

Shw mae, a chroeso! Welcome to Say Something in Welsh.

SSiW is a different way of learning, so you may take a short while to get used to it. Be patient – it's worth it. Here are a few tips so that you can really get the benefit of SSiW right from the start.

- For beginners, where to start is easy. Start at lesson 1, and work through. For experienced learners, it's just as simple: Start at lesson 1, and work through! Here's why:
  - SSiW is different from any other course you've ever done. If you can get used to the course while covering material that you already use in conversation, then you will hit the new material flying. It will make things a whole lot easier.
  - The Welsh we teach may differ slightly from what you've learnt previously. To start with you may find this off-putting. Don't worry – you will soon get used to it, and it will increase the amount of other people's Welsh that you are able to understand.
  - Finally, however much Welsh you know, unless you use it a lot, there's a good chance that it's just not quite on the tip of your tongue. With SSiW you use what you learn naturally from the start. Even advanced learners may struggle to keep up in lesson one. Don't panic – you haven't forgotten your Welsh, you are just experiencing “real life conversation panic” in a much safer environment. This is a good thing, honest!
- Try and do a little bit every day. We recommend 20 minutes, but you can do as much or as little as you want, as long as it is done often. You may find it helps to download the mp3 lessons onto an mp3 player (you can get them for as little as £15 in big supermarkets), so that you can listen as you do something else, like gardening, running or ironing.
- During lessons, we will tell you something in English, pause, and then you will hear it said twice in Welsh. You *must* try to say the Welsh in the pause. To start with, this will be impossible without using the pause button. The pause button is your friend. It is allowed and encouraged. But...
- Don't try to get everything perfect. In fact, don't try to get *anything* perfect. If you were somewhere close with what you said in Welsh, congratulate yourself and move on. The course is called Say Something in Welsh, not Say Something Perfect in Welsh – you will learn far more from saying things wrong than from staying quiet, or pausing for 5 minutes while you check your grammar books. Relax, laugh at your mistakes (especially if you have said something really odd!), and be pleased with anything you get right. Enjoy the process.
- Don't make written notes. You will not take your notes to a conversation session, or to the pub, so don't get used to relying on anything other than your innate ability to speak a

language (and yes, if you already speak one, for instance English, you have that ability). If you are really stuck with what sounds are in a word after a few goes through a lesson, there is a written guide to the SSiW course available on the forum. Use it as little as possible.

- Re-do lessons as often as you like. You will know when you have “finished” a lesson when you can get most of the Welsh mostly right most of the time. If you move on too fast, you will know, because you will find the next lesson really difficult. Have a break and redo the previous lesson.
- Don't be a perfectionist. If you know the words but keep getting the mutations wrong, don't worry – they will come. Move on! (BTW If you don't know what a mutation is, don't worry. Most from-birth Welsh speakers don't either.)
- Ah, yes, mutations. They don't matter, we don't *teach* them until late in the intermediate course. You'll hear them, and you will naturally use them yourself from constantly hearing them. If you mutate wrongly, no-one will mis-understand you, become insulted or confused, so go with the flow, and don't worry about them. If you *do* worry, they'll be frustrating little b\*\*\*ers, so let them look after themselves!
- If you have a question, or something is bothering you, ask on the forum. We have over 11,500 learners, so someone will have experienced the same problem, or found an answer to the same question. The forum is a gold-mine of information, some of it in obvious places like “Asking questions” , some hidden away in “Welsh encounters of a nervous kind” or “General Chat”. Introduce yourself and join in. Remember, only lessons will teach you to speak Welsh – the forum will help and entertain, but don't waste valuable learning time!
- Practice sessions: Do not try doing the practice session until you have completed lessons 1-6. There are two types of practice session.
  - Speaking Sessions: The speaking practice follows the same format as the lessons – you will hear an English sentence, and should say the Welsh equivalent. They are more difficult than the lessons, because they are totally random, so you have no clues as to which vocabulary will be required. Don't worry – you will get used to them quickly.
  - Listening Sessions. All the sentences in the listening sessions are ones that you could make if given the English prompt. They only use material that you have learnt. Don't think for one second that this means you should be able to understand them. When you first listen to a listening practice, if you understand *anything* past the (English) introduction, you are ahead of the curve – well done!
    - **Do not** try to translate anything.
    - **Do not** use the pause button.

- **Do not** spend more than 5 minutes listening to a 5 minute practice session.
- Over a period of time (yes, you will have to be patient), you will start to understand individual words, then phrases, and then simple sentences. The harder you try, the longer this will take, so relax, listen to the amusing gobbledegook, then delete the file. Make sure that you are seriously chuffed the first time you understand something, and don't worry about the stuff you don't understand. It will come.

**Summary:** If you are frightened by all the above suggestions, or are too lazy to read them, then here is the briefest summary: Enjoy yourself, congratulate yourself, don't try to be perfect, accept that sometimes you'll get stuck, and remember, once you can make your own sentences in Welsh, then you are a Welsh speaker. From then on in, you just need to increase the range of things you can say!

All the best with your new language,

Iestyn (Voice of the Southern Course)

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