



Mentor-Apprentice Program “Survival Phrases”¹

The key to immersion language learning is to stay in the language you want to learn and **not use English**. Here are some phrases that an apprentice should learn to say right away in order to “survive” without using English. You can write the translations on this page and use this as your cheat sheet until you have all of these phrases memorized.

NOTE: It is not always possible to translate things in exactly the same way. That’s OK! Just provide a translation that comes closest to the idea in your language.

Asking Questions

There are lots of things that an apprentice does not know how to say. If you learn these questions, you will be able to ask how to say things in your language without using English. Please translate the **question**, not the answer to the question.

1. How do you say ____ (in our language)? _____
Ask this question as you point at something you don’t know the word for. This will help you learn words for things (nouns).
2. What is this? _____
Ask this question as you point at someone doing an action. This will help you learn words for actions (verbs) when you can see someone doing something, like in a picture.
3. What is she or he doing? _____
Ask this question as you mime or act out an action yourself. This will help you learn words for actions (verbs).
4. What am I doing? _____
Ask this question when your mentor is doing something. This will help you learn words for actions (verbs).
5. What’s happening? _____
Ask this when you are at an event or looking at a picture in a book. This will help you learn words for things (nouns) and actions (verbs).

¹ These phrases were developed for the Master-Apprentice Program by Leanne Hinton and the Advocates for Indigenous California Language Survival. (See: Hinton, L., Vera, M., & Steele, N. (2002). *How to keep your language alive: A commonsense approach to one-on-one language learning*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday.) They have been adapted by First People’s Cultural Council www.fpcc.ca (2018). They are licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/). Please click on the link to read the terms of use.



7. Can you describe this (meaning shape, size, texture and so on)? OR What is this like?

This is a difficult question to translate but asking a question something like this will help you learn describing words.

Other Helpful Phrases

Sometimes fluent speakers slip into English so it's helpful to gently remind them to speak your language. And learners often need to have words pronounced slowly with lots of repetition. These phrases will help in those situations.

8. Please speak in our language _____

9. Say it again _____

10. Say it slowly _____

11. I forget _____

12. I'm learning _____

Your Favourite Phrases

Add your own useful phrases to this list.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____