

Learning Steps

1. Grammar

① Learn grammatical rules as a theory

For example, in the case of the present perfect (I've done it, I've been doing it for a long time), the first thing you need to know is that you need to form a sentence with "have + past participle".

② Practice the grammatical rules

You work on questions in your grammar workbook while checking in your mind, "Oh, yeah, I need to use 'have + past participle' to express continuity over a period of time". You sometimes make mistakes.

③ Memorize the grammatical rules

You completely remember the rule of "have + past participle" without looking at the explanation. You can answer correctly in your grammar workbook. You can read (listen) and write (speak) properly if you are conscious of "have + past participle".

④ Make the grammatical rules your own

When you read or hear English including the present perfect, you can reflexively understand the situation of the "continuity over a period of time" without being conscious of the "have + past participle".

⑤ Output freely based on the grammatical rules

Without thinking of "the back of 'have' is a past participle, so...", you can speak and write correctly and appropriately in your words the moment the situation of the "continuity over a period of time" comes to your mind.

<Key Points>

- Steps ① to ③ are the stages of solidifying your knowledge of grammar **with a firm consciousness**.
- Steps ④ and ⑤ are the stages where you can manipulate the grammar **unconsciously** based on that solid knowledge.
- At the Step①, most people think that "I'm done with grammar now! This is the most common misconception. They feel like they understand everything only because they have read through their grammar reference books.
- When you reach the step ③, you will be able to get 100 points in the grammar test at school. For example, if you know that the present perfect is "have + past participle" and there is a grammar question on the present perfect in a workbook, you can answer it correctly. However, even though you have memorized the grammatical rules, they are not yet your own. Without being aware of the steps ④ and ⑤, it doesn't come to you in an instant when you read or listen to conversations or long sentences. It doesn't come out smoothly at all when you try to speak or write it, either.
- At the steps ④ and ⑤, it is more than just grammar. The basic premise of the correct rules of grammar is still at the center, but from here, the application takes on another dimension as follows.
 - Step ④ → Input (Read and Listen)
 - Step ⑤ → Output (Write and Speak)

That is why grammar is the most important to start first.

2. Listening & Reading

① Close Listening

"Close Listening" is listening carefully and repeatedly while understanding every part of the English language. If you are a beginner who has not done much listening training, you should start with close listening training. It is much more effective to concentrate on listening to English that you understand for 15 minutes than to listen to English that you don't understand for 3 hours. Listen to material that you know the meaning of, that has all the scripts and explanations, and do it repeatedly. Start at the first-grade level and listen to the material repeatedly until you have memorized every single word. Through repeated close listening, you will be able to match the sounds you hear with the actual English you speak, break free from the katakana English pronunciation that is stuck in your head and experience the changes in sound caused by liaisons, etc. You will never be able to do these things if you just "sort of" listen. By listening to the script repeatedly, and checking the script, you will discover that "like it" is not "like it" but "lik(e)-i(t)!" Through repeated discoveries like this, you will begin to match the sounds with the actual English and build a foundation for hearing English as "meaningful words. The secret to improving your listening skills when they are not yet firmly established is not to "go wide and shallow" but to "go narrow and deep". In any case, listen to the same thing enough to memorize it and enough to get bored with it. Then you will begin to understand liaisons and other sound changes not as "knowledge" but as "feeling. Once you understand the sound changes, you will be able to "cut out" words that were previously meaningless chunks of English, thinking, "This connected sound is this English. If you can cut out the words, you will naturally be able to understand the meaning of the English. English, which was just "noise" until then, will become audible at an accelerated rate, and your high school and university entrance examinations, Eiken and TOEIC listening scores will increase.

<Close Listening Training>

- First, choose material that is a little easy for you, that you can listen to repeatedly and that has scripts. It is recommended that you start with easy conversational materials. Listen repeatedly to the ones you know the content of properly, paying attention to the meaning and pronunciation of each word. Instead of "I understand it, so I'll move on to the next material," listen to the material more carefully and pay attention to sound changes such as liaisons, words, idioms, grammar, and intonation.
- It works best if you repeat the process, cycling through a collection of many dialogues until you are not too bored.
- This can be done by dictation or shadowing. Dictation is a study method in which you write down all of the dialogues you hear, relying only on the sounds you hear. Shadowing is a study method in which you pronounce the sounds of English as you hear them, shadowing them behind you. Both methods are impossible unless you can hear every word perfectly, so they are also a part of close listening.

② Extensive Listening

Extensive Listening means to grasp the whole conversation in a general way, not focusing on every single word, and to understand the conversation in a general way, such as "Oh, this is a conversation about this kind of scene" or "This is what they are talking about". If you can't grasp the whole content of the conversation, it's because you don't have enough grammar skills or you are too focused on individual words. So, as soon as you hear a sound you can't understand, you'll think, "What? What did you just say?" They start to panic and lose track of the next word and the flow of the conversation.

<Extensive Listening Training>

Choose material that is more difficult for you than what you use for close listening, where you can't understand every word, but you can understand half of the meaning. Follow the steps below to engage in multiple listening.

1. Listen to the entire passage without looking at the script or Japanese and see how well you understand it. When you do this, don't try to listen to everything, paying attention to every word, but try to grasp the general idea of what is being said, even if you can't understand some parts.
2. Rewind and repeat about three to five times, and gradually eliminate the details that you could not understand. As you do this, it's OK to guess and write down words and ideas that you think are key words in the sentence, or that are the main idea here. (Writing down the key words makes it easier to guess what is being said.)
3. When you think you can't hear any newer information, check the English script and the Japanese translation to see how well the Japanese translation matches the content.
4. Look at the English script to see what the English expression that you couldn't understand was. When you look at the script, find out if you couldn't understand because you didn't know the words or because the sounds were too close together or too fast. By ascertaining the cause of the problem, you will be able to identify your weaknesses.
5. Finally, listen to the same material again without looking at anything and see if you can understand it properly. If there are any words or phrases that you want to remember, write them down in a notebook or on a vocabulary sheet.

This is the end of the training, but you should not only use the materials you have already learned in this way, but also use them in your daily "listening while doing other things". Even if you learn something only once, you will forget it soon, so you can effectively review the material by listening to it, making sure you get the meaning and remember the words.

③ **Speed Reading**

Speed Reading means reading as fast and as much as possible in English, in word order. It is not reading so fast that you can't understand the meaning but reading as fast as you can at a speed where you can understand and enjoy the content. This will help you improve your reading scores on the high school and college entrance exams, as well as on the Eiken and TOEIC examinations.

Benefits of Speed Reading

- **Learn to Read in the English word order without reading backwards and translating**

It prevents you from reading backwards, which is your usual habit. When you read slowly, you will inevitably want to analyze the text or translate it neatly into Japanese in your mind. To break this bad habit, read as fast as you can. If you don't break the habit of reading backwards and translating, you will never be able to read smoothly in the English word order. The only way to read without reading backwards is to get used to reading so much simple English that you don't need to read backwards to understand English in its proper word order. In other words, to read as fast as possible, it is important to read "simple English". If you don't, you won't be able to read fast. "It is not a matter of "I might be able to manage to read this much" or "I can read this much if I try hard enough. As a rule of thumb, good material is the one that has no or few unfamiliar words (1-2% at best), and if there are any, they are at a level that can be guessed.

- **Learn to read a lot**

As you learn to read fast, you can also read a lot. This is the point where you can understand English as it is by being exposed to the same words and phrases repeatedly. For example, the moment you see (or hear) the word "baseball," the image of that sport will come directly to your mind without your having to think, "It's 野球 in Japanese language". This is the stage where you can understand English as it is.

< Word acquisition process >

1. You don't know the word itself.
2. When you see the word, you say, "I should know that word, but what is it?"
3. Recognize the word with its translation, saying, "Let's see, that's what it means in Japanese.
4. You will be able to quickly think of the meaning in Japanese.
5. The moment you hear (or see) the word, the concept (image) of the word comes to mind (you can understand the word in English without translating it into Japanese)

Thinking "I can't remember any words! It's because I'm not smart enough!" after doing a word book just once is misguided. You must go through so many processes to make the words your own, and you must encounter the same words repeatedly to remember them. Conversely, words that you can now picture without hesitation the moment you see them in English mean that you have met them that many times over. In this way, you have trained your muscles to understand English as it is*. Similarly, to be able to understand English as it is, you need to listen to and read a lot of English that is easy for you. This is made possible by reading a lot. Of course, you need to keep expanding your vocabulary to get to the next level, and you need to listen to and read English that is difficult for your level. But most Japanese people don't have enough time to be exposed to "easy English". We need to spend more time on the easy stuff. Of course, people of any level will encounter English that is difficult for them, and there are times when they can finally understand it by trying to translate it into Japanese. As you repeat this process, you will gradually learn more and more words, and the variation in syntax will increase. The more you do this, the more words you will learn and the more variations in syntax you will have, and the more you will be able to understand in English. The first thing to do is to read a lot of simple things as fast as you can. Make a conscious effort to increase your speed to read. By doing so, you will gradually get out of the habit of translating and reading backwards.

****Understanding English as it is**" usually does not happen unless:

- you already know the meaning of the word "deeply".
- the field or topic is familiar to you.
- the English is easy for your level.
- you have enough input (reading and listening).

So you need to:

- study in a way that does not involve Japanese.
- train yourself to understand in English as it is.

To acquire an "English brain" that can understand English as it is, you need to input a lot of English that is easy for you, and gradually increase the level of English that you can understand without having to translate it into Japanese.

〈How to build an English Brain〉

- Listen to a lot of simple English and use Shadowing.
- Read a lot of sentences in English that are easy for you.
- Practice understanding words in their original order.

Don't worry if at first you find yourself in a situation where you can't understand the English word order, so you can't keep up with it right away, or if you can hear the words but can't understand the meaning of the sentences. It happens to everyone at first, and you can always overcome this by training yourself to understand English as it is.

〈How to train yourself to understand words in their original order〉

Read the English phrase by phrase, and then read the corresponding Japanese. The first thing is to get a clear image of the meaning of each phrase in your mind in Japanese, rather than just vaguely understanding it in English.

For example, when you see the following sentence,

I saw the painting which she had bought at the auction.

you might try to translate it into “私は彼女がオークションで買った絵を見た” in Japanese word order, but it is not the right way. This is what is so called “reading backwards,” and it is the reason why English cannot be read or understood in English word order.

You will understand it as follows.

I saw the painting / 私はその絵を見た
which she had bought / それを彼女は買った
at the auction. オークションで。

Understanding English "in word order" will make you listen to English in a completely different way than if you had just listened to it randomly, and will greatly improve your listening accuracy.

Furthermore, an important tip to dramatically improve your English reading and listening skills is to listen (read) while **anticipating what is to come**, like this.

I saw the painting / 私はその絵を見た **(what kind of painting was it?)**
which she had bought / それを彼女は買った **(where did she buy it?)**
at the auction. オークションで。

This is very important. When you don't understand the sense of "understanding English in word order," English you hear may just go in one ear and out the other, and think, "I can't keep up with it at all..." However, when you are able to predict the information that comes next, your listening and reading comprehension skills will improve dramatically.

3. Speaking & Writing

Instant English Composition

Instantaneous English Composition is a training method where you see (or hear) a Japanese sentence and instantly replace it with English. It is **a way to understand English as it is while using Japanese***. It is effective for English composition for high school and university entrance exams, the second test of the EIKEN, and the SW test of TOEIC.

● **Misconceptions about Instant English Composition**

Instantaneous English Composition is a method of practicing reading Japanese sentences and speaking them out in English. So, you may imagine that your mind is like this. In other words, there is no picture (image).

「彼女はテニス上手だ」 → **She is a good tennis player.**

Furthermore, if you are not accustomed to Instant English Composition, this is often the case.

彼女は → **She** / ~です → **is** / 上手な → **good** / テニスをする人 → **a tennis player**

In short, it's like you are translating the words one by one in your head and trying your best to reflect all the Japanese into English, just like in an English composition class at school. And sometimes you are so busy translating that you don't even think about the meaning of the Japanese words properly. However, if you don't get out of this state, you will never be able to speak English smoothly.

● **Imagine "pictures" even in instant English composition!**

One of the tips for Instant English Composition is to try to picture it as much as possible. Then, instead of translating the Japanese word by word into English, try to translate the images that come to your mind when you read the Japanese into English, like this.

「彼女はテニス上手だ」 →  → **She is a good player.**

When you are able to produce English from "pictures", you will gradually be able to say English without using Japanese. When the circuit of "Japanese → Image → English" becomes stronger and thicker through Instant English Composition, and the expressions, words, and grammatical items contained in it become familiar to your mouth, you will be able to transfer the image directly to English without Japanese when you are speaking in English, if the content is like what you did in Instant English Composition,

And here is the secret of why Instant English Composition training is so effective. It is for you to practice thinking of as many different kinds of pictures as possible and then converting them into English. Think of using Japanese just as a way to visualize various situations in your mind. If you take care to picture the images in your mind and then translate them into English, you don't need to be afraid you will never get out of the habit of using Japanese. There may be a way to actually look at a picture and translate it into English, but if you do it that way, you may end up using only expressions and constructions that you know. Of course, if you are really having a conversation with a foreigner, you can just use the expressions and constructions you know, but this is training, and in order to broaden your range of expressions, Instant English Composition with variations is very effective.

Appendix:

*What is the meaning of understanding English as it is while using Japanese or not using it?

① In the case of Reading or Listening to English

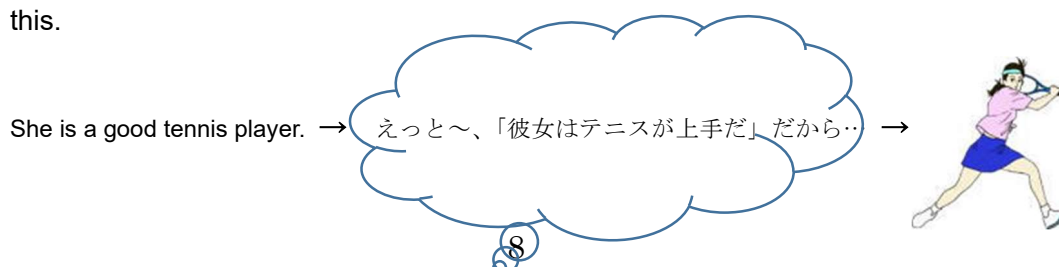
Let's start with an example of hearing English and understanding it as it is **without** using Japanese. For example, let's say you hear this sentence: "**She is a good tennis player.**" Processing (understanding) this English in your head means that you can picture her playing tennis very clearly in your mind.



You may not have thought about it much, but when you say, "I understood what the other person said (no matter what language)," you have a picture (image) of it in your mind. When it is in your mind as a "picture," it is neither Japanese nor English.

Now, if you want to "understand" the above English, there are two ways to do it.

1. When you listen to the English, you understand it in Japanese first, and then picture the scene like this.



2. When you listen to the English, you picture her dashing around playing tennis.

She is a good tennis player. →



If you are a beginner in English, you can use the method 1. to understand. But this will take a lot of time. Therefore, what all English learners should aim for is the state of 2.

② In the case of Speaking English

When you speak, it is the opposite of the above. You are picturing "her dashing around playing tennis," and you want to convey to the other person the fact that she is a good tennis player.

1. You picture her dashing around playing tennis, and then put it directly into English. Ideally, you should be able to handle it this way.



→ She is a good tennis player.

2. If you are a beginner in English, you verbalize what you want to say into Japanese first, then convert it into English.



→ えっと～、「彼女はテニスが上手だ」って
英語で何て言うんだっけ・・・

→ She is a good tennis player.