

Your Independent Language Learning Portfolio/Dossier

Hints, suggestions, content, organisation, recommended activities, where to get help

Who is it for?

The portfolio/dossier is for you, not for your tutor. It's helpful to get feedback on it from your tutor, who can give you encouragement and suggest things you may want to try, but the portfolio is yours. Don't think in terms of what is expected or allowed. Think in terms of what is important to you.

What should go in it?

1. Your learning journal

It's like a personal diary over the year, so keep it up to date, add to it regularly and put a date on each entry. It doesn't have to be typed either. You could include:

- a description of yourself as a linguist: strengths, weaknesses, anxieties; plus how you want to be
- a plan of what you need to do to get there

"It's useful in that it makes you think about what you could be doing; it gives you extra ideas and helps you to think about that."

- a record of your learning activities, even things you can't 'prove' and informal activities like chats
- diary entries for conversations you've had, e-mail exchanges, Skype discussions, anything you can't or don't want to store in the portfolio - but remember to note what you've learned from these
- diary entries for grammar exercises completed on PCs from which you can't print - have you finally got to grips with particular grammatical rules, can you really use them? Is your written work for your language tutor improving?
- notes of feedback from tutors and marks from tests and homework – use them to decide what you need to work on more
- reflections - every month or so, think about how you can improve your language skills even more. How can you become more confident and make fewer mistakes? What could you do differently? From time to time, also ask yourself how, when and where you learn best. Look back at the journal and read what you said about yourself before. How have things changed and why?

"Looking back through my journal has helped me to know how to do it better next time and to work out what's most useful to me."

- targets for holidays, for next semester, for next year

- reward yourself by recognising how well you're doing in your diary entries
- For more information and ideas see the Support and advice link on the ULC website at

<http://www.languagecentre.manchester.ac.uk/resources/support-and-advice/> From this webpage you will find links to printable forms and questionnaires that will help you record, plan and reflect on your learning.

2. Examples of your work

So you can see how much/how well you're doing; useful notes to look at later and learn from. Not all learning can be 'proved' – that's why your journal is so important. It's up to you, but you could include:

- samples of homework and tests of which you're proud, where you achieved good marks
- things which are useful for revision, eg: vocab lists and grammar notes
- articles you've read with your notes or a summary, which you can look at again
- summaries/reviews of films you've seen/articles you've read
- print-outs from exercises on the web
- notes on films and programmes you've listened to or watched
- translations of texts you've chosen yourself
- recordings of conversations

What activities can I do?

Your tutors and course handbooks will provide suggestions, but it's really up to you. Do things you find fun, but remember that spending time on things you can do already won't help you improve. So don't just work on your strengths! Look at the Support and advice section of the ULC website

<http://www.languagecentre.manchester.ac.uk/resources/support-and-advice/> and check out the links to the ULC's resources. Here are some examples to get you going, but you're bound to come up with more.

Reading

- search online for things you're interested in; read novels, magazines, newspapers
- write vocab notes/lists, try the grids from the ULC website

Listening

- watch films and write a review or notes (just watching passively won't help your language - you need to do something productive as well)

"It helps my language and it's fun cos I like watching films anyway."

- watch TVoverIP (live streamed TV) in the ULC - check the channel schedules from the links on the website, make notes or use the grids on the website
- listen to online radio
- listen to CDs - check what's available in the ULC library; following the words of a song isn't a bad idea!

Speaking

- find a Face-to-Face partner or other native speaker, or practise with friends in your group or in your halls - even if they aren't native speakers

"Whenever I go out somewhere socially I always meet French people. I don't know if it's because they stand out because I'm doing French, or there are a lot of French people in Manchester. So it's quite good, because you stand at the bar and you have a few conversations in French, and you think: 'Yeah, that's really nice'."

- make notes of the new vocab you've learnt from conversations or just record an entry in your learning journal with your opinion on how you're improving

Writing

- translations, summaries, resumés, letters, emails - use the dictionaries, thesauruses and spell-checkers provided on the ULC PCs

Grammar

- exercises on in books, on websites, etc
- make notes of vocab, rules and explanations to look back at

Vocab

- whatever you're doing, make vocab notes. Use index cards, a vocab book, anything that works for you, but learn vocab every day - it's the only way

General IT work

- Check out the software available; there's some for translating, there are some good CD-ROMs with exercises, some with video, and some for business language
- Check out language learning sites online. A really good starting point is the ULC website
<http://www.languagecentre.manchester.ac.uk/resources/online-resources/>

Where can you get help and advice about your language learning?

- Your tutor
- University Language Centre reception
- The Support and advice section of the ULC website:
<http://www.languagecentre.manchester.ac.uk/resources/support-and-advice/>
- Fernandez-Toro, M. & Jones, F R. (2001). *DIY Techniques for Language Learners*. CiLT, London. Two copies are available in the Language Centre in Samuel Alexander Building, or you may want to buy your own
- Donald, S. G. & Kneale, P.E. (2001). *Study Skills for Language Students: A Practical Guide*. Arnold