

# STAGES

short guides for every stage of the language learning journey



**STAGE:**

**Before You Move Overseas**

## Welcome to the language learning journey!

My name is Aaron Myers and from 2008 - 2012 I was a missionary serving in Istanbul, Turkey with my family. While there I began writing about the language learning journey and working as a language coach. My desire then and now is to support the work of global missions by empowering and encouraging missionaries on the language learning journey. I give you this guide as a gift to help you begin the journey well. I pray it would help you to begin the process of learning a new language on a firm foundation. At the end of this guide I have included a list of all of the resources you can find at The Everyday Language Learner, the blog which serves as the platform for my work. I would encourage you to take a look at these and allow me to continue to walk beside you on this journey.

May God bless you richly in these coming months of preparation,

*-Aaron Myers*



*My Family in Turkey 2012*

With regard to the language, let this occupy your most precious time and your most anxious solicitude. Do not be content with acquiring the language superficially, but make it your own, root and branch. To become fluent in it, you must listen attentively, with prying curiosity, into the forms of speech, the construction and the accents of the natives.

-William Carey

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# Let's Get Started

You have made your decision. You have your passports and will buy your tickets in the coming months. You're beginning to make plans to sell your stuff and are starting to wonder about starting over.

**You** are moving overseas.

There is a ton that goes into a move like this. I know, I've done it. I moved with my wife and two kids to Istanbul, Turkey back in 2008.

And while there is much that has been written about the logistics of a move overseas, with this short guide, I want to focus on just one aspect of that move: **language**.

**This guide is a blueprint for the weeks and months before you board the plane.**

In it you will find actions that, when implemented, will help you prepare for the language learning journey.

But like a map on which a good friend has marked off all the best sites to see along the way, **you** need to decide which ones you **want** to see, which ones you **can** see and which ones you **need** to see.

I begin the guide with a timeline. It will help add structure to the coming months so that you can maximize your time and more effectively prepare for the language learning journey.

**But it's not a rigid timeline. It's a guide.**

I've filled this guide with the actions I wish someone had encouraged me to take in that year before moving. The bulk of this guide then is made up of ten actions you can take over the coming months before you move. Each of these actions will include:

- **A how to make it happen section.**
- **A rationale for the action.**
- **A difficulty rating.**
- **An importance rating.**
- **A timeline indicator.**
- **Further reading suggestions.** (links in orange)

## Difficulty Ratings

I've added a difficulty rating to each action to help you understand how much work each will require. The difficulty pertains both to the amount of time needed to complete the task as well as the overall difficulty that completing the task presents. The difficulty ratings are:

**Easy** - these can be accomplished with little effort in a short amount of time.

**Moderate** - these require more time and may be a bit more challenging.

**Difficult** - these require dedicated time commitments and a fair amount of hard work.

## Importance Rating

I have also categorized each of the actions by the relative importance that I feel each has for language learners in this pre-departure stage.

**Extra Curricular** - these are activities to be done if you'd like a little extra work. All of them will help you prepare, but none are critical to the journey.

**Moderate Importance** - these are important and helpful and should be done if possible.

**Very Important** - if you do nothing else, do these. They will give you the most bang for your buck.

## Timeline Indicator

I have also indicated when on the timeline you should consider beginning each of the actions. You'll learn more about the timeline in the next section.



I'll bring the guide to a close in the appendix with a few planning worksheets to help you prepare for the road ahead. **Print these out** so that you can actually use them.

That is a basic run down of what you are about to read. I hope it will encourage and empower you to take control of the language aspect of this next season of your life.

**Blessings on your language learning journey!**

**Make sure you save this guide to your desktop for easy reference.  
Consider printing pages 14 - 32 as well.**

# Timeline



## The Timeline

I have created the timeline as a sort of loose guideline to help you structure your time before you make your move overseas.

**Stop:** Print off the Timeline Planning Sheet before you read further.

Outside of the launch phase of the last month, the amount of time you spend in *Research and Development* and *Building* depends on how much time you have before your move. You will need to adjust what you do, how much you

do and when you do any of the ideas in this guide depending on your departure date.

For example, if you are leaving in a year, you may want to spend four months in Research and Development and seven months in Building, leaving the last month for the Launch phase. If you are moving in six months, you will need to adjust accordingly.

**This is not a hard and fast rule but rather a system to help you structure and maximize the time you have before you leave.**

## **Research and Development Phase**

This is the time to do your research. Spend time looking for resources. Develop systems to keep track of all of your resources and materials.

Life probably isn't crazy yet so take advantage of this time to do the research and get yourself ready for the language learning journey.

## **Building Phase**

The Building Phase is the time to start using some of the resources you have found. Experiment with different programs. Find out what you like and what you don't like. Use this time to read and watch and learn.

## **Launch Phase**

Crazy.

If there is one word to describe the last month before you move overseas, it's the word crazy.

The goal of the timeline is to help you have everything in place at this point so that you can focus on quality good byes and last minute preparations for the move.

The only thing I'll encourage you to do during Launch Phase is to read through the next two stages in this series: *The First Month Overseas* and *The First Year Overseas*. This will help you immensely once you touch down and are swimming in the craziness of your first month overseas.

I want to encourage you again to print off the Timeline Planning Sheet in the back before you go any further. Use it to layout a way forward and take control of the next months of the language learning journey.

**Let's Get Started!**

# RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** Print out the Timeline Worksheet from the appendix and sit down with a calendar to map out the coming months. Set the beginning and end dates for each of the three phases. The Launch phase is just one month. Research and Development should occupy 1/3 of the remaining time leaving roughly 2/3 of the time to focus on the Building Phase actions.

**Step Two:** Focusing on the Research and Development actions, write down the actions you would like to begin to work on during the appointed time. At this point it could be wise to avoid the Building Phase actions. You may want to glance through the actions, but you are probably busy enough. Mark the date on the calendar that you would like to begin working on the Building Phase and leave it until then.

**Step Three:** Make a plan to begin working on the actions for the Research and Development phase. Create a system to collect and save resources that you find.

# ACTION

Begin listening regularly to the target language.

## Further Reading

- \* How to Learn a Language by Listening to the Radio
- \* To Learn a Foreign Language, Listen to it First
- \* Pronunciation and Listening Comprehension

### DIFFICULTY

moderate

### IMPORTANCE

very important

### TIMELINE

research and development

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** Search for target language listening material. It could be a radio station, a podcast, a Youtube video, or dedicated learning material created for language learners. Visit The Everyday Language Learner's Language Specific resource page to get started. [visit now]

**Step Two:** Download as much audio as you can and load up your ipod or MP3 player.

**Step Three:** Begin listening regularly to familiarize yourself with the sounds, rhythms and words of the language. Ten minutes a day, six days a week will give you twenty four hours of listening in six months.

## RATIONALE

Language is made up of sounds, rhythms, patterns, intonations and much more. By listening regularly, you begin to familiarize yourself to these - many of which will be new for you.

Top loading listening before you go will help you hear better once you arrive. This will increase your comprehension allowing you to progress faster. Dedicated listening can also help reduce accent.

You won't have this luxury to just listen once you arrive in country.

**Listen now and listen often.**

# ACTION

Explore resources for learning the language.

## Further Reading

- \* [Language Learning Resources at EDLL](#)
- \* [The Omniglot A-Z Language Index](#)
- \* [Discovering a New Language from Afar](#)

### DIFFICULTY

easy

### IMPORTANCE

very important

### TIMELINE

research and development

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** Create a folder in your bookmarks bar called “Language Resources.” When you find a new resource online, save the link into this folder.

**Step Two:** Starting with the links above, begin to find language specific resources, general resources, information about the country via blogs, forums or Wikipedia and the offline resources that you will want to begin to purchase. Research options for language learning when you get in country. Are there language schools? Tutors? What have others done?

**Step Three:** Keep exploring but also guard your time. The Internet can be a black hole.

## RATIONALE

The Internet is a vast ocean of resources for language learners. That said, you will want to begin now to find and familiarize yourself with some of the best.

Exploring resources now will also help you grow your excitement and motivation for learning the language and begin to remove some of the fear.

Creating a folder of resources now will help reduce the time spent searching once you are in country and help you get started learning the language right away.



# ACTION

Begin Training to be an Independent Language Learner.

## Further Reading

\* [The World's Best Language Learning Method](#)

\* [The Ten Week Journey](#)

\* [The Everyday Language Learner's Guide to Getting Started](#)

### DIFFICULTY

difficult

### IMPORTANCE

very important / moderate

### TIMELINE

research and development

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** Using the *Am I Ready?* worksheet, determine how prepared you are to be an independent, self-directed language learner.

**Step Two:** Choose appropriate steps to take in order to increase your level of knowledge and understanding of how to learn another language.

**Step Three:** Begin at once to learn more about learning another language. Read books. Read blogs. Watch videos. Sign up for a class or program. Become a student of the language learning journey.

## RATIONALE

**Give me six hours to cut down a tree and I'll spend the first four sharpening the axe.**  
-Abraham Lincoln

Learning the language is one of the most important and rewarding aspects of any move overseas.

Taking the time now to get some training in how to learn a language will increase dramatically your enjoyment and success on the language learning journey.

**Take the time now to sharpen your axe!**

# BUILDING PHASE

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** Reflect on the Research and Development Phase. What went well? What do you need/want to continue to work on even as you move into the Building Phase? Write these down on your Timeline Planning Worksheet.

**Step Two:** Using the Timeline Planning Worksheet, prioritize the actions you wish to work on in the upcoming months. Look through the following six actions and determine which you feel are essential and which you feel you can let go or work on if you find the time?

**Step Three:** Again, make a plan to accomplish your goals. Write down how you will complete the actions on the list in the coming months. Be as specific as you need to be, but determine in your mind to complete the actions you have decided on.

**In Turkish there is a proverb:**

***Damlaya, damlaya göl olur.* - Drop by drop a lake is formed.**

# ACTION

Assemble your language learning tool box.

## Further Reading

- \* [10 Essential Tools for Everyday Language Learners](#)
- \* [The Language Resource Page](#)
- \* [15 Language Learning Tools for Lifelong Learners](#)

DIFFICULTY

moderate

IMPORTANCE

very important

TIMELINE

building phase

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** Read 10 Essentials for Every Language Learner's Tool Box.

**Step Two:** Write down your own list of essential language learning tools and resources.

**Step Three:** Acquire those resources.

**Step Four:** Familiarize yourself with your new resources. Play around with them. Figure out the special features. Practice using them now.

## RATIONALE

These essential resources are the tools with which you will work to learn the language. They are an important part of the language learning journey.

Find them now, before life gets crazy so that you don't miss getting them and so that you have some time to figure out how some of them work.

Also, some may be difficult to find overseas or much more expensive. Find them while you are in your own country and can work in your own language.

# ACTION

Identify and Memorize Key Survival Phrases.

Further Reading

\* What's the Password

\* Travel Phrasebooks: A Serious Language Learner's  
Best First Book

DIFFICULTY

moderate

IMPORTANCE

very important

TIMELINE

building phase

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** Find a resource for survival phrases in the language. This could be a traditional phrasebook, an online resource or an audio series for travelers.

**Step Two:** Identify 10 - 20 of the most important phrases that you would like to memorize before getting on the plane.

**Step Three:** Make a plan to memorize them. Use flashcards. Use audio. Make it a family game. Make sure you find a way to hear these phrases too so that you can learn the pronunciation.

**Step Four:** Implement your plan.

## RATIONALE

Knowing a good handful of phrases to help you navigate the first weeks in country will do much to reduce stress, increase confidence and help you get started learning the language in country on the right foot.

Learning these will also more quickly establish yourself as a serious language learner in the eyes of the locals, an important distinction and one that will lead to better feedback and help from native speakers.

By learning phrases, you will also begin to train your mouth for the new sounds it will need to produce. For this reason it is important to get audio to listen to and mimic.

# ACTION

Read a Summary of the Language.

## Further Reading

- \* [The Role of Grammar in Language Learning](#)
- \* [Language Learning Tip: Glance at Grammar as a Beginner](#)

### DIFFICULTY

easy

### IMPORTANCE

moderate

### TIMELINE

building phase

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** Find a simple summary of the basic structures and features of the language you are learning. Wikipedia is often a good source as is the introductory chapter to any of the Teach Yourself Series of language texts.

**Step Two:** Read the summary so that you can have a basic understanding of how this language works, how it is different from your native language and to become aware of any elements that might be confusing.

**Step Three:** File this summary away somewhere for later reference.

## RATIONALE

Having a basic understanding of some of the major features of a language can help you more quickly identify and understand the language once you really start to dive in and learn it.

At this point, you are just looking for a basic understanding. You don't need to 'study' this summary or memorize it.

Think of this more like taking a look at a road map before a long trip in order to know what direction you're going to be heading, to take note of any major land marks along the way and to get the general feel for the route.

# ACTION

Make a native speaking friend.

Further Reading

\* Finding a Language Helper

\* Help Them Help You

DIFFICULTY

difficult

IMPORTANCE

very important

TIMELINE

building phase

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** Read Finding a Language Helper and then make a list of possible ways to meet native speakers.

**Step Two:** Reach out! Write an email, visit a restaurant, go to a meeting, make a phone call. Do something to reach out and begin to establish a relationship with a native speaker.

**Step Three:** Work toward friendship. I want to caution you against viewing any native speaker as a 'resource'.

## RATIONALE

If we are to learn the language, we need to speak the language and while we may not be speaking a lot at first, you will be developing a relationship with a native speaker with whom you will one day be able to speak.

Perhaps more important at this point though is that building a friendship with a native speaker will do much to fuel your motivation to learn the language.

None of your co-workers or friends care much if you are learning another language, but a native speaker cares immensely and will be a support and an encouragement on the journey.

# ACTION

Begin reading books and blogs about the country.

## Further Reading

- \* [Creating a Personal Language Learning Culture](#)
- \* [Expats Blog](#)
- \* [Inter Nations](#)
- \* [Blog Expat](#)

### DIFFICULTY

easy

### IMPORTANCE

moderate

### TIMELINE

building phase

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** Stop by your local library or bookstore or go online and search for books about the country where you will be moving. Consider starting with a simple kids books.

**Step Two:** Search the Internet for blogs written by other expats living in the country. Find online forums for expats and begin asking questions. Try starting at *Inter Nations*, *Expats Blog* or *Blog Expat*.

**Step Three:** Begin reading about the country and her people in your spare time. Find a book or two - or a National Geographic - and put it on the coffee table for easy access. Subscribe to a few favorite blogs.

## RATIONALE

Learning more about the history, political climate, economy, culture, people and daily life of the country will do two things:

**First** it will help you build excitement. Knowing more should give you a better vision for the life you will have in your new country and this will in turn increase motivation for learning the language.

**Second**, by learning more, you will minimize frustration and stress once you do arrive allowing you to have more energy for learning the language and diving into the culture.

# ACTION

Create a list of language projects to work on.

## Further Reading

- \* Project Based Learning
- \* Language Activity Page
- \* The LACE Manual (14-17)

### DIFFICULTY

easy

### IMPORTANCE

extra curricular

### TIMELINE

building phase

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** Using the Language Projects Worksheet at the back, make a list of possible language projects for later reference (you will need to print it off).

**Step Two:** Familiarize yourself with the language activity page at The Everyday Language Learner (See link above).

**Step Three:** File the Language Projects worksheet somewhere where you will be able to pull it out and add more projects as you think of them and where you will not lose it during the move. You will want to use this once you have moved to your new home.

## RATIONALE

My father-in-law is a farmer who often uses the expression, "*An hour in summer is worth two in winter.*"

The meaning is this: Whatever you can do now will save you time, energy and effort in the future.

Preparing a list of possible language learning projects to work on will give you a clear place to begin in the language when you don't know what to study.



# LAUNCH PHASE

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** Reflect on the the last months. Hopefully you are feeling more prepared than ever to get started really learning the language once your plane touches down. Taking into consideration that this is going to be a crazy last month, are there any one or two things that you would like to continue to try and do during the Launch Phase? Write these down on the Timeline Planning Worksheet.

**Step Two:** Read the next two stages in this series: *Stage: Your First Month Overseas* (free) and *Stage: Your First Year Overseas*. (\$2.00) (**both coming soon!**) Reading these now will give you a sense of direction for language learning and will help you to reduce at least this one stress of your first months overseas.

**Step Three:** Create space for good goodbyes, for intentional time with family and friends and for creating as smooth a transition as you can for you and your family.

# ACTION

Read the next two guides in the stages series.

Further Reading

\*Read - *Your First Month Overseas*

\*Purchase - *Your First Year Overseas*

DIFFICULTY

easy

IMPORTANCE

moderate

TIMELINE

launch phase

## MAKE IT HAPPEN

**Step One:** *Your First Month Overseas* is an extended blog post and can be found at the blog for free. *Your First Year Overseas* is a more robust guide like this one and can be purchased at the link above.

**Step Two:** Save these on your hard drive in an easy to find location or better yet, print them off.

**Step Three:** Set aside 15 minutes to read *Your First Month Overseas* and some of the included links.

**Step Four:** IF you are feeling up to it and have the time, do the same for *Your First Year Overseas* to familiarize yourself with it.

## RATIONALE

The last month before leaving and the first month after arriving are probably two of the craziest months of a person's life. Everything is topsy turvy and new and exciting and stressful. And there will be a TON to do.

For that reason, the only thing I want to encourage you to do in the month before you go is to read the first article that will help you navigate your first month in your new home country.

Doing this will help you get started with a strong focus that will put you on the path to success as a language learner.

# FINAL THOUGHTS

**You miss 100% of the shots  
that you never take.**

**-Wayne Gretsky**

**My hope** with this short guide is to give you a roadmap for preparing to be an effective language learner once you move to your destination country.

Many believe they can just wait until they get there - and they will indeed get there and they will most likely learn the language.

I believe you can do better though if you are **proactive in preparing**. And so I hope the actions I have given here can help you do just that.

These actions are not prescriptions for success but they will empower you to be more effective, more efficient and have more fun on the language learning journey.

**And so my final encouragement to you is this:**

**Get Started, Don't Stop.**

# Appendix

The following worksheets have been created to help you more effectively plan for the journey ahead. They will be most useful if you print them off and then keep them with your language learning materials for later reference.

**Timeline Planning Sheet:** This worksheet is to help you plan the next months leading up to your departure date. It will help you be intentional about taking action and help you know how to better schedule the days, weeks and months ahead.

**Am I Ready Worksheet:** This worksheet is designed to help you think about how prepared you are to be an independent language learner and to know what and how much training you should get before you embark on your move overseas.

**Language Projects Worksheet:** Making a comprehensive list of ideas now will help you more quickly begin to dive into language study once you have embarked on the expat life of living in another country.

**Everyday Language Learner Resources:** I've included a list of all of the resources I have created for language learners. Please stop by and take a look.

# Timeline Planning Worksheet

Today's Date:

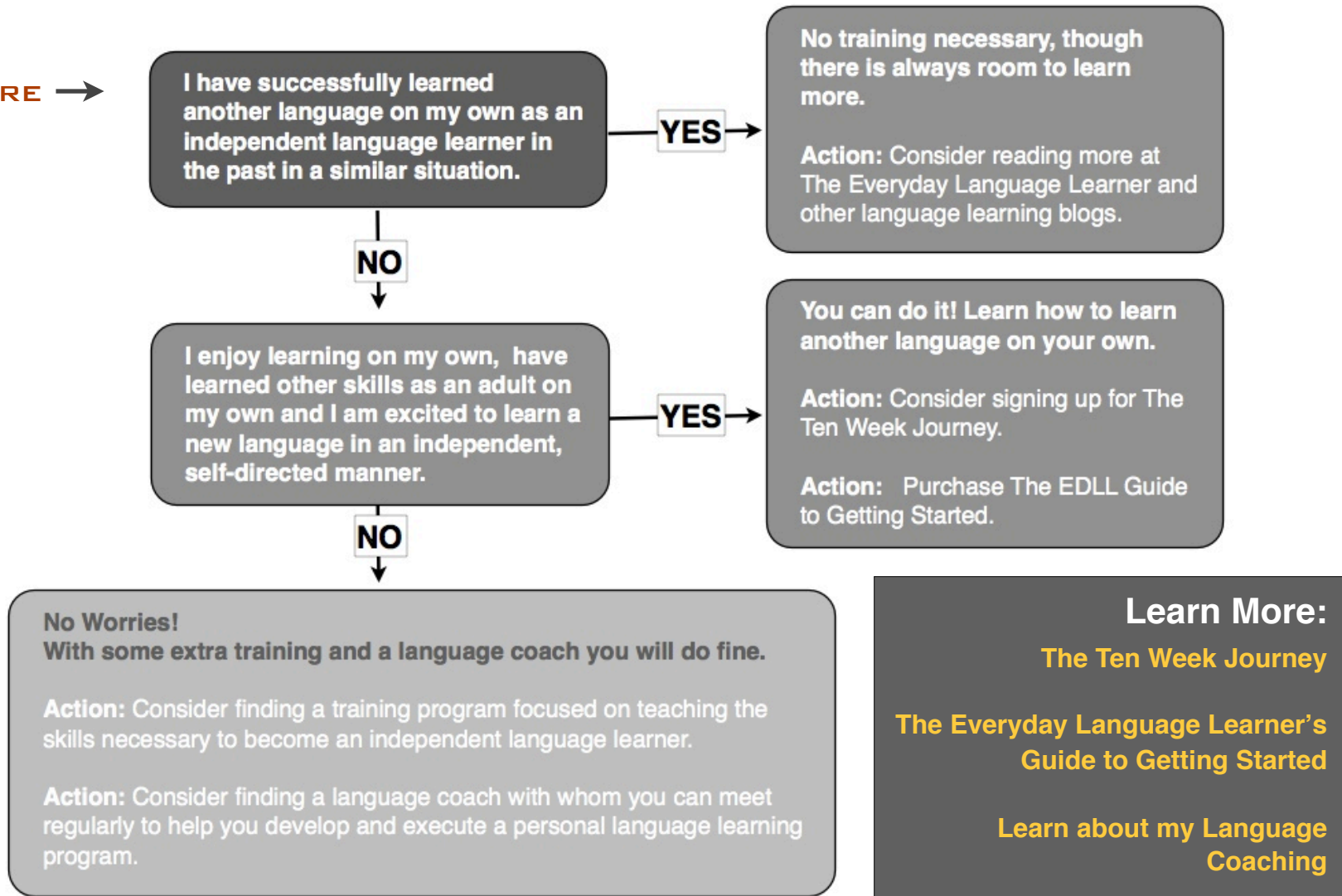
Departure Date:

Research and Development Phase	Building Phase	Launch Phase
What will I do?	What will I do?	What will I do?
Date Range:	Date Range:	Date Range:

Use the worksheet above to make a rough plan for the coming months. Start by writing down today's date and your departure date. If you do not yet know your departure date, write as close an approximation as you can. Next you will want to fill in the date ranges for each section. The launch phase is the easiest. It's date range will be the one month prior to your departure. You will then want to divide the other two phases into roughly 1/3 time for the Research and Development phase and 2/3 time for the Building phase. Now fill in the actions you would like to try and accomplish for each phase.

\*The aim of this worksheet is to help you visualize the months ahead and to begin to plan for them.

START HERE →



## Am I Ready?

A worksheet to help you determine your language learning readiness and need for more training.

# Language Learning Projects

Make a list of topics through which you would like to learn the language once you are in country. You can use these as the content through which you learn the words, phrases and grammar necessary for speaking well. You can learn more about learning through projects in The Everyday Language Learner's Guide to Getting Started.

**Five Cultural Topics I would like to explore:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Five Historical Topics I would like to explore:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Five daily life topics I would like to explore:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

**Four of my hobbies and interests are:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Other ideas I would like to explore:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



# Thank you for reading and thank you for going!

I hope you have found this guide an empowering tool to get you ready for the language learning journey before you. I would love to continue to be a part of that journey and so want to encourage you to take a look at the other resources I have created for language learners. (Links in Orange) And if you have any questions, please feel free to send me an email at: [aarongmyers@gmail.com](mailto:aarongmyers@gmail.com)

**The Everyday Language Learner Blog**: I write one post a week with the same goal in mind - to empower and encourage everyday language learners. I have also worked to pack the site with useful information, tips and ideas, great resources and activities and everything you will need as a language learner. When you subscribe to the blog you will get each week's newsletter in your email, a monthly newsletter and the "8 Ways to Maximize Your Language Learning" article.

**(subscribe now)**

I would also encourage you to share this site with your new friends in your future host country. My writing at the blog and in my guides is for a broad audience and so I keep the focus on language. It can be a great resource for English language learners.

## Language Guides

**The Everyday Language Learner's Guide to Getting Started**: This is the most robust guide I have written and in it I give you all the information you will need to be a self-directed, independent language learner. The proceeds of the sales of my guides and my language coaching are what pay the bills and allow me to continue to do what I do.

**The Everyday Language Learner's Guide to Self-Assessment**: With this guide I lay out the blueprint for assessing both your level of fluency, but also give you a tool to assess the activities, methods and actual day to day things you have been doing to learn the language.

**Sustaining**: This free guide focuses on helping learners create, maintain and protect their motivation, commitment and a positive attitude toward the language learning journey. If you've hit a wall, this is the guide that will set you back on the right track. Read it before you hit the wall to discover how to avoid the crash.

**The Stages Series**: This is just the first of the Stages Series of guides. The next in the series, **Your First Month Overseas**, comes in the form of an extended blog post. Subsequent guides return to the ebook format of this guide and like this one, will cost less than a cup of coffee. Learn more about **Your First Year Overseas**, **Stuck: Moving Off the Plateau** and **Extended Home Stays: Maintain and Grow**.

## **Courses**

**The Ten Week Journey**: The Ten Week Journey is a course created to introduce you to the resources and know how to become an independent, self-directed language learner who can take control of the language learning journey. For now, this is a free course and at the time of this writing, over 800 learners from across the globe have taken the journey.

## Language Coaching

The thing I love more than anything else in the work I do is one on one language coaching. As a language coach I work personally with learners to help them acquire the language and culture successfully so that they can be more effective in the work to which God has called them. With monthly skype call session I work within the framework of the **six pillars of successful language learning**:

Encouragement - Knowledge - Resources - Planning - Accountability - Assessment.

### As a coaching client you will receive:

- A minimum of one coaching session per month
- Unlimited email access for questions you have
- A monthly accountability and encouragement email
- Free access to all EDLL guides
- Language Assessments every six months

Six Month Coaching Commitment - \$300

One Year Coaching Commitment - \$500

One Time Consultations - \$40 (subject to availability)



If you are interested in learning more about having me be your language coach, please feel free to send me an email: [aarongmyers@gmail.com](mailto:aarongmyers@gmail.com)