



# LOW HANGING FRUIT

## New Year's Resolution: Learn a New Language

By Allison Floyd

Using the holiday break to consider resolutions for the new year? Good news! Languages have zero calories, so learning one as a New Year's resolution may further several goals simultaneously. Then again, language learning can be habit-forming, so you do have to watch out for that. Nevertheless, the benefits are many!

### Such as?

Well, the usual suspects, of course: increased currency in the job market and college landscape; improved prospects for travel to distant lands and exchange programs; maintaining mental dexterity; higher standardized test scores, and the joy of learning for its own sake! Perhaps, however, this being preparation for New Year's and all, you would prefer to absorb these benefits in the form of an itemized list—to which I say, take it away, Associate Professor Emerita Renate Latimer!:

<https://cla.auburn.edu/forlang/resources/twenty-five-reasons/>.

Oh, and I almost forgot! There's also Alzheimer's prevention (see what I did there?). Well, maybe—the jury's out on that one: <https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/can-learning-a-foreign-language-prevent-dementia/>. Speaking a second language, however, does appear to pose some cognitive benefits, and it indisputably strengthens your idiomatic arsenal!

Another reason to learn a language in 2020? As Idaho residents, you—and your students! And their families!—can do it for the low, low price of free (have a gander at the Digital Tools sidebar)!

Whatever you and your pliant brain get up to in 2020, here's wishing you a holiday season filled with joy, good health, and increased language ability!



### LINKS TO MORE LEARNING



#### Beyond Words: The Benefits of Being Bilingual by Neel Burton, M.D.

There are many! Check out this *Psychology Today* article: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hidden-and-seek/201807/beyond-words-the-benefits-being-bilingual>

#### Are we doing it wrong?

Perhaps we should move away from the rules of grammar and verb conjugation and just learn the language in a way similar to how we learned our first language.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesleadershipforum/2014/04/22/the-best-way-to-learn-a-foreign-language-is-the-opposite-of-the-usual-way/#151016e85e8e>

### PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS



#### The Stroop Task

There seems to be some evidence that those that are bilingual perform better on the Stroop Task. The Stroop Task requires people to quickly identify the color of a word that spells a different color, i.e. **Blue**. The correct response for this example would be red. Get it? Ready to Stroop? Give it a go at:

<https://www.psytoolkit.org/experiment-library/stroop.html>

### DIGITAL TOOLS



#### Pronunciator

Lili.org's go-to language learning database offers lessons in 131 languages (and growing!), including American and Mexican Sign Language, Basque, English as a foreign language, and so much more! Choose courses based on age level, degree of proficiency, or travel plans, or create your own customized course based on occupation and/or interests. Find Pronunciator, and other great resources, on <https://lili.org/>.



