way.

- ▶ To enhance students' skills and increase learning confidence through individualized support, recognizing each student's unique abilities.
- ▶ To improve the quality of life, in individuals and communities through education.

Our tutors are certified teachers and professionals. Each is carefully screened and selected to match individual students' needs.

We help students to achieve.

For more information, and free study tips, visit us on-line at:

www.SmartTutorReferrals.com

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This insight showed him an important link between how we 'receive' information, and how we 'produce' it. He was a violin teacher, and he began to use this theory of language learning to teach young children (3 and 4 years old!) the violin. First, he let them listen to a particular piece of music for several weeks. Then, after a while, they were able to play the piece themselves – without knowing how to read music yet.

This method of teaching became known as "The Suzuki Method" and is now used world-wide.

It makes sense, right? First we listen, then we speak, then we read, and then we write. But we listen first; it's the natural order.

Your speaking ability (both fluency and pronunciation) will improve if you will listen, listen, listen. Make no mistake – you can improve your second language this way no matter what level you are at right now: whether you are an absolute beginner or at a much higher level.

"How much listening does it take to make a difference in your speaking?" That's a very good question! The answer is, "it depends." We are all so different; we have varied backgrounds, experiences, talents, and abilities, some people will need to do more listening and some people need to do less to achieve the same results.

The simple and true answer is this: "the more listening, the better." And even more importantly: "the more often, and the more consistent, the better."

So, there we have one secret to second language fluency - being a good listener will help make you a better speaker. And the great thing about listening is you can practice it just about anywhere! If you have a walkman or discman, you can carry your listening practice with you on the bus, train, subway, car or plane.

Of course, it's true that spending some

time in a country that predominantly speaks your second language will give you many more opportunities to overhear it. But wherever you are, try to expose yourself to your second language and to a variety of different voices – just like when you were a baby learning your first language. The more you do this, the better!

Here is a list of some suggestions for you to try. We know you'll find more!

- ▶ Listen to TV stations or programs in your second language. Try closing your eyes sometimes. This will challenge your to "hear" more – especially to hear the rhythm and intonation in natural speech.
- ▶ Watch videos in your second language (it's much better to not have subtitles!).
- ▶ Listen to the radio in your second language – you can do this anywhere in the world.
- ▶ Listen to songs – practice singing along!
- ▶ Listen to recordings of books.
- ▶ As you are walking down the street, listen for your second language.
- ▶ Listen to conversations in coffee shops, on the bus, at parties...
- ▶ When you hear a few words of your second language, repeat them to yourself. Repeat them again and again. Can you understand what was said?
- ▶ The Internet. This is a great source – there are literally hundreds of helpful sites for you to listen and practice.

These are just some ideas – the important thing is to listen OFTEN and to listen CONSISTENTLY. 10 minutes every day is better than 1 hour per week.

"A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while he gets to know something."

Wilson Mizner