

FeelGoodEnglish

# How to Master English – “The Art of Learning” by Josh Waitzkin #55



The transcript to episode #55

# How to Master English – “The Art of Learning” by Josh Waitzkin #55

[LISTEN HERE](#)

Hello there. Kevin here, with another episode of the Feel Good English podcast, the podcast that helps you become a better person in life and business, all while naturally improving your English to help you become a fluent and an excellent English speaker.

Today, I'm going to share some lessons on the book written by a guy named Josh Waitzkin. He's an American. When he was a child, he became an International Chess Champion, beating grandmasters from around the world, people much older than him. There was even a movie made about him called “Searching for Bobby Fischer,” a fictional movie based on his life. He stopped playing chess when he was young, and then he became very competent in Martial Arts. Winning championships in the martial art of “Taiji Push Hands,” whatever the hell that is, plus he's a black belt in Jiu-Jitsu, and now runs a Jiu-Jitsu Academy in New York City with the famous Marcelo Garcia. This guy obviously knows how to learn skills. Some people call him a prodigy, meaning he was naturally born as a genius, somebody who can learn things much better than everybody else, and maybe he is. Even if he was born with these natural abilities, he obviously knows how to learn new things. We can take lessons

and advice from people like this, and apply it to our own learning process.

This guy has a lot of valuable knowledge for us, and he wrote a book called “The Art of Learning,” a journey and a pursuit of excellence.

This book is excellent with some ideas on how we all can learn things better and can become excellent at certain things in our life, including English.

So, I’m going to share some of the key strategies from the book “The Art of Learning” and show you how you can apply them to your own English learning. You can also apply these to other areas of your life.

A great book. There should be a great lesson. So, listen up, learn how to learn. Learning how to learn is very important. When we’re children, a lot of times, we don’t actually learn how to learn. We’re just taught in school information, and they teach us certain things, but actually, learning how to learn can be so valuable. But before we get into lesson, if you want transcripts to this episode of the Feel Good English podcast, go to [feelgoodenglish.com](http://feelgoodenglish.com), you can become a Feel Good member, you get transcripts to all the episodes.

Now, let’s get into “The Art of Learning” by Josh Waitzkin.

*The key to pursuing excellence is to embrace an organic long-term learning process, and not to live in a shell of static-safe mediocrity. Usually, growth comes at the expense of previous comfort or safety.*

So, what Josh is saying here in this quote is that in order to grow, in order to learn, we have to lose. We have to break out of our safe shell, of our safe environment. By losing and by feeling that we are losing or failing, we also gain very valuable insights and

lessons into our own learning process.

Here's an example:

Maybe you've heard before. When I was growing up, I was always trying to learn Spanish. In school, starting from a young age, through middle school, high school, and even college, I would take Spanish class, trying to learn Spanish. I thought it was a good idea. However, I was terrible at it. I was always losing at Spanish. I was losing because I was one of the worst students, I would fail tests, I was nervous, I was uncomfortable, and I did stop after a couple of years in college. I started traveling. When I went to Spain, I started communicating with people on the streets, and what I realized is the little Spanish I knew was actually effective in communication, and what I also realized is *"Hey. I can actually start using and learning this language if I learn it in a way that is more connected with my style of learning."*

I lost in Spanish class. However, I was winning the Spanish learning in the streets; in communicating with people.

So through learning that, I was not good at learning a language in school or in class. I was able to recognize that there are other methods to learn, and I learn a language well if you put somebody in front of me.

So by losing, we can gain valuable lessons on how we can be better at something and how we can personalize our own learning process. Personalizing our learning is something that Josh talks a lot about in this book. Everybody learns differently, and we have to be aware and be conscious of how we learn and how we do best when trying out new skills. This takes patience, this takes awareness, and this takes courage and the ability to experiment with different methods. So, know that when we are failing at something, there are lessons to be learned there. So,

pay attention to these lessons and make adjustments. When you win, you're going to feel good. When you lose, you're going to learn a lesson. Both of those work together.

Another quote from the book: *"Each loss was a lesson, and each win, a thrill. Every day, pieces of the puzzle fell together."* So, it's all a puzzle, all these pieces: losing, winning. They connect together to make us better. So, use both of these experiences. Don't consider one as good or bad. Got it?

The second idea from this book is we have to prepare to feel vulnerable during the learning process. And a quote from the book,

*"Growth comes at the point of resistance. We learn by pushing ourselves and finding what really lies at the outer reaches of our abilities."*

We have to find where we are at the current moment, and we have to go beyond that. When we go beyond our current level, for example, in English, when you push yourselves past that current level you are at, you're going to feel weak, you're going to feel exhausted sometimes, you're going to feel hopeless, you're going to feel embarrassed, you're going to feel inferior to other people, but this is just part of the process.

Through the years of teaching English, I had a lot of students that were CEO's, executive of companies, people that had a lot of power in their business, or they were just successful at what they did, they were computer programmers, they were doctors. They reached the very high level of success in their field. However, in English, they weren't confident yet; they weren't fluent yet. So, they would have these feelings of inferiority. They would feel like less of a person, and this caused a lot of frustration in these students because they knew they were successful in some areas, but in English, they were not

successful. Oftentimes, they give up or they just stop focusing on English. They don't want to deal with these emotions. They don't want to have these feelings of inferiority.

But in the book, Josh talks about that these are absolutely necessary in the learning process, and I totally agree. Think about a time in your life when you started something new, but you really wanted that thing, or maybe you didn't even have a choice. You had to become good at it. In the beginning, you felt bad sometimes. You felt weak or tired, frustrated, embarrassed, but you kept going, and you kept moving up, levelling up your abilities, and eventually, you got to a place where it became more natural to you.

Same with English: learning how to deal with these emotions, accepting these negative emotions, and knowing that they are just part of the learning process will help you keep moving forward.

Be careful not to berate yourself. Don't criticize yourself too much, and when you are feeling bad, if you need a break, take a step back, relax, and reconsider your situation. Re-assess where you are. Think about the lessons that you learned from that situation. How can you do it differently? How can you be better? How can you try again and apply something new to help you get through that situation more effectively?

Emotional intelligence is a big thing here. We have to learn how to deal with our emotions and know that our emotions are not part of us. We are not our emotions. If you're feeling frustrated, sad, weak, disappointed, all of these things, they will pass. They will go through you. They were fluid; they are not static. So, let them flow through you. Relax, and go back to a place of being aware of your emotions.

Another idea here: “*Incremental learning keeps us moving*”

*forward.”*

So, some people think you are either born smart or not. You either have the ability to do something or you don't have that ability. So if you fail at it, that just means you're not going to be good at it. You don't have that ability to succeed at that. So, what happens? They give up, they don't try things, and they stay comfortable where they are. However, other people have a growth mindset. An incremental mindset, meaning they have the ability to become great at anything. It just takes what? It takes hard work. If you're frustrated with English, or if you're frustrated with anything right now, if you're not at the place you'd like to be in a certain area or whatever that may be, think about it. *What is keeping you from getting there?* There's a very good chance; it's because you were not working hard enough. A really easy excuse is to say *“Ah. I'm just not good at learning English. I'm not good at languages. It's much easier for other people.”* So then, ask yourself: *Are you working hard enough at it?* Are you doing what's necessary to become better? Take the necessary steps in order to become great.

Incremental learning, meaning learning little by little. Every day, learning a bit more, going through the process of learning, being patient, taking it step – by – step, learning from people that are better than you, and focusing on the process is the key to success. If you feel stuck at something, just take a step back and remember, it's the small steps that keep us moving forward. Hard work is the key. It's not easy, but you have to realize that's what it takes, and if you do put in the work, you will be rewarded in the future.

So, let me summarize all of this for you. Going through the main points here, and by the way, if you connected with this book and the lessons here, I would really recommend either reading or listening to the full audiobook. This book is great for you, if

you're learning English, it's great if you're trying to learn a new skill, get a new career, and it's also very important for parents who have children. This book can give you more insight on how to teach your children this incremental mindset; this growth mindset. So instead of just thinking that they are smart or not, or that they are good at something naturally or not, you can teach them that, no matter what the skill or what the area, if they put in the hard work, and they learn little by little incrementally, they will succeed at that. So many times, parents and teachers don't show their kids that they are capable of learning new things by putting in the hard work. It's a great book to read, by the way, if you go to my website, [feelgoodenglish.com/josh](http://feelgoodenglish.com/josh), you'll see a link there where you can get the audio book, the full audio book for free, and you can listen to that through Audible, which is a great phone app for either iOS or Android. So go to [feelgoodenglish.com/josh](http://feelgoodenglish.com/josh), if you are interested in learning about this book, *The Art of Learning*, more deeply.

So, the main points from the book:

1) We need to take lessons from other people, learn from them, but we also have to personalize them. We have to put them into action and connect them with our own lives, so we can make them more personal for us, and we can use them in a way that reflects our own styles and our own learning styles. This takes courage, we have to have the courage to experiment with different methods and to do things differently than other people sometimes, but internalizing these lessons and making them our own will help us learn faster.

2) Through the learning process, we will often feel weak, inferior, frustrated, tired, all of these feelings that come when we're learning a new skill. We have to accept these feelings. This is totally normal. Emotional intelligence is a big part of this.

Emotional intelligence means you are able to deal with your emotions. You are not controlled by them. So these negative emotions come in you, and you have to take a step back and relax, disconnect from these emotions, and just keep working hard. You know that? Through this process, you will have these negative emotions less and less, but you have to keep putting in the hard work. If we get stuck in these emotions, if we get lost in our emotions, we'll often give up, find excuses, and find reasons not to continue. So, work on being able to deal with your emotions better.

3) And lastly, the entity-verse incremental mindset, also referred to as the "fixed-verse growth mindset." Through research, psychologists and scientists they have studied the brain, they've studied behavior. They have found that people that think they are able to learn by putting in the work, do just that. They keep working hard. They're excited with challenge. They want to face challenge. They want to go through these tough, difficult times, knowing that if they put in the hard work, they will become better, versus people with a fixed mindset, an entity mindset, you are good at something or you're not. You're smart or you're not. This is a very damaging and limited way of thinking, and it's a choice. It's something we can learn. Again, if you're a parent, you can teach your kids on how to have more of a growth mindset, as supposed to an entity or fixed mindset.

And fortunately, but also, unfortunately, it always comes back to this: Hard work. *Do you have the dedication, commitment, and tenacity to put in the hard work? Do you have a big enough purpose behind your goals? To put in the hard work? To put in the necessary work? To put in what it takes to become excellent at something?*

There're so many different ideas, so many different methods, and so many different shortcuts and all of the stuff you see

online and read, but you know in the end, it requires hard work, but one good thing is you have the Feel Good English podcast. So, you're working hard here by learning new things and learning new English, but I'm trying to make it as light and friendly and positive as possible.

---

Going over some of the vocabulary from today's lesson, *organic learning* is something we talked about in the beginning. It's from a quote from the book. Organic learning means making the learning your own. It's natural. It comes from you. It's not synthetic, meaning from outside of you. It's organic. It's internal.

Another word we used here: *static. A shell of a static-safe mediocrity.* Static means not moving. It stays the same. If something is static, it's not moving. You're stuck.

An expression: *comes at the expense of.* If something comes at the expense of, it means you pay a price. So, drinking a lot of beer comes at the expense of having a big belly. Not practicing English every day comes at the expense of not progressing very quickly. If you want to progress quickly, study every day. Practice every day. I don't like the word study. If not, being lazy comes at the expense of not progressing.

*Berating yourself.* To berate is to criticize, to speak negatively out. So, if you're berating yourself, you're very critical and you're talking yourself down and you're criticizing yourself, it's not a good way to be.

Another expression I used here is the *entity mindset.* So if it's an entity, it's something you possess. An entity is something possessed. So if you possess intelligence, for example, you either have it or you don't. You're born with it or you're not, and it's a very bad way to think about intelligence.

The other side of this is the *incremental*, meaning you can build it piece by piece. In increments or incremental means piece by piece, little by little.

Another phrase I talked about here is the *emotional intelligence*. This is EQ. You've heard of IQ, which is about intelligence quotient. EQ is the emotional quotient, emotional intelligence. How good are you at dealing with your emotions?

When you are speaking English at work, you are going to feel nervous sometimes. If you are around with native speakers, and you're in a meeting, of course, you're going to have negative emotions. Perfect. This is exactly where you are improving. Use these situations to your advantage. Pretend you're in a karate fight, you're fighting somebody, and you're fighting somebody better than you. You have to fight people that are better than you in order to improve. So the next time you're in a business meeting, imagine yourself kicking and punching everybody in the face to improve your skills, but punch them in the face with your English. Bam!

Again, if you want a transcript to this episode, go to [feelgoodenglish.com](http://feelgoodenglish.com), become a Feel Good member, and get access to transcripts so you can learn like a ninja.

And speaking of ninjas, how about a Chuck Norris joke? How does Chuck Norris flush the toilet? He doesn't flush it; he scares the crap out of it.

Until the next episode! Be your best. Keep learning. Keep living. See you next time. Bye!

# Share the blog post!

And change someone's  
life by helping them  
become a master!

SHARE OF  
FACEBOOK