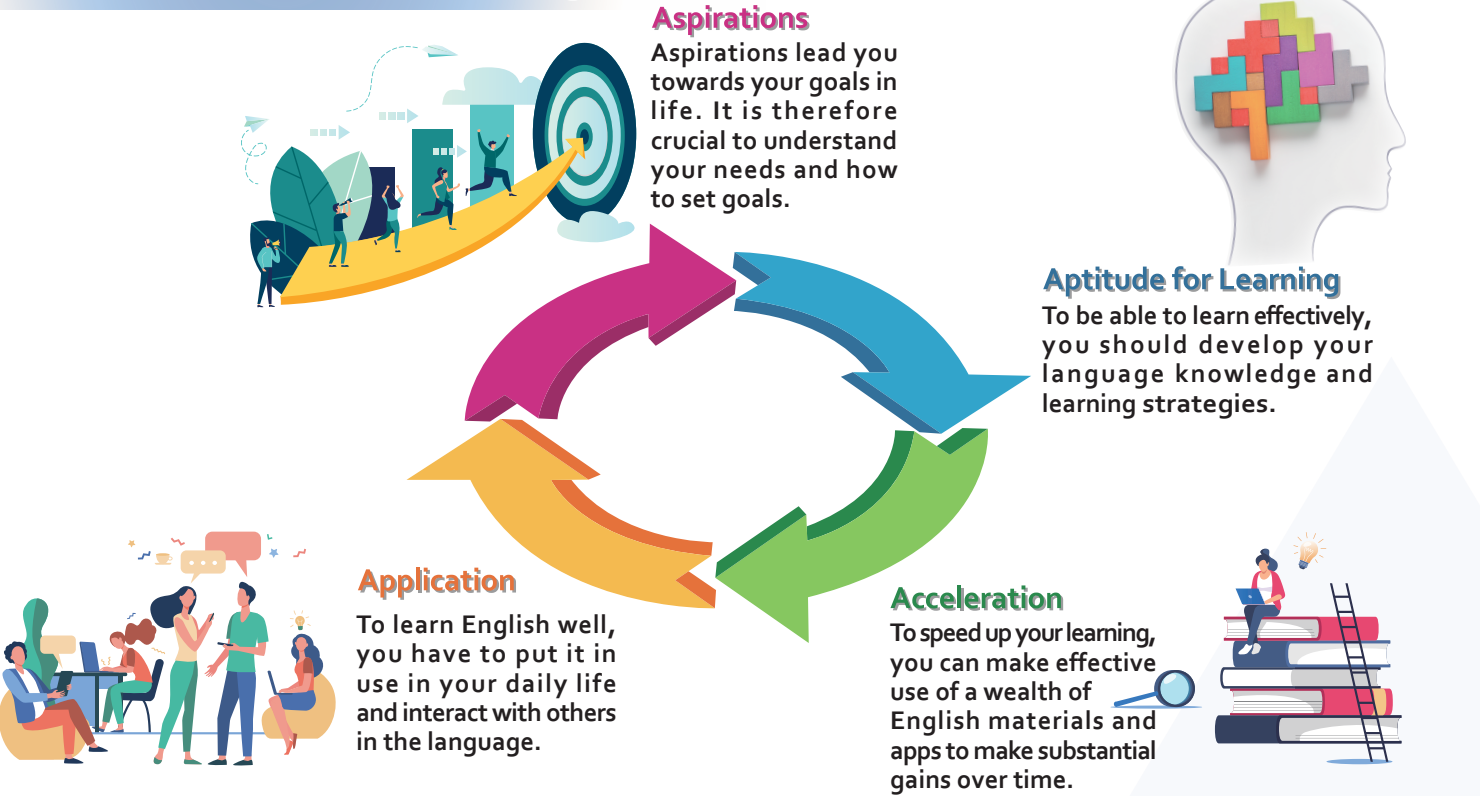# A Guide on Self-directed Learning for Secondary Students

English learning is no longer confined to the classroom. With more flexible learning time and resources, you can increase your exposure to English and improve your language skills anytime and anywhere through self-directed learning. Self-directed learning is a process in which you take the initiative, with or without the help of others, to identify your learning needs, set learning goals and plans, choose suitable resources and evaluate your learning progress. Good self-learning skills and habits can help you bloom into responsible, lifelong learners.

## 4As of Self-directed Learning



**Aspirations**
Aspirations lead you towards your goals in life. It is therefore crucial to understand your needs and how to set goals.

**Aptitude for Learning**
To be able to learn effectively, you should develop your language knowledge and learning strategies.

**Application**
To learn English well, you have to put it in use in your daily life and interact with others in the language.

**Acceleration**
To speed up your learning, you can make effective use of a wealth of English materials and apps to make substantial gains over time.

## Understanding Needs and Setting Goals

Students may have different learning needs, ranging from learning English for fun to enhancing English proficiency. Based on your learning needs, you may set SMART goals on English learning with reference to the guiding questions below:

| Goals should be: | Guiding questions |
|---|---|
| **S**pecific | What will I achieve? What actions will I take? |
| **M**easurable | How can I measure how much I have achieved? |
| **A**chievable | Is the goal doable? What skills and resources do I need? |
| **R**elevant | Is this relevant to my needs and learning styles? |
| **T**ime-based | How much time should I spend each day/week working on my goal? |

## A Closer Look at English Self-learning Resources

Developing language knowledge from different English resources and using appropriate learning strategies is essential to language learning. The following section discusses how you can select appropriate English resources, make the most of them and learn effectively and efficiently.

| English self-learning resources | Typical features | Remarks | How the resources can be used | Tips on English self-learning |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Collections of vocabulary/idioms/ useful expressions** | ➢ Items usually grouped under different themes/categories <br> ➢ Sample sentences provided <br> ➢ Chinese translation and exercises sometimes provided for practices and easy understanding | ➢ May not support the development of vocabulary learning skills and strategies <br> ➢ May fail to show the multiple meanings of certain vocabulary items and how they are used <br> ➢ May encourage rote learning | ➢ Select vocabulary items to learn according to themes/functions/frequency of use. <br> ➢ Avoid words which are obsolete and too technical (e.g. beef-witted, masculine rhyme). <br> ➢ Focus on learning a manageable number of words each time. | ➢ Pay attention to the meaning(s), pronunciation and usage instead of just memorising the spelling. <br> ➢ Look up the words in a dictionary for further information (e.g. parts of speech, word formation, word family, collocation, synonyms and antonyms). <br> ➢ Apply the newly learnt items in schoolwork and daily life. <br> ➢ Use graphic organisers/apps to facilitate memory and understanding of the items. |
| **Grammar books** | ➢ Explanatory notes provided on forms and functions of grammar items <br> ➢ Exercises with answers included for practice and consolidation | ➢ May focus mainly on mechanical drilling of forms with grammar items not presented in context <br> ➢ May lack explanation of answers and opportunities for application | ➢ Study the notes carefully to understand the functions served by the grammar items. <br> ➢ Think of contexts for suitable use of the items to create and add your own examples. <br> ➢ Find patterns of mistakes after checking answers and consult other reference materials or teachers. | ➢ Learn the usage and functions in addition to the form. <br> ➢ Make connections with grammar items learnt before (e.g. the past tense vs the present perfect tense). <br> ➢ Highlight the target items when you encounter them in reading texts, and think about their functions in the texts. <br> ➢ Apply the grammar items purposefully in new contexts (e.g. in writing and speaking tasks). |
| **Model essays** | ➢ Topic-related vocabulary and expressions included <br> ➢ Explanatory notes, examples on text structure and language use and Chinese translation of the target vocabulary/ expressions sometimes provided | ➢ May limit creativity <br> ➢ May encourage text memorisation or rote learning of "advanced" vocabulary/ stock phrases/sentence patterns <br> ➢ May encourage over-reliance on Chinese translation in vocabulary learning | ➢ Learn the format, structure and organisation of the text-types. <br> ➢ Highlight useful vocabulary items, expressions and sentence patterns. <br> ➢ Try to identify the tone and style and relate it to the task requirements (e.g. writing purpose, audience). | ➢ Learn the features of the text-types, including the structure, register, tone and style. <br> ➢ Learn how to build coherence within a paragraph and across the text. <br> ➢ Apply your knowledge of text structure and language features to other tasks with similar requirements. |
| **Videos/movies/ podcasts/songs** | ➢ A wide selection of topics to choose from <br> ➢ More interesting and engaging <br> ➢ Authentic and colloquial use of English featured | ➢ May be designed for entertainment rather than English learning and contain improper content and language <br> ➢ May not have any language focus for purposeful and structured learning <br> ➢ May encourage passive learning | ➢ Use judiciously to enhance listening and viewing skills. <br> ➢ Learn some colloquial expressions in daily life. <br> ➢ Develop awareness of how English is used in different cultures. | ➢ Pay attention to how English is spoken naturally (e.g. intonation, speed, use of pauses). <br> ➢ Note the use of language in natural speech and different contexts (e.g. contractions, idiomatic expressions). <br> ➢ Understand and appreciate different cultures, facilitating mutual and fair appreciation of cultures of different countries, building proper values and attitudes and enhancing your cultural confidence. <br> ➢ Develop awareness of how English is spoken or used differently around the world (e.g. accents, pronunciation, word choice). |
| **e-Learning platforms: interactive language games/websites/apps** | ➢ Interactive and fun <br> ➢ Progress of learning often recorded <br> ➢ Adaptive and interactive features (e.g. read-aloud, chat box with tutors, items generated matched to the level of students and answer-checking functions) embedded <br> ➢ Subscriptions often required | ➢ Dependent on access to technology (e.g. devices, Internet connection, IT knowledge) <br> ➢ Other online activities (e.g. gaming, chatting, browsing other websites) can be distracting <br> ➢ May require fees for additional features and content | ➢ Study the terms and costs of the subscription plans carefully. <br> ➢ Utilise the interactive features offered by the platform and develop a habit of regular practice. <br> ➢ Review progress with records/data provided by the platform. | ➢ Research to understand the features and functions of different platforms and select those that match your learning needs. <br> ➢ Break everything down into small chunks and create notes and flashcards for revision using apps. <br> ➢ Choose platforms that facilitate interaction and exchange with other learners and online tutors if necessary. |
| **Examination skill books/Mock papers** | ➢ May focus on exam skills and format <br> ➢ Explanatory notes, question analysis and answer key often provided | ➢ Focus on assessment rather than development of skills <br> ➢ May be mechanical | ➢ Use the materials to familiarise yourself with the exam format and question types. <br> ➢ Use the materials for structured practice to review and evaluate performance, and improve time management. | ➢ Keep clear records of the results, identify areas of weaknesses from mistakes and devise follow-up plans. <br> ➢ Use the data for regular review of learning performance to inform next step of learning and seek timely advice from teachers. |

## What Should You Consider When Choosing English Self-learning Resources?

You may be puzzled at the variety of English resources or materials. Here are some tips to help you make SMART choices.

| Myths | Considerations |
|---|---|
| Learning materials with the most information are the best? | Too much information may confuse you. Your specific needs and goals should always come first. Focus on the language items or skills you want to improve. |
| Expensive items are of higher quality? | Cost of the materials may not reflect the quality. For self-directed learning and attainment of measurable goals, choose quality materials with answers and clear explanations or e-learning materials that offer immediate responses and feedback so that you can keep track of your learning easily. |
| Difficult and challenging learning materials are the best? | Very difficult learning materials can be hard to understand. You need materials at the appropriate level of difficulty to make your self-directed learning plan achievable. |
| The more practice, the better? | It is true to say that "practice makes perfect". However, you can speed up your learning if you identify ways of learning which are relevant to your learning style. For example, visual learners prefer visual aids (e.g. diagrams, timelines) to help them understand complex concepts. |
| Buying a large quantity of materials for reference can enhance my learning? | Frequency of practice rather than quantity of materials matters here. Time-based planning and implementation will make your self-directed learning effective. Create a daily routine and schedule a set amount of time to work towards your goal. |

Some quality English learning materials are available for free. You can access them via the following web pages:
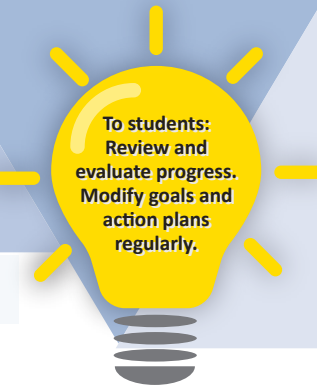


EDB English Language Education Section

EDB Educational MultiMedia (EMM)

Hong Kong Education City

Hong Kong Public Libraries

*To students: Review and evaluate progress. Modify goals and action plans regularly.*

## Parent Corner: How to GEAR your children up for success in English Learning?

Bear in mind the following tips:
- **Guide** your children to understand their needs and set learning goals and plans.
- **Encourage** careful selection of self-learning materials according to their needs.
- **Arouse** your children's curiosity about how English is used in everyday life, which helps them develop greater language sensitivity.
- **Reinforce** positive English-learning strategies and habits (e.g. reading books and listening to English news regularly).
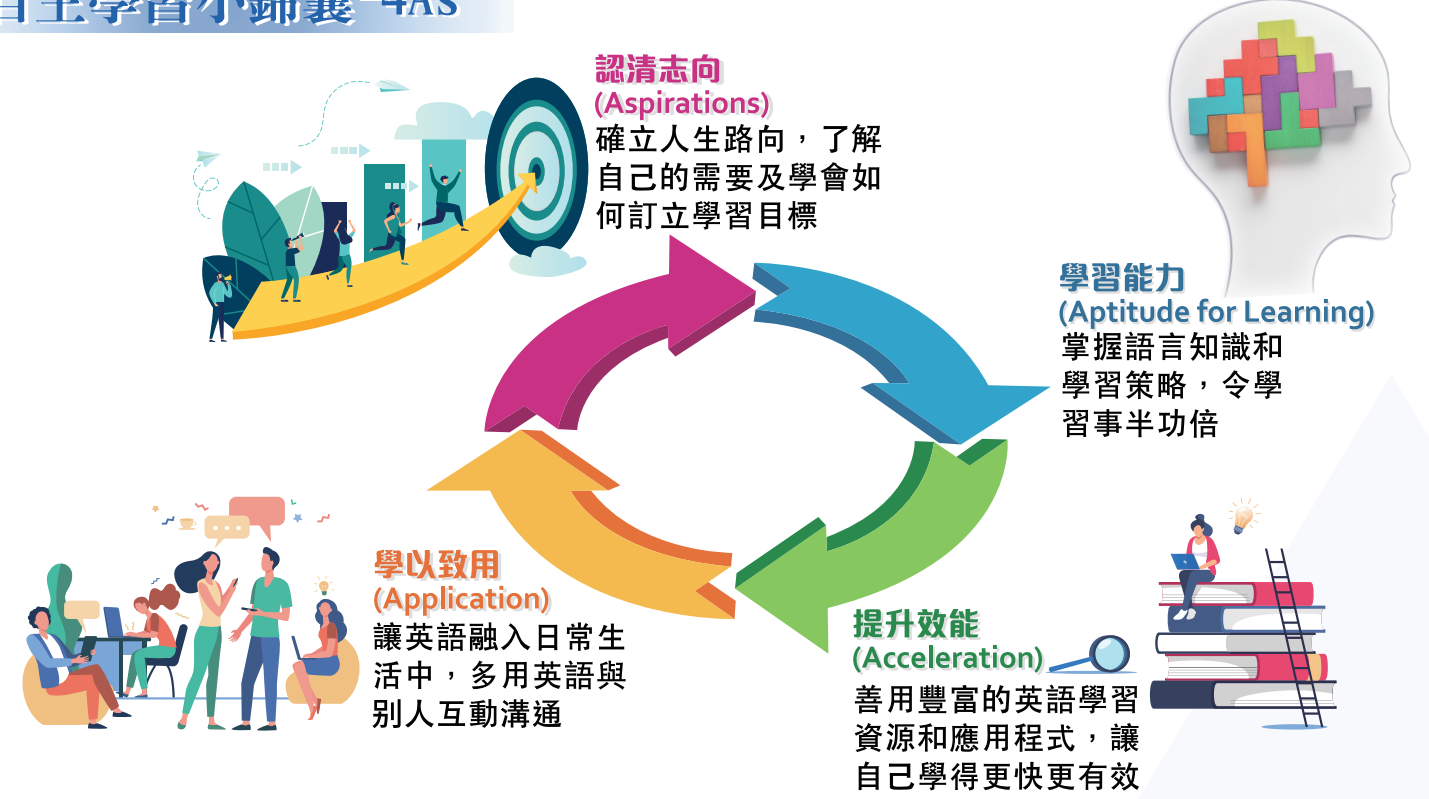
# 中學生英語自主學習指引

英語學習已不再局限於課堂，你可隨時隨地善用彈性的學時及豐富的學習資源自主學習，多接觸英語以提升英文能力。自主學習是指你可自發地，在有或沒有他人協助下學習。過程中，你要認清自己的需要，訂立目標和計劃，選擇合適的資源及檢視學習進度。良好的自主技巧和習慣可以幫助你成為一個有責任感的終身學習者。

## 自主學習小錦囊-4As



- **認清志向 (Aspirations)**
確立人生路向，了解自己的需要及學會如何訂立學習目標
- **學習能力 (Aptitude for Learning)**
掌握語言知識和學習策略，令學習事半功倍
- **學以致用 (Application)**
讓英語融入日常生活中，多用英語與別人互動溝通
- **提升效能 (Acceleration)**
善用豐富的英語學習資源和應用程式，讓自己學得更快更有效

## 了解需要和訂立目標

每個學生可能有不同的學習需要，有的為興趣而學習英語，有的則希望提高英語水平。根據自己的學習需要，你可參考以下的問題來訂立SMART的英語學習目標：

| 你的學習目標應該是： | 問問自己： |
|---|---|
| 具體的 (**S**pecific) | 我想學到甚麼？我要怎樣做才能達到？ |
| 可衡量的 (**M**easurable) | 我可以怎樣評估我的學習情況？ |
| 可達到的 (**A**chievable) | 我訂立的目標可行嗎？我需要甚麼技能和資源？ |
| 配合學習需要的 (**R**elevant) | 我訂立的目標配合我的需要和學習模式嗎？ |
| 有時限性的 (**T**ime-based) | 我應該每天/週花多少時間來達到我的目標？ |

## 常見英語學習資源

建立語文知識和學習策略對促進英語學習尤其重要。
本部分會介紹如何選擇及有效地運用合適的英語學習資源。

| 英語學習資源 | 特點 | 備註 | 用法 | 溫馨提示 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 各類字詞庫（包括生字、成語、慣用語） | ➢ 通常按主題/類別分類<br>➢ 附有例句<br>➢ 附有中文翻譯及練習題，以便理解和溫習 | ➢ 未必提供學習詞彙的技巧和策略<br>➢ 未必解釋字詞的多重意義和用法<br>➢ 或鼓勵死記硬背 | ➢ 可按主題、功能、使用率來選取要學習的詞彙。<br>➢ 避免記誦過時且過於專門的詞彙(例如：beef-witted, masculine rhyme)。<br>➢ 每次集中學習適當數量的字詞。 | ➢ 除緊記字詞的串法，還要留意字義、讀音和用法。<br>➢ 利用字典以學習其他有用知識(例如：詞類、搭配、詞族、搭配、同義詞、反義詞)。<br>➢ 在家課和日常生活中運用新學的字詞。<br>➢ 利用組織圖或應用程式來幫助記憶和理解。 |
| 文法練習 | ➢ 附有筆記解說語法的形式和用法<br>➢ 附有練習和答案以助鞏固知識 | ➢ 或偏重機械式操練，忽略語境<br>➢ 部分練習缺乏答案的解說和提供實際應用的機會 | ➢ 細讀解說，認真理解文法的功能。<br>➢ 嘗試多構想真實的應用情境，並加入自己的例句。<br>➢ 找出常犯錯誤處，並查找參考資料或向老師請教。 | ➢ 除學習語法的形式外，也要留意用法。<br>➢ 與以前所學的文法建立聯繫(例如：過去式與現在完成式的分別)。<br>➢ 閱讀時，多留意文法的使用，了解它們在文中發揮的作用。<br>➢ 多在新的情境(例如：寫作和說話練習)運用所學的文法。 |
| 作文範文 | ➢ 附有與範文主題相關的生字和慣用語<br>➢ 附有解說文章結構和語文運用的筆記和例子，以及重點字詞的中文翻譯 | ➢ 或會局限創意<br>➢ 鼓勵背誦範文和運用過於艱深僵化的詞彙或句式<br>➢ 過分依賴中文翻譯 | ➢ 了解文體的格式、結構和組織脈絡。<br>➢ 標示有用的詞彙、慣用語和句式。<br>➢ 行文的語氣和風格應配合命題目要求(例如：寫作目的、讀者)。 | ➢ 了解不同文體的特徵，包括結構、語氣和風格。<br>➢ 留意如何建立每段落，及跨段之間的連貫性。<br>➢ 在其他類似寫作練習中，運用所學的文章結構和語文知識。 |
| 影片、電影、廣播節目、歌曲 | ➢ 主題內容廣泛<br>➢ 較有趣和吸引<br>➢ 展示地道口語和生活化的英語 | ➢ 目的以娛樂為主，可能包含不當內容或用語<br>➢ 可能欠缺語文學習元素及學習重點，以致難以訂立目標<br>➢ 或鼓勵被動學習 | ➢ 用以提升聆聽和理解力。<br>➢ 學習一些日常生活中的地道用語。<br>➢ 提高語文意識，注意不同文化人士如何運用英語。 | ➢ 留意如何把英文讀得自然流暢(例如：語調、速度、停頓)。<br>➢ 注意日常生活和不同情境下英語運用的特色(例如：縮寫、慣用語)。<br>➢ 了解和欣賞不同文化，以促進各國文化平等互鑑，建立正確價值觀和態度，增加自身文化自信。<br>➢ 認識世界各地不同的英文口語表達方式(例如：口音、字詞讀音、用法)。 |
| 電子學習平台：互動遊戲、網站、應用程式 | ➢ 互動性和趣味性高<br>➢ 可記錄學習進度<br>➢ 具調適和互動功能(例如：朗讀、與導師遙距交流、按學生水平配題、自動核對答案)<br>➢ 或需要收費 | ➢ 使用時須具備相關器材、網路連接、電腦知識<br>➢ 其他線上功能(例如：遊戲、網上聊天、瀏覽其他網站)或會導致分心<br>➢ 額外功能和內容或需要收費 | ➢ 仔細研究訂閱計劃的條款和費用。<br>➢ 多利用平台提供的互動功能，養成定期練習的習慣。<br>➢ 使用平台提供的記錄和數據檢視學習進度。 | ➢ 了解不同平台的特點和功能，並選擇符合自己學習需求的平台。<br>➢ 將內容分拆成小部分，並用應用程式自製筆記和字卡溫習。<br>➢ 如有需要，可選擇設有與其他學員和導師互動交流功能的網上平台。 |
| 應試練習、模擬試題 | ➢ 注重考試技巧和形式<br>➢ 附有筆記、題目分析及答案 | ➢ 過分著重評估，或會忽略技能的發展<br>➢ 偏重機械式操練 | ➢ 可用以熟習考試形式和題型。<br>➢ 亦可作有系統性的練習，以檢視和評估表現，並改善時間管理。 | ➢ 記錄結果，從中找出弱點以作跟進。<br>➢ 利用數據定期檢視學習表現，作出跟進並適時向老師請教。 |

## 選擇英語學習資源時有甚麼考慮？

英語學習資源五花八門，要選取適合自己的學習材料是一大挑戰。以下的小提示有助你作出SMART的決定。

| 有些人會認為： | 選擇英語自學資源時須考慮： |
|---|---|
| 學習材料內容越多越好 | 過量的資料或會令你感到混亂。你應以自己明確的學習需要和目標為首要考慮，針對改善自己的弱項。 |
| 學習材料價格越高，質量越好 | 學習材料的價格未必能反映其質量。自主學習材料應附有清晰的答案和解說；而網上的自學資源最好能具有即時批改和回饋功能，以助你檢視自己的學習進度及衡量處繼情況。 |
| 學習材料內容越艱深越好 | 過分艱深的學習材料可能難於理解。為達到自學計劃的目標，你應挑選程度合適的學習材料。 |
| 練習做得越多越好 | 多做練習當然有一定幫助，但也不要忘記要配合自己的學習模式，以達至最佳效果。例如視覺型學習者可運用視覺輔助工具(例如：圖表、時間軸)加強對複雜概念的理解。 |
| 購買越多學習材料越好 | 練習的頻次比學習材料的數量更為重要。你應訂立有時限性的學習計劃，並定時定量實徹實行，以提高自學效能。 |

你可善用下列網址，選取一些有質素而又免費的英語自學資源：



教育局 英國語文教育組　　教育局 教育多媒體　　香港教育城　　香港公共圖書館

## 家長小錦囊：如何裝備(GEAR)子女學好英語？

家長可留意以下幾點：

- **引導(Guide)** 子女了解他們的學習需要，從旁協助他們訂立學習目標和計劃。
- **鼓勵(Encourage)** 子女按自己的學習需要，小心選擇合適的自學材料。
- **激發(Arouse)** 子女對日常生活中接觸到的英語的好奇心，加強他們的語感。
- **鞏固(Reinforce)** 子女英語學習的策略和習慣，如培養他們恆常閱讀及聆聽英語新聞。