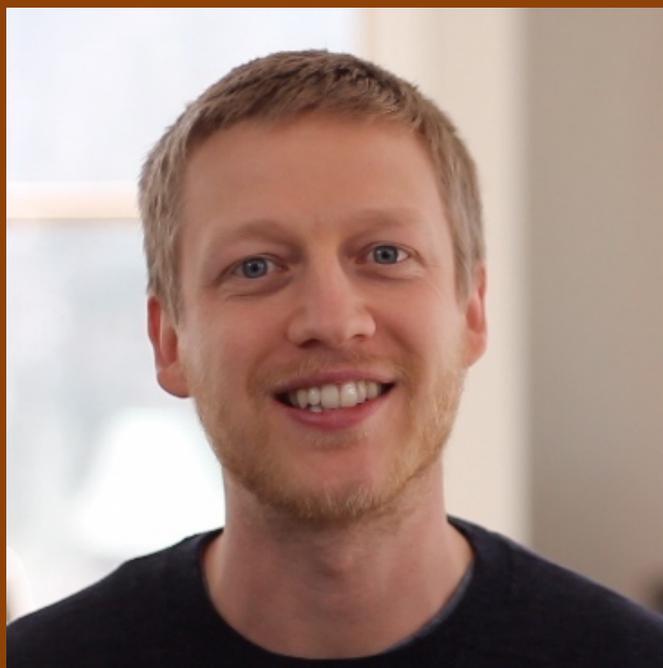


Feel Good English

# Jack Askew on Discovering Your Path TO FLUENCY



The transcript to episode #50

# Jack Askew on Discovering your Path to Fluency

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Kevin: Hello there. Kevin here, with another episode of the Feel Good English podcast, the podcast that focuses on helping you become more confident in English, life, and business.

Today, I have a very cool and fun interview with Jack Askew from [tofluency.com](http://tofluency.com). Jack helps people become fluent and confident English speakers as well with his program *To Fluency*.

In today's lesson, Jack's going to talk about a book that has really impacted not only his life, but also the way that he teaches, and is directly connected with the program he offers on his website. This book is called *The Strangest Secret* by Earl Nightingale, and we're going to get into some of the main lessons from this book that can help you become a more fluent and more successful person in life, in general.

Jack's also going to talk about why it is important to focus on the journey, and not the result. So, we'll talk a little bit

about Jack and what he does and how he got started, as well as the lessons from a book that has really impacted his life.

If you want transcripts to this and other episodes of the Feel Good English podcast, go over to [feelgoodenglish.com](http://feelgoodenglish.com) after the interview. And without further delay, let's get into the episode today with Jack Askew from [tofluency.com](http://tofluency.com).

Hey, everybody. This is Kevin from the Feel Good English podcast. Today, I'm here with an awesome guest, Jack Askew. How are you doing, Jack?

Jack: To everybody, welcome. Kevin, thank you for having me here tonight.

Kevin: And thank you for being here, of course. So, first of all, I'm always curious and I'm sure the listeners are curious. Where are you right now? Where are you talking to me from?

Jack: So, I am in Asheville, North Carolina. Now, when I say this, a lot of people think I say *Nashville*, because it's "I'm in Asheville." When you say this quickly, it sounds like "Nashville." This is in North Carolina, it's a great city, outdoor adventures, and has a great community. It's quite alternative, and I'm currently in my office, which I just moved into quite recently.

Kevin: Very cool. Congratulations. So, okay. I think I have made that mistake. So you're saying "I'm in Nashville" or "I'm in Asheville." So, connecting, there's a city, of course, Asheville, I'm sorry, Nashville, Tennessee, and then Asheville, North Carolina. Right?

Jack: That's right. Yeah, because of the linking words here. Yes, they connect.

Kevin: Yes, yes. Sure. Very cool. I have not been there, I do know that people are very friendly in that part of the country in the Southern States, we would call that "The South." Do you agree that people are pretty friendly in the South of the U.S.?

Jack: Definitely. Why we live here as well, is a little bit different because whenever you talk to someone or meet someone new, you always ask them "Where are you from?" because it's very rare to meet someone who is actually from Ashville, who lives here now because over the last time, twenty years, it just booms. The place has boomed, and some more people move in here. People come from all over the country, or like myself from different countries as well. But yes, everyone's super friendly, it's a great community, and everyone seems to know everyone else, too.

Kevin: Can you tell me how you got into English teaching?

Jack: Yeah, I kind of fell into it. It was something I didn't plan to do, but when I was living, when my wife was in America, and I had finished traveling, I needed something that I could do in both of these places because I want to visit her, and then I had to come home because of the visa. And this was going to happen for about a year. So I found a company, where you could update your profile, upload a profile, and it talked about how you can help English learners. So I said, "At the moment, I can have a conversation with you, and give you corrections on your speaking, and lots of people signed up some lessons with

me.” And I knew that after two or three lessons that, this is fun. You know, I enjoyed this. I enjoy connecting with learners. And then from there, I got certified, and then taught in Spain for those two years.

Kevin: I know you’ve been teaching for several years, you do a lot online with your To Fluency program, then you have a Youtube channel, and you help a lot of English learners out there, and without going too deep into all of the tips that you could give the listeners today, what are some of the most important advice you would give out there to people listening to this, who are trying to become more confident English speakers, trying to become more fluent with their English?

Jack: Yeah, I actually have a 5-step plan for English learners. It’s something that will go into a little bit later as well. We talk about the book. Very briefly, the 5-step plan is “Why? What? What? How? Go.” It just starts with knowing why you want to learn English because it’s important to know this for a couple of reasons: Firstly, to understand what you’re going to use your English for, so it helps you create a plan that comes later, but it also gives you that motivation to actually take action and actually do this. It gives you the excitement to create a plan and move forward with your English.

The next two stages is “What?” What do you need to do? What are you going to achieve in terms of your goal? So, thinking about *okay, I’m going to reach a specific level of English by a specific day*. Then, it’s about understanding exactly what you have to do to reach that goal. *Do I need to speak with professional native speakers? Do I need to use*

*specific methods? Do I need to learn grammar for this?*

Then, it's all about how are you going to do what you need to do. Looking at your schedule, and saying "Okay. 8am, this is what I can do on Tuesdays and Thursdays." So making it specific to you and making it sustainable. And then finally, just to do it. Stay consistent, and take action with it.

Kevin: You know, I think one of the biggest obstacles, and not even just to English, but to real life and success and all areas, and what causes a lot of frustration is being confused about the process and being unclear about what you want and how to get there. The answers are out there if you find them, and I think what your program tells us something very concrete that can give a lot of clarity to learners out there, and give them a clear path, clear instructions, and I think that is extremely valuable. It sounds like you have a great program.

Jack: Thank you. Yes, I also have this as the facts that can be downloaded as a free book. I'm sure, we can leave that link in the show notes, but it just goes into each of these steps, and I just say it's just so important to think about what you're going to spend your time doing because not every method of learning English is the same. Some are very effective, some are a waste of time. You know, I need some points to how busy spend our time wisely, and you can get really deep with this and make it specific to you and your goals, too.

For example, if you're looking to learn English to do writing, email writing, then you should get focused on what you need to do for that. To read lots of emails, to learn the vocabulary, you need to learn for it, as well, and then to get

the practice you need. So yes, it's making it specific to you and understanding that, not everything works, you know. And the traditional ways of learning aren't as relevant anymore. You know, we can get very sophisticated and smart with the way that we can learn languages.

Kevin: Right! Great. You're very cool. Transitioning from that, and I know you mentioned that this process is connected to a book that you're going to talk about, and that's what we do here on the Feel Good English podcast is take lessons from authors and writers of books and people that have lived lives and come up with great ideas, and gone through a lot of the obstacles that we face, and written about their experience and given lessons on this. So Jack, let's get into that now. Let's talk about the book that has impacted your life, that has helped you, and it sounds like not only helped you, but also given you insights on how to help English learners directly from these lessons. So, can we get into that a little bit?

Jack: Definitely, yeah. So, the book is called *The Strangest Secret* by Earl Nightingale. Now, the good thing about this book is you can find the audio of the book on Youtube. I listen to it quite often, and it's a short book. It's very powerful, and it's also Earl Nightingale who narrated this book, and you could just listen to his voice all day. He's a great speaker, lots of clarity, so very clear, and it's quite easy to follow as well. So for someone, who's an intermediate speaker of English, it's a great book to listen to. So I used this book to help me come up with this 5-step plan I created, and also just to help me in my life as well, to help me set goals and then take the action that's necessary to actually

achieve these goals.

And it just sounds such a clear way for me, and this is a great quote from the book that I always think about and I tell my learners, too:

“Success is a progressive realization of the worthy ideal.”

*Success is a progressive realization of the worthy ideal.*

What it's saying is this: *If you are progressing towards your goal, then that is the definition of success.* What I love about this is it focuses on the journey instead of the actual event. So, the event for an English learner might be to reach the C1 level of English, based on the European Framework, like an advanced level of English. You say you're successful if you can do that, whereas when you focus on the actual journey, what it's saying is this: “If you will work into one-side goal progressively, then you are successful if you are doing this.” And that really focuses on the message I want to get across, that English learning is all about that journey. It's all about that every day, or how you study English, enjoying this journey, and getting better each day. Now, obviously, there are certain ways that we can speed up this process, but if you are content and you're happy with your level of progress, and for me that is a successful learner.

Kevin: Yeah, and I think that's a great, great lesson often learners they get caught up, and trying to be as fluent as they want. Their whole mind is set on

“I want to be a great English speaker,” and it's very fresh with me because it takes a long time to get there. So this place, they say “*Here I am. I don't speak how I want to speak, and I want to be here,*” and there's a big gap there,

which takes months, even sometimes, years, but what you're saying is all you really have to do is wake up in the morning, know what you're going to do that day with English, do that and by the end of the day, you are a success. You have done what you needed to do. Is that correct?

Jack: Yeah, because we set those initial goals, we can put deadlines on them. You know, as you were saying like *we're here. We want to be here.* And if you always focus on that distance between the two, then you just feel down. You don't feel energized or motivated. But then, instead of focusing on the day-to-day work, and focusing on what you've done in the day to help you reach that goal, it just changes your whole mindset, and it's one way you can feel like you're getting some momentum, and then you're actually doing the things you need to do. You know, it's always good to test yourself, maybe on a monthly basis, just to see how far you've come because then you could change what you're doing on a daily basis. But just to focus on and to enjoy that journey, and to realize that you are progressing, and a lot of times, you might not even notice that you are.

Kevin: That's sure of a good point. Great. It's the little incremental improvement that sometimes aren't even noticed that make a big difference, right? And then, all of a sudden, you're like "Wow! I didn't even notice I was improving, and here I am." Jack, what encouraged you or how did you find this book? Was it recommended to you? Or did you just find it by searching it online? Or how did this book come into your life?

Jack: I think it was a recommended book on Amazon. That's where I bought it from, and it must have just been a recommended book and I thought. It was really cheap at that time, I think it was ninety-nine cents. It was short, so I thought I would just get it with the reviews, and then I read it, and it just helped me gain clarity on what I was trying to achieve at that time because I've used this book to help me come up with that 5-step plan, and I use that 5-step plan in my life as well, for my business, and also my fitness thing.

Kevin: Can you tell me more about that?

Jack: Sure. It's mainly about, for me, growing up through my mid-30's. It's changed a little bit. Before, it used to be all about you know, the appearance. Now, for me, it's about how I feel. You know, I want to have energy throughout the day. A good example of that is I'm at a stand-up desk right now. So, I use this standing desk, and I don't sit down at work because I know if I sit down, then I'm not as energetic. When I stand up, I have more energy. So, I set myself certain goals for flexibility, and the way I measure it as well is how I feel. Do I feel energetic? That helps me create a plan, based on food, exercise, and those types of things to help me reach those goals.

Kevin: So, yeah. Let's just do this real quick. So, let's take the 5 steps here, and let's put it into a fitness plan. This will really show some learners out there about how maybe they could apply this could be their English goal, could be another goal in their life. So, can we do this quickly? Can you maybe give an example of how this could be set-up with a fitness goal?

Jack: Definitely. So Step 1: *Think about why you want to be fit.* Okay? Step 1 and Step 2 are quite connected because it's basically saying *what you want to achieve and why you want to achieve this.* So, for me, my goal is to feel good and not to be overweight. You have sustained a certain range. The reason I want to do this is because I want to be energetic. And then, you can keep asking yourself "Why? Why do you want to be energetic?" So then, I can produce really good lessons, "Why do you want to produce good lessons?" "To reach more learners." "Why do you want to reach more learners?" Keep going deeper and deeper, so you have that really underlying fact of why this is important for you. Another reason for me is I have a young son, so I want to have energy, to be able to play with him after work.

And Step 3, is *knowing what you have to do to reach your goals*, which is a research part where you'll learn. *Okay, I need to exercise, I need to use this standard desk. I need to eat this certain food.* Step 4 is so important, and it's what most people miss out: "How? How am I personally going to do all these things?" So for me, what I did was I joined the gym with my wife, and a place where they have daycare for my son. Because otherwise, I wouldn't have time to go to the gym, so it's like a family day out. My son loves going, my wife loves going. I love going. So, it allows us to do this all together, and it gives me the time to do it.

Kevin: So, this fourth step seems like this is where you kind of need to be smart, and have to look for different tactics and maybe look at other people on how they're doing it and connect it with your own life, and this sounds like it has

some strategy involved, and the more time you could put into creating a plan and using different strategies, the more successful you are. I like this idea, and I teach this a lot to my students, as well as it's connecting different things, different activities, or different goals or intentions into one. You know, you want to spend time with your family, and you want to work out. So, you take the family to the gym. That's a great way to connect those things. You want to be fit, and you want to practice English more. So, you go to the gym and you listen to English programs. It's a great connection between goals and put them into one activity. I think that's a powerful technique.

Jack: Yeah, I do that as well because I want to listen to podcasts, and so I do that at the gym. And what's also important in the Step 4 as well is to think about maybe starting small steps and getting used to this new routine, but also so important is to make it sustainable, to make it a part of your life, in a way that isn't just going to make you crash and burn. You know, within two weeks. So if exercising might be "*Okay, I'm going to run fifteen miles every day or twenty miles every day,*" and you start and you realized this is not sustainable. And I can't do this over a long time. So, same with English learners: If you say, "I'm gonna study grammar two hours a day," and try to memorize every single word that I come across, it's not sustainable. So it's important to think about the systems you can use and how you can actually implement it into your life.

Kevin: Starting small, being patient, having faith in the process. Right?

Jack: Yeah, exactly.

Kevin: And then, so Step 5?

Jack: Step 5, yeah. This is just to take action. You know, this is to stay consistent, and a good way to take action is again, just start small. You know, start working with maybe one thing that you can do every day. There's other ways as well to think about staying consistent, and I love to think about this in terms of systems. So for example, for exercise, I have a checklist on my phone of certain things I just do every day. And, it's very small. It's like ten push-ups in the morning, but it's that system to make sure that I'm doing at least one little thing. Other things, like just to commit to listening to one minute of your podcast, let's say. So if you're an English learner, commit to one minute. If you want to listen some more, you can. If you want to turn it off, you can. Because a lot of the times, we are overwhelmed by "I'm going to study for two hours," you know, instead of saying "I'm just going to stop this. Let's see if I continue," because once you get started, you want to continue.

Kevin: It's almost like we have our minds, and we have our thoughts, and we have our intentions, and those can be disconnected with our body, in the way that our bodies naturally work and feel about things. And if we start small, and we allow our emotions and our body to adapt to what we want, then it seems more sustainable this way.

Jack: I really like saying "Willpower is like a muscle, and willpower is your ability to do something that's not a habit or routine."

"Okay, I'm going to study English tonight. I'm going to do it,"

instead of, Actually just happening because it's part of your life and part of your routine." It's the same with anything, really. You're like brushing your teeth; with a kid, it's willpower. "Okay, I'm going to brush my teeth." When you're an adult, it's just something you do twice a day. It's just a habit.

Kevin: That's great, a great advice. Sounds like a great book. I think this will be very valuable to people out there, not just in English, and other areas of their life. Any last words you would have for people listening to this podcast about anything, about English, about life, about whatever you want to tell them?

Jack: Yeah. I'd say: enjoy it Don't do things that you don't enjoy; it could be really specific. You don't have to read a book you don't want to read in English, you can read books that you're really enjoying. Some people, some learners also feel like "Okay, I need to read this book, and I need to finish it," but if you're not enjoying it, then you're not engaged with it, and then you're not gaining anything out of it. It was the same with anything in life or any kind of goal we want to achieve. If you're not enjoying it, it's really hard to do over the long term. So just enjoy the journey and make it fun. Make it interesting.

Kevin: Awesome. Yeah.

The opposite of what you might find in the traditional English school, where you're forced to study what they tell you, put up in front of the class, made to speak and made to do these dialogues that are forced and stuff that I hated when I was learning languages.

Kevin: So Jack, tell the audience where they can find you if they don't know where to find you. Where can they find more about you, more about your course, more about what you have to offer, and what you have to say?

Jack: Yeah. A good place to start is [tofluency.com/book](http://tofluency.com/book), and that is the book I've been talking about the 5 - step plan. It's free to download, and if you just search for To Fluency on Youtube, on Facebook, all these places, Instagram, Snapchat as well. I snap every day so you can find me anywhere on the Internet.

Kevin: That's cool. Yeah, so the British accent would be tofluency, I might say "to fluency." To-to-to, like "tofluency" for those who want to hear both ways of saying [tofluency.com/book](http://tofluency.com/book) or Snapchat, which is quite fun. Awesome, man! That's great. Thanks again for being here with us, and I'm sure we all can take what you have said today, and make some changes in our lives. So, I appreciate that. Yeah, thanks again.

Jack: Yeah. Thank you, Kevin. It's been fun.

Kevin: So, some of the vocabs used for today's interview. You heard Jack say "The city has boomed. The place has boomed." B-O-O-M-E-D, or to boom. When a city booms, it explodes, meaning the population explodes, meaning the population increases very quickly. Boom is like an explosion. So in this case, using it metaphorically is *the population explodes*. Sometimes, we use "explode" when something increases rapidly. Denver, where I live, is also booming. It's becoming a very popular city. A lot of people are moving here. Jack also says "He kind of *fell into it*. He

*fell into teaching:*” If you fall into something, this is a phrasal verb, “fall into,” it means you start doing something without planning on doing it. It just kind of happens to you. So, he wasn’t really searching to become an English teacher; it just kind of happened to him. He fell into it because of his circumstances. Something I use here, is Jack’s programs are very “concrete.” Concrete is like the sidewalk, or the road is made out of. So if something is concrete, it means it is solid. It’s a solid program. It’s a solid foundation. It’s very specific. So, his program sounds very concrete. It sounds very specific. A very solid structure. Another phrasal verb I used here, “get caught up.” “To get caught up in.” To get caught up in, to be caught up in something is to be stuck in something, to be trapped, to be totally absorbed by that. So in this case, learners get caught up in wanting to become fluent. All they think about is “I want to be fluent. I want to be fluent.” They can’t get past thinking this. Instead of thinking about the daily process, and think about what you need to do every day, they get stuck on the idea of “They want to be a better speaker.”

So don’t get caught up in these frustrating thoughts. Focus on what you can do each day. Jack uses another phrasal verb, “to come up with.” To come up with, we’ve used this before. To come up with is to create. You come up with an idea. You come up with a program. You come up with a strategy to become more successful. He also used another phrasal verb, “to come across” in “How difficult it is to memorize every single word that he comes across.” If you come across a word, for this example, it means you hear it or you find it without looking for it. You’re looking for something, you don’t come across it. But if you’re not really

looking for something, and you see it or you hear a word that you weren't expecting, you can come across it. I was listening to the podcast, and I came across a word that I didn't know.

And that is all for today's episode. Thanks again, Jack Askew, for being here. Your program sounds wonderful, in a way that you make your program concrete and easy to follow. It sounds like such a great way for learners to become more successful in not only English, but in life as well. The book you talked about sounds wonderful, I know. I'm going to go read it or listen to it. I like listening to books at the gym.

Again, if you want a transcript to this episode, go to [feelgoodenglish.com/member](https://feelgoodenglish.com/member), and learn how you can become a Feel Good member, join us over at Feel Good to get transcripts and also get VIP access to new courses and all of the other good stuff that will come in the future.

Until next time. Be happy. Learn every day. Focus on the journey, don't focus on the result. The journey is what makes you successful, and what brings you to the results. Thanks for listening, and we will talk to you soon.

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