

# Collaborative personal learning

## Introducción

This activity uses a spreadsheet application to encourage students to think independently about the things they can do to improve their English outside of the classroom. It takes a collaborative approach to encouraging students to think of and share new ways of improving their English as well as sharing their experiences, achievements, and failures.



In his webinar Milton Bradbury suggest this activity for students who are working remotely, but it can also be used by students working in physical classrooms.

## Tech Tip

Spreadsheets like many other types of documents can now be accessed online or 'In the Cloud'. Cloud-based spreadsheet applications have the benefit of being sharable, this means that many students can access and contribute to the same document from different computers. This enables students to see each other's work and learn from and with their fellow students. Spreadsheets, though normally used for statistical data, are also very useful for creating tables containing text-based information. There are several different cloud-based spreadsheet applications available for free.

Here are some examples:

Google Sheets: <https://www.google.co.uk/sheets/about/>

CryptPad Sheets: <https://cryptpad.fr/sheet/>

Spreadsheet.com: <https://www.spreadsheet.com/>

Microsoft Excel: <https://office.live.com/start/excel.aspx>

Zoho Sheet: <https://www.zoho.com/sheet/>

**Webinar time reference:** 27:17 – 31:19

**Level:** Intermedio B1+

**Time:** De 30 a 45 minutos

**Aim:** Ayudar a los estudiantes a formarse y a apoyarse entre sí como alumnos independientes.

### **Preparation:**

In this stage of the session, the teachers think about how they are dealing with the problem at present.

- Create a shared spreadsheet using one of the online applications.
- Add your students' names in the first lefthand column.
- Think of two to three activities that students can do independently to improve their English.
- Add these to the top horizontal row.
- Create a shareable link so that all students can access and edit the spreadsheet.

### **Procedure:**

- Write the question “How can I improve my English?” on the board.
- Ask the students to think about this question.
- Put the students into small groups.
- Set them a time limit and ask them to think of as many ways as possible to improve their English outside of the classroom.
- Tell the students these don't have to be good ideas, but just get them to think of as many as possible. Note: This is to stop them judging the ideas during brainstorming, as this will stop the flow of ideas.
- Monitor the students from a distance but don't interfere.
- When they are starting to run out of ideas, stop the activity and find out how many ideas each group had.

- Congratulate the group with the most ideas.
- Regroup the students and ask them to share their ideas with their new group and decide whether any ideas can be combined, e.g., ‘keep a digital vocabulary book’ and ‘make audio recordings of new words’ could be combined to make the vocabulary book multimedia.
- Once they have thought about which ideas can be combined, ask the students to decide which of the ideas they think are likely to be easiest and have the greatest impact on their learning.
- Ask the students to order the ideas.
- Get feedback from the students and start to add their ideas to the top row of the spreadsheet. Add one idea to each cell in the top row.
- When you have added all the ideas, show the students the spreadsheet, share a link to it and ask them to find the row with their name.
- Tell the students you want them to start trying some of the ideas in their own time. Tell them that when they try the ideas, they should write in their row about:
  - What they did
  - How well the idea worked
  - Any problems they had
  - What they think they learned from it
- Once the students understand tell them that you will review the spreadsheet regularly in class.
- Warn them that they should only write in their own row and that their entries can be tracked so you will know if they write in the row of another student.

### Follow up

- Show the spreadsheet regularly in class and ask students to talk about the things they did to improve their English and how well they worked.

## Additional resources

### Learner autonomy: English language teachers' beliefs and practices

- Learner autonomy has been the subject of many studies but there have been fewer studies of what learner autonomy means to teachers. This study, conducted in Oman, reports on teacher beliefs and reported practices regarding learner autonomy.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/learner-autonomy-english-language-teachers-beliefs-and-practices>

### Promoting learner autonomy through communication strategy training

- In this webinar recording Kathleen M. Bailey discusses the topic of learner autonomy in the context of conversations in the target language. Speaking a new language entails taking risks – and that's where communications strategies come into play.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/promoting-learner-autonomy-through-communication-strategy-training>

### Vocabulary and autonomy

- This article looks at ways to improve your students' abilities to both explore, store and use vocabulary. The general aim is to involve the students in a more autonomous fashion in their learning, rather than simply having them presented with word lists selected by the teacher or syllabus.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/vocabulary-and-autonomy>

### Learner autonomy

- Watch a recording of this webinar with Lizzie Pinard, looking at learner autonomy and practical methods that we can use to encourage our learners to move towards being genuinely autonomous outside the classroom.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/learner-autonomy>

### Forum on autonomous listening

- In these three talks, the speakers discuss how we can help learners to bridge the gap between what is said and what they hear, explore how we can increase learners listening comprehension through metacognitive strategies and look at the implementation of academic listening circles for developing autonomous listening in EAP learners.

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/forum-autonomous-listening>