

3-Stage Fluency Tracker™



DR LANGUAGES
BY DR ESTHER GUTIERREZ EUGENIO

Congratulations for downloading my 3-Stage Fluency Tracker™

This deceptively simple tracker is one of the most powerful learning tools I have ever seen.

I designed it years ago during a coaching call with a client who was really struggling to activate passive vocabulary, and the results he started getting after just a few days of using it were so mind-blowing that I decided to share it with all my other clients.

Those who started using it went on to see **similarly impressive results, rapidly increasing their active vocabulary and their fluency.**

Since then, I have refined the tool to also include grammar and pronunciation, and have developed **a whole set of instructions to help you exploit its full potential.**

If you follow the instructions in this guide, **you'll make your language learning more focused, more consistent, and less overwhelming** - so you start learning the right things, in the right order, and in a way that you can actually remember and use them.

Inside, you'll find:

- **What to include in the tracker:** which words, rules, or sounds are worth learning now
- **When to use it:** how to fit the tracker into your weekly routine
- **How it works:** what to do at each stage, step by step

Learning a language doesn't happen all at once, it happens through small, intentional steps. **This tracker will help you focus on what really matters, stay consistent, and finally feel like you're moving forward for real.**

To your language learning success,

Esther



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1. "WHAT should I add to the tracker?"

You can include absolutely everything you want to learn, BUT I don't recommend this.

Why? **Because we only have one brain and 24 hours in a day, so we need to be strategic with our language learning.**

If we are reading an article or watching a video in our target language, new words/expressions will fall into one of these categories:

1. This is a **basic and really useful** word that we definitely want to learn and be able to use
2. This is a **probably useful** word that it would be good to learn
3. This is an **interesting word/construction**, it's good to understand it but it's not that relevant right now for us and/or our current level

(I actually advice students to highlight these words in 3 different colours in the text/list after looking them up, with one colour for each group. This is especially helpful if you are a visual learner.)

We would definitely **add words in group 1 to our tracker.**

These is low-hanging fruit - words that are commonly used and can easily help us express our ideas better in a variety of situations.

We DO want to learn these words very well and move them to the third column as soon as possible.

We want to understand all their meanings, contexts in which they can be used, correct pronunciation, etc. These words are our priority, they go straight into our tracker and we will be focusing our energy on them.

So what are we going to do with words in groups 2 and 3?

In most cases, we are still going to **look up these words/expressions - but we will not add them to the tracker just yet.** We will make the deliberate decision not to focus energy on actively learning them for the time being.

Words, expressions and structures in groups 2 and 3 have a lower immediate ROI (return on investment - of our time and our energy). They are less common and/or only used in very specific situations that are not extremely relevant to us. It doesn't mean that they are not important, or that we will never learn these words. **It just means that RIGHT NOW these words are NOT a priority.**

Once we feel confident about the words in group 1 and we feel that we can use them naturally even when speaking, **we will typically just move to another text/video to identify new key, highly-relevant words and structures to focus on them again.**

BUT HERE IS THE TRICK:

Sometimes life happens and we can't find the time to work on a new text/video. **This is where words and structures in groups 2 and 3 become important** - and why you want to identify them and highlight them in different colours so they are easy to identify when you need them.

When you have one of those busy weeks, you are not just going to skip learning. Instead, **you will go back to those texts/videos you have already worked on, and you will quickly identify the best words in group 2** - so we can now concentrate on moving these words from column 1 to column 3 in the tracker.

Again, these words wouldn't normally be our top priority, but they are still useful words and consistency is everything in language learning - so **we are better off learning some slightly less relevant words than not learning any new words at all!**

→ **IN A NUTSHELL:**

Treat your 3-Stage Fluency Tracker as your North Star - this is where we capture all the key things that we need to really learn in the short term to keep moving toward fluency.

Our brain has a limited capacity so we NEED to be strategic if we want real progress. Otherwise, we drown in group 2 and 3 words that will take all our time and brain power but not really help move the fluency needle! 😊

2. "WHEN exactly should I use it?"

See, one of the biggest advantages of using this tracker is that it allows you to do just that: track your progress!

I see many students trying to learn a language who **lack a consistent tracking system to evaluate how much progress they are making, and what they need to concentrate on the most each day/week.**

When students ask for my help to progress faster in a language, one of the first things we do is **scheduling quick checkpoints in their calendar**, preferably every week. These checkpoints are an opportunity to discuss how they feel about the learning process and what they are struggling with - but also **a great opportunity to update their 3-Stage Fluency Tracker and visualise in a very concrete way the progress they've made since their last checkpoint.**

There are five main reasons why using your tracker during checkpoints can be really helpful:

1/ You have a clear, actionable plan.

Nothing will slow down your learning more than trying to learn a random new thing every day.

The tracker captures exactly the words and rules that you need to practice each week, and the column they are in suggests the type of activities you need to do for each item* - so you always know what to do to see the fastest progress.

(*[This video details activities for vocabulary at each stage](#), I'll be making videos for grammar and pronunciation very soon so keep an eye on my channel!).

2/ You can SEE your progress.

Every week, you literally SEE how items move from one column to the next, which is much more tangible than just saying "I feel like I have progressed a bit and maybe learnt a couple of words?".

3/ It fuels your motivation.

The pleasure of moving words from one column to the next and realising how much you can achieve in just 1 week when you focus on just mastering a limited number of items.

4/ You can identify issues.

Sometimes our brain refuses to learn certain things, like the meaning of a word or a certain language rule.

Items stuck in a certain column throughout several checkpoints are easy to spot - so we can focus on putting in extra practice on those specific items.

5/ It keeps you accountable.

It's easier to stick to a plan that you can see, because it's always more painful to abandon something tangible than something that only exists vaguely in your mind.

→ IN A NUTSHELL:

Schedule regular checkpoints in your calendar (preferably every week) where you update your tracker, evaluate your progress, and identify the items you will focus on over the following week.

This will increase your motivation and accountability, and will provide a very actionable, easy-to-track plan to measure your progress towards fluency.

3. "HOW exactly should I use it?"

In the previous sections, we have already covered exactly what you should include in your tracker (and what you should NOT include!), and how to use it to check your progress during your weekly or bi-weekly learning checkpoints.

But you are probably wondering - how am I supposed to track my progress? **How do I go from adding a completely new word/expression/grammar rule in the first column to automating it inside my brain so I can move it all the way to the third column?**

You are going to follow three simple steps:

1/ Add new RELEVANT words/expressions/rules to column 1

Every time you are reading or watching new materials, pay attention to any new words or rules. Follow the steps in section 1 above to determine which items you will want to include in your tracker.

Remember: **we only care about group 1 items** (highly-relevant, commonly-used words/rules that would be very useful to master as soon as possible).

Once they are in column 1, you are committing to learning them - so your goal now is to move them to column 3 as fast as possible.

Ideally, **you should always have 15-30 items in your column 1**. Some items will require more time and effort to master so keep a balance between low-effort items (e.g., individual words) and high-effort ones (e.g., verb tenses). If you are focusing on a couple of really high-effort items, you will want to keep a smaller number of low-effort items in the tracker.

There is only so much a normal brain can assimilate at any given point in time - so **be strategic and focus on your priorities**.

Once in column 1, look up these items in a dictionary or grammar book. Make sure you fully understand their meaning, how they are pronounced and how they are used in different contexts. Your goal in this column is to **capture the items so you can focus on them and track them**.

2/ Start moving items in column 1 to column 2

This is where you start putting in the reps. **You need repeated exposure to the new items - as much as possible, as frequently as possible.**

If the items are words, you will want to see those words a lot. You can review your list every day, put the words on a flashcard app and start playing with it several times per day, or just ask ChatGPT to write short texts at your level that contain those words.

Remember to **always listen to the pronunciation of the words while reviewing them!**

If the items are grammar rules, you will want to get **a lot of exposure to that rule, as well as controlled practice.** You can use some targeted materials (e.g., textbooks, online worksheets) or simply ask ChatGPT to create texts and short tasks you can do to get more exposure to that specific rule.

Attention: at this stage we need our brain to see this rule as many times as possible. You can do grammar drills and start creating your own sentences using this rule (more effective than drills). The goal is to **give our brain enough exposure to the rule before pushing ourselves too aggressively to use it.**

If the items are sounds or words that you mispronounce, you will want to hear them many times until you can fully differentiate them and recognise them. You should also **start trying to imitate them and articulate them**, as this will reinforce the learning pathways in your brain.

3/ We move items from column 2 to column 3

This is the most important yet the most difficult step.

Many students struggle because they are trying to move too many items to column 3 at the same time - this is why the tracker is extremely helpful to **visualize all the items you have at each stage**, and it pushes you to **stay realistic and focus on the items that are going to have the biggest impact on your fluency.**

What can we do to move items from column 2 to 3?

For **words**, you will now want to **start using these words actively**, i.e., when you write and when you speak in the language. Focus on 5-7 words at a time, and try to first write texts that contain these words, especially if you are feeling insecure when you speak in the language. Then you can start including these words in your speech.

If you have no opportunities to practice the language with others, you can just do some speaking tasks on your own (I will share more about how to do this in an upcoming video too). It's really important that **once you fully understand and recognise words, you start using them yourself**. This is the only way to make words active and readily available for your brain to use them when you speak in the future.

For **grammar rules**, this is when we abandon the controlled practice (drills, tasks, etc.) and force ourselves to start using the rule in our own writing and speaking.

At the beginning this is going to be challenging and we will make mistakes, that we will notice ourselves for the most part. This is normal because we are now training our brain to go from a very passive, controlled use of the rule to **trying to incorporate it into our normal language production** - and this is challenging.

Imagine the rule has now been saved in one part of your brain (where you keep declarative knowledge, like knowing the rules for riding a bike without falling down), and now **we are trying to create a mirror image of that rule in the procedural part of the brain that will allow us to use the rule unconsciously** (in our bike example, being able to ride a bike without stopping to recall each rule at every step).

If you don't feel confident speaking in the language, I always recommend you **start by writing and focus on practicing one rule or part of a rule at a time, especially if it's a complex rule such as a verb conjugation**.

Your brain is already doing a huge effort trying to use the new language, so **don't try to get everything perfect at the same time**. When you practice, it's ok to focus on one thing at a time, such as using the right words or using the right grammar rule. Once each of these elements has solidified in your brain individually, you can start bringing them all together.

For **sounds and pronunciation**, it's really important that you move from just repeating sounds to being able to use them naturally when you speak.

It's very common that, at the beginning, you will be able to use certain sounds perfectly well when doing targeted repetition exercises, but as soon as you start speaking you go back to mispronouncing those sounds or words. It's very important that you pay attention when you speak, and **even take a second before saying that difficult word or sound to make sure you are pronouncing it correctly.**

You can also follow the approach I described in the previous section about grammar - **do short free speaking practice tasks where you ONLY focus on getting these sounds right.** You don't worry about vocabulary or grammar, just this/these sound(s). Once you feel more comfortable with the sounds, you can go back and try to say the same thing again but while focusing a bit more on the grammar or the vocabulary.

Remember **pronunciation involves muscle memory.** The bad news is muscle memory requires repetitions, like A LOT of them. The good news is that **once you put in those repetitions, the brain records the right muscles it needs to activate and does it automatically** - exactly as you are able to read this message right now without thinking about the different optical muscles focusing your eyes on the screen, or your hand muscles casually but firmly holding your phone/mouse.

→ **REMEMBER:**

You only have one brain, and it can only pay attention to so many things at the same time.

Trying to pay attention to EVERYTHING will overwhelm you and frustrate you, and you will eventually hate learning languages.

Instead, **use the tracker to plan, scaffold and monitor what you are going to focus on next** - and once you've fully learnt that, you can move on to the next thing in your list.

Without overwhelm. Without confusion. Just a simple plan of items you need to learn, one step at a time.

That's the real magic of the 3-Stage Fluency Tracker and why it is so powerful when used correctly - and now you have all the tools to start using it straight away.

So stop reading and go implement what you have just learnt. 😊



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Check the video for full instructions:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xRj_onVgIWQ



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Month/Week: _____

	COLUMN 1 I can recognise it / understand it but I can't use it yet	COLUMN 2 I can use it but it requires a lot of concentration and I often make mistakes	COLUMN 3 I have started using it correctly without even thinking about it
Grammar Structures			
Vocabulary			
Pronunciation			

Next steps

There are A LOT of techniques you can use to start turning words and rules into active language you can actually use every day - and I cover this process in great detail inside my **30-Day Language Reset Challenge**: <https://www.drlanguages.com/language-reset-challenge>

This challenge is ideal if you want to understand what's slowing down your progress, how to activate all the passive knowledge you already have in the language, and how to design a learning routine that FINALLY pushes you to fluency - including 90-day support from me as you implement everything you've learnt.

If you prefer my personalised help

If you would like my help to get the fastest results, then I invite you to apply for my small-group coaching programme, the **Language Results Accelerator**: https://www.drlanguages.com/results_accelerator .

This is where we work closely together to break through stubborn barriers, build a clear roadmap, and create your personalised language learning method tailored to how your brain learns best - so you can finally reach the fluency you've been striving for.

Dr Esther Gutiérrez Eugenio is a leading expert in language learning and international communication.

She helps busy professionals and ambitious language learners achieve results fast using **neuroscience-based methods, innovative diagnostic testing, and practical coaching**.

Esther has a PhD in Language Education. She has taught at schools and universities across Europe, led teams at international organizations (UN, EU, P&G), and coached senior leaders across industries.

Her work focuses on **turning research into action so learners reach fluency efficiently**. She specializes in helping language learners who struggle because they have tried everything without success - so with her help they can finally reach their most ambitious language goals.

