



# A Mr. Vig GUIDE

simple solutions for  
your biggest English headaches

# The YouTube METHOD

**How to turn  
a time-waster  
into a fluency  
machine**



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# The YouTube Method

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**MR VIG**

MrVig.com

But first....

# WHAT THEY SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU IN SCHOOL

Learning a language is natural.

That's maybe one of the biggest secrets in the English industry.

There are a lot of companies that will argue the opposite.

But the truth is, after you learn the basics, you don't need a teacher; you don't need a school; and you don't need text books or grammar books or lists of phrasal verbs and idioms.

Think about this: did you learn your first language by studying or playing with your parents?

Many people have told me they learned English from watching "Friends" or "The Simpsons" or even by playing video games. But I've never met someone who said he became a fluent English speaker by studying a grammar book / taking a class / getting a certificate.

MIT linguist Noam Chomsky says every human is born with a “Language Acquisition Device” in his head which allows us, unlike all the other animals, to learn language.

University of Southern California professor Steven Krashen calls this natural ability the “Input Hypothesis.”

And that’s one reason why watching YouTube videos is so effective; it copies how we naturally learn language: by listening.

Listening is the favorite technique of super-polyglot Steve Kaufman who currently speaks 18 languages (he learned 9 after the age of 60!).

And it’s the method of the Vaupes Indians. Although they never took a Berlitz class or downloaded a language app (maybe because they live in the Amazon rainforest...) they speak an average of 6 languages each.

So believe me, listening is one of the most effective things you can do to improve your English.

And just a few years ago if you wanted to listen to a native speaker in Prague, where I live, you had to put on your shoes, go outside, get on a tram, and then walk into a language school and pay money to sit in front of someone from the US or UK.

Now you can do it on your phone, anywhere, and any time, for free!

Welcome to the best time in history to be learning English.

Enjoy,  
-Mr. Vig

# HOW TO WATCH RULE ONE: EASY

Look at this sentence:

*“I wish the car behind me would stop tailgating me. It’s dangerous; if I stop quickly he might hit me.”*

Do you have an idea what “to tailgate” means?

You probably do, even if you’ve never seen the word before..

But look at the same sentence now:

*“I \_\_\_\_\_ the car behind me would \_\_\_\_\_ tailgating me. It’s \_\_\_\_\_; if I \_\_\_\_\_ quickly he might \_\_\_\_\_ me.”*

What about now?

It’s really impossible to understand the meaning of tailgate now because you don’t have enough of the other words.

This is what it’s like when you watch something that’s too difficult.

When it’s easy, and you understand most of the words, you can figure out the unknown words.

But when there are too many unknown words, you’re lost. And then you’re not learning.

Language researcher Paul Nation says an English student should understand 92% when you’re reading.

But for a video, I say it can be less because your eyes help you understand more.

## **BUT WHAT IF EVERYTHING IS HARD?**

1) Try videos for kids.

If you're embarrassed to be watching Pepa Pig, then close the door.

Don't know what kids watch? Find someone with kids and ask him/her, and most of the time you can find the same videos in English.

And if the kids videos are too easy for you, then try shows for older kids or teenagers.

Or...

2) Watch the video in your native language first.

This way, you'll already know the story and it will be much easier to understand when you watch it in English.

Or...

3) Is a transcript available?

If it is, you can read the transcript first (reading is easier than watching/listening), and then watch the video.

Or you can try...

4) The Subtitle Technique

Here's how it works:

First, watch the video with English subtitles

Then, watch it again without subtitles

Simple. But here's why it's effective:

### Why English Subtitles

One of the big differences between fluent speakers and students who stay stuck at intermediate is that the stuck students have a habit of translating in their head.

That's why you must **never watch an English video with subtitles from your language!** When you do this, you're mixing the two languages and you're making the translation habit stronger.

### Why Watch It Again Without Subtitles

When you watch a video with subtitles you're not practicing listening; you're practicing reading.

Reading is good, but listening is a conversation skill and it's what you need to practice for better speaking

# HOW TO WATCH RULE TWO: INTERESTING

I once met a student who told me she listened to a business English podcast every day in her car.

“What words did you learn today?” I asked.

Silence.

Although, she had just left her car, had just listened to a lesson about business vocabulary, she couldn't remember one word!

Why couldn't she remember?

Because it was boring!

### **The Black List**

- Grammar videos
- Business English videos
- Videos explaining vocabulary (I call these teachers “talking dictionaries”)

They're all boring!

And your brain cannot remember boring!

What can your brain remember? Anything that's funny, exciting, sexy, shocking.

Is it emotional? Does it make you laugh or cry or get scared?

Perfect!

Does it make you think? Is it so interesting you want to watch more and more? Perfect!

Do you start thinking about cleaning your bathroom when you're watching it?

Stop the video and find something else!

A lot of students feel bad when they watch something like “Friends” instead of something “helpful” for their English, like a video called “Using infinitives of purpose.” (This is actually a real video I found on YouTube! Zzzzz...).

This is absolutely wrong, and just another bad habit we learned in school.

You can learn and have fun at the same time.

In fact, it’s ideal!

**TIP:** Leave the dictionary on the shelf.

A lot of students want to understand every word in a video. So when they hear a word they don’t know, they stop the video and look it up in the dictionary.

The danger here is that if you do this too much, watching a video becomes like work and you stop enjoying the story. And that’s not good at all.

YouTube works so well because the videos are so interesting; you’re relaxed, you’re focused, and you’re doing lots of listening just like you did when you were a child.

But when you turn it into work, you stop enjoying it, you watch less, and you kill that magic.

So every now and then, sure, reach for the dictionary if you really want to know what a word means. But leave it on the shelf most of the time and relax and enjoy the videos and trust that your brain knows how to learn.

**HOW TO WATCH  
RULE THREE: AGAIN AND AGAIN  
AND AGAIN...**

Imagine a golfer who takes a lesson and then immediately tries to compete in a tournament.

Or imagine a piano player who learns a new song and then performs it in a concert.

Of course both would fail.

What's missing is practice. Lots and lots of practice.

And it's the same with your English.

Except for English, we call "practice" "repetition."

Here's one of my favorite quotes from a polyglot (he speaks 5...6? languages) on how to learn a foreign language:

"Language learning is over-learning."

Every time you re-watch a video you hear more, you notice more, your brain is making stronger connections, and the information is becoming more natural.

So watch it again and again and again and you'll feel the difference like an athlete or a musician who has spent hours and hours practicing.

# WHAT TO WATCH

## TV SHOWS VS MOVIES

Both are good.

But TV is better.

Here's why.

Reason one: time

When you find a movie you like, it's over in an hour and a half or two hours.

But when you find a TV show you like, you can spend hours and hours for weeks or months watching it.

And something interesting happens after the third or fourth episode - you start to understand more.

TV writers, like any writers, have their favorite words. And after a few hours of hearing these words, and hearing the characters' accents and figuring out the story, it all suddenly becomes much easier. But this doesn't happen with a 90 minute film.

And one more thing, drama is better than comedy; jokes are the hardest thing to understand in a foreign language.

Plus, the stories in comedies end after each episode. But dramas leave the stories open so you want to come back and find out what happens. Find a show you love and you can really become addicted to it.

What shows do I recommend? I've got my favorites, but what you like might be different. So ask your friends, watch a show you've already seen in your native language, or just try one episode a night until you find one you like.

## WATCH THIS VIDEO FIRST

Here's the one skill that will improve your English faster than anything else:

Learn how to learn.

Most people are passive.

Either they blindly follow a teacher or they repeat what they've always done.

It's much better to invest just a little time into learning some new methods.

And if you're like me, when you understand how something works, you're more motivated to do it.

For example, I had heard for a long time that meditating was good for you.

But I never did it.

Then I read an article that explained how it slowed down your brain waves and how this change made you more confident and less likely to be stressed.

And that's when I started meditating - after I learned how it worked!

I've seen the same with my English students.

I can say "Do this."

Or I can say "I think you should do this, and here's why..."

And then I explain why it works and they're much more likely to actually do it and get the results.

Make sense?

So I recommend you first learn how to learn.

Because guess what, everything you learned in school is wrong.

Sit in a classroom, memorize, translate, take tests... it's all wrong.

People who learn quickly and who speak easily and with confidence, they do it differently.

And a very smart person who can explain it simply is professor Stephen Krashen.

Start with this video:

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=NiTsdurReug>

## WHAT ABOUT SONGS?

A lot of teachers recommend songs.

It's true that it's easier to remember words when they have a melody, this is why advertisers use songs, but have a look at these lyrics from Bon Iver.

“That’s a pair of them dochs/mooring out two separate lochs/  
ain’t that some kind of quandry-waundry/take me into your  
palms/what is left when unhungry.”

Huh?

The reality is that a lot (most?) modern songs are full of bad grammar, the latest slang, or just don't make any sense.

Here are some exceptions. Add the word “lyrics” in the search if you want to read along “karaoke style.”

- Abba
- The Beatles
- Johnny Cash

## WHAT TO NEVER WATCH ON YOUTUBE

Grammar videos!

(Yes, I need to say this twice.)

After you learn the basics of grammar, you don't need more rules.

You already know more than most native speakers.

And studying more rules makes your speaking worse.

The benefit of learning advanced grammar is mainly psychological.

You feel like you're prepared. And it seems to logically make sense.

But I've seen the actual results with my own students.

If I give them a grammar exercise, immediately their speaking gets worse.

So instead, watch lots and lots of easy, interesting videos and as you listen your brain will make memories of correct English.

Then eventually, you'll start to speak correctly.

But you'll speak correctly the way a native speaker speaks correctly, because it "feels" or "sounds" correct.

Not because you've become a human computer and can quickly remember all 10,000 rules from *Murphy's English Grammar In Use*.

Also, let me add: Any video where vocabulary is explained.

"5 Phrasal Verbs For Presentations", "The Difference Between 'At' and 'On'", "How To Talk About The Bathroom"...

You will not remember these words!

And if a miracle happens and you do remember them, you won't know how to use them.

Either way, you'll feel like you're failing.

And when you feel bad, you'll watch less.

And when you watch less, you'll learn slower.

And that's not good.

# THE SYSTEM

## **DAILY**

The magic of any system is doing it daily.

And the trick to doing anything daily is making it a habit.

Here's what I recommend.

Most people like to “wind down” before bed. This means they do something relaxing before they go to sleep.

And watching TV is a good way to do this.

So instead of watching TV in your native language, replace it with some YouTube in English.

Do it every night, make it a habit you look forward to, and feel your English improve.

## **VEGETABLES BEFORE DESERT**

If you're addicted to a TV show and absolutely have to watch the next episode to find out what happens next, that's great!

If that's you, then watch all the episodes, and when you're finished and finally know who shot J.R., start over at the beginning and rewatch the entire series.

But, if you can possibly wait a little longer before you watch a new episode, then I recommend this.

Eating your vegetables first means re-watch the show you saw yesterday before you watch a new episode.

Or, if you can spend more time, watch two episodes a night, but do your re-watching first.

## **SPACED LEARNING**

If you're like me, then when you were in school you waited till the day before the exam to study.

That worked in school, but if you want to put something into your long-term memory, and you want to do it in less time, then here's a better method.

It's called "spaced learning."

The basic idea is that spending less total time, but more time daily, will give you better and faster results than more time less frequently.

Translation: 15 minutes in the morning, 10 minutes at lunch, and 20 minutes in the evening every day is better than five hours on Saturday.

This is the exact method of "super polyglot" Steve Kaufman.

And the research absolutely proves that it's the best way to use your learning time.

## **SUMMARY**

Find something easy.

Find something you love.

Watch every night before bed.

Re-watch nightly or in cycles.

# EXTRA: BEYOND YOUTUBE

## Other Video Recommendations

YouTube is great, but it's not the only place for videos online. Here are some other sites I recommend to my private students.

### [Ororotv.com](http://Ororotv.com)

Lots and lots of English and American TV shows. And you can turn the subtitles off and on! One hour a day is free; for more than an hour you have to pay.

### [Yabla.com](http://Yabla.com)

Watch YouTube videos, but as a bonus, you can make them go slower and make flashcards for new vocabulary words.

### [Ted.com](http://Ted.com)

Incredibly interesting speeches. Lots of different accents. And transcripts are available.

And of course, Netflix and Amazon Prime.

## Listening Recommendations

And let's not forget just plain, old-fashion listening. Keep your phone or ipod loaded with easy and interesting English audio, listen when you walk or travel or wait, and you'll start to feel the progress soon.

[Audible.com](http://Audible.com)

The #1 site for audio books.

[Npr.org/podcasts](http://Npr.org/podcasts)

My favorite site for podcasts.

# MR VIG

## ABOUT MRVIG.COM

MrVig.com is a blog for adults who speak English but are not yet fluent.

It was created by American English teacher Ryan Viguerie.

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