

There are samples of English all around us – things to read, listen to or view. A sample is a small amount that gives you an accurate picture of what something is like. Have you ever tasted samples of food at the grocery store and decided “Hmm... that was good. I think I’ll buy a box of that.” Well, a sample of language is similar. It’s a taste, a small amount of English that you can study and learn from.

As you explore these samples, you will encounter new language features. We suggest that you focus on studying 4 basic features: vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and culture. We talked about these features in previous videos. In this video, we will show 4 pages for your notebook to help you record new language – a page for vocabulary, for grammar, for pronunciation and for culture.

A good balance of these 4 features will help you to reach your goal. It’s like the 4 wheels on a vehicle. If you are missing one or more of them, you will not reach your destination.

Likewise, if you are trying to learn a new language, and you neglect one of these fundamentals, you will not succeed. Let’s start with vocabulary.

The iLEAP cycle creates a natural way to learn new words. As you study samples you will notice words that you don’t understand. These words are right there, located in the sentences and paragraphs in front of you. You will have all this information surrounding the word. This can help you understand its meaning.

This would be a good time to pull out the “vocabulary” page and learn more about that new word. This is what Veronika did. For example, while reading ‘101 Ways to Market your Art,’ she discovered the word “convenient.” Let’s see how she used the “vocabulary” notebook page.

The vocabulary page provides a section for you to write out the sentence that the word appeared in. Veronika encountered the word “convenient” in the sentence: “I would like to arrange a time to meet that is convenient for you.” She could tell that the word was an adjective because of its place in the sentence. But what does “convenient” mean?

She tried to understand the meaning from the context of the sentence, but still had trouble. So she checked a dictionary. “Convenient” means “useful to you because it saves you time, or does not spoil your plans or cause you problems.” She also wrote a definition using her own words – she wrote, “It requires little effort. It fits well with your needs and activities.”

The next section on the page asks the question “How do I say it?” Veronika never heard this word before. She used the internet to hear its pronunciation and wrote the word using the International Phonetic Alphabet. She learned that the stress is on the second syllable. This means that syllable is spoken a little more loudly and clearly. Con-VE-nient.

The vocabulary page also has a section where you can study the word more deeply. There is space to write:

- Words that have a similar meaning or synonyms
- Common phrases that contain the word. These are called ‘collocations.’
- Next, what “feelings” does this word suggest? – this is its ‘connotation.’ Is the word considered positive, negative or neutral – where can you use it? Is it formal? Informal? Is it usually written or spoken? Or both?
- You can also plan how you will use the word.
- Finally, how will you remember your new word? There are memory strategies that you can use. The vocabulary page has a section for this. In this case, Veronika chose “associating” as her strategy. We will learn more about these memory strategies in future videos. But for now, I can tell you that “associating” is a way of remembering something by connecting it to something else.

So, Veronika associated the word “convenient” with the image of a small store near her home. It has a sign that says, “convenience store.” Its location is “convenient” for her. This is how she’ll remember this word.

Okay, so that’s vocabulary. Let’s move on to the next page.

What about grammar?

The iLEAP cycle also helps you to learn grammar in context, as you focus on meeting your goal. You might encounter a grammar pattern that is strange and doesn’t seem right to you. Go ahead and explore it! Try to figure out the rule. Our “grammar” page can help.

You can see that the grammar page is structured much like the vocabulary page. There is a section to record the new language, a section to write out the sentence that it appeared in, three sections to help you study it, and a strategy section to identify how you will remember it.

Veronika encountered a strange grammar pattern while viewing an online video. The presenter said, “If I were you, I would find out all I can about the company before calling.”

Why did the presenter say “If I WERE you”? Shouldn’t it be “If I WAS you”? Veronika researched this and learned about the “The Second Conditional.” It’s a structure used to describe unlikely situations and “if I were you” is a phrase that people use to give advice.

Veronika then studied this grammar form to learn how to construct it. She also answered questions about its function – that is, “What does it mean?” and “How is it used?”

After studying it, she decided she would follow-up by finding songs that contain this grammar structure. Veronika likes to use music to practise her English. In fact, one of her favourite songs has this structure- The song is called, “If I Were A Boy.” It helped Veronika remember how to form the Second Conditional.

Ok, I have two more pages to show you. Next is pronunciation.

Pronunciation is important.

Poor pronunciation can often be the problem when a native speaker doesn’t understand you. If you’re learning English mainly through reading, then you need to know that the pronunciation often has little to do with how the word is spelled. Spelling can trip you up when trying to pronounce new words. So go beyond reading. Find samples where you hear English being spoken.

Veronika heard something strange while she was practising her phone dialogue with a friend. She heard her friend say, “Would you (woojya) give me just 5 minutes of your time?” “Woojya?” “What does woojya mean?” Then she realized her friend was saying “would you.”

Veronika took out a blank “pronunciation” page and wrote down the sentence that she heard. She then described what she noticed:

“The pronunciation of the word ‘you’ often sounds like ‘ya’ and it usually gets attached to the word that comes before it.” For example, “Would you” sounds like “woojya” or “I want you” sounds like “I wanchya”

This is a result of two English pronunciation features: linking and reduction.

Linking is when two or more words are attached and spoken together, without a pause in between them. It sounds like one word, even though its two.

Reduction means the word isn't spoken fully...it's "reduced" to a shorter, weaker sound. This is why the pronoun "you" sounds like "ya." It's being reduced.

Veronika decided to make a list of common expressions with the word "you" and practise linking and reduction by repeating them over and over. Repeating is the strategy that she uses to learn and remember these pronunciation features.

Finally, another feature to explore is "culture."

You see – vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation are the ingredients that make up the language. But then you need to use the language. How do you know when it's appropriate to use a word in one situation, but not in another? The answer – culture. Culture gives us different containers for the language. Language is poured into culture. Language will take on different shapes, depending on the occasion – depending on where we are and who we are communicating with.

Well, Veronika was preparing to make a business phone call. She had done this many times before in her own language, in her own culture. But now, she was in a new culture and she needed to make the call in English! She hoped that her book "101 Ways to Market your Art" would describe the appropriate language and behaviour to use. In fact, it did and what she learned surprised her!

She decided to use the "culture" page to record her discovery.

The book had a section about "speaking to the receptionist of a company" and the basic message was "show the receptionist respect." After writing these statements down, Veronika also wrote out a short paragraph from pg. 147 of the book that says, "Show the receptionist respect – the same as you would show her boss. Many business managers give their assistants the responsibility of screening their calls." Veronika was surprised by this. This means the receptionist may have the authority to decide which calls are important or not.

The "culture" page has a section to reflect on how it may be different in your own culture and on how you feel about this cultural norm. She wrote, "Back home, I would have expected the receptionist to transfer me directly to the manager. I wouldn't have spent much time speaking with her."

Veronika will use this knowledge to make a good impression with the receptionist when she makes her phone call.

In fact, all of these notebook pages - to record vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and culture – helped Veronika prepare for her task.

Now that you've seen how she used them, feel free to use them yourself.

Remember, you can download, print and write on it with a pen (as Veronika did) or you can type right on the document and save it as a digital file. You may even prefer to record new language in a different way. These pages are a guide. We encourage you to do what works best for you.

Once again, do the practise activities that go with this video to help you get the most out of these pages.

Also, stay tuned for other iEnglish episodes where you can learn direct strategies for learning English.

We hope that you continue with iEnglish. So many people are doing it! Some are doing it online. Some are gathering together face-to-face. How ever you do it, I wish you the best with your learning.

Remember - life is the classroom.  
Immerse yourself!