

Teaching World Languages for Homeschooling

Michael Gannotti



Figure 1: Cover

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This illustrated edition is the teaching-manual of 1 September 2026. Endnotes run in one series. Chapter-opening images are original still-lives, not portraits of persons or children. Documents still constrain the facts.

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Welcome

This book exists because the language hour at your table is the whole program. There is no department down the hall and no specialist waiting after lunch. There is you, a student, and today’s phrase —something to hear, a chance to say it, one real use, a question worth waiting for. That is enough, if you know what to do with the hour.

I wrote this for a capable, busy, willing parent. You may be teaching two ages at once. You may be fitting a language hour between a job, a toddler, and a grocery run. You may have loved school Spanish, or you may remember two years of it as a fog of verb charts. Many adults feel rusty around “I took two years and froze” when they sit down to teach. That feeling is common. It is not a verdict. We will move on from it. This book will make you fluent enough in this week’s idea to notice a wrong phrase and ask a good question —without taking over the talking.

You do not need to be a speaker of the language. You do need to understand this week’s idea well enough to hear a wrong turn —*el mesa* when the table is *la mesa* —as a pattern mistake, not a cute slip. You need a session shape you can run on a Tuesday. You need a few sentences that actually help. That is the job. A path through a language—from first-grade listening-and-playing through a college-ready high-school sequence in one of seven languages: Spanish, French, Italian, German, Chinese, Japanese, or Korean—is possible at a kitchen table. The path is not a personality trait and it is not a percentile. It is a sequence of listening, talking, and a few useful phrases, practiced until they hold, with you in the chair.

About 3.4 percent of U.S. students ages 5–17 were homeschooled in 2022–23 —roughly 1.765 million children.¹ That figure is context, not a ranking. You are

¹Ellena Sempeles and Jiashan Cui, *Parent and Family Involvement in Education: 2023*, NCES 2024-113 (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, September 2024), Table A-6: 3.4 percent homeschooled, approximately 1,765,000 students, ages 5–17 with a K–12 grade equiv-

one of those tables. Homeschooling is legal in all fifty states and the District of Columbia. The paperwork is not one load: Texas asks almost nothing of the state agency; New York asks for a written plan and regular reports.² There is no national homeschool diploma and no national world-language credit a registrar already files.³ In the last federal tables that published the row, foreign language at home was a minority subject: taught that year in 32 percent of households overall, and in 35 percent of grades 9–12.⁴ About half of high-school homeschoolers had ever been taught a foreign language. Those numbers are a pond, not a lecture. The titles that travel —Spanish, French, Italian, German, Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Korean, World Language —are names a stranger can read. The hour in front of you is the work.

What a good language hour looks like

You sit down already knowing today’s phrase. Something understandable is on the table —an apple, a door, a greeting that is actually happening. The child hears

alent, 2022–23. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2024/2024113.pdf>. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026. Latest federal count this book uses; not a 2026 national total. A neighboring 5.2 percent received instruction at home (homeschooled or full-time virtual) and is a different bucket.

²Texas Education Agency, “Home Schooling,” <https://tea.texas.gov/families-and-students/finding-school-your-child/home-schooling>. New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers,” <https://www.nysed.gov/nonpublic-schools/home-instruction-questions-and-answers>. Homeschooling is legal in all fifty states and D.C.; these two pages illustrate a light-process and a heavier-process pattern, not a national template. This book is not legal advice.

³Texas Education Agency, “Home Schooling”: “The State of Texas does not award a diploma to students that are home schooled.” New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers”: a high school diploma “may only be awarded to a student enrolled in a registered secondary school.” North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education, “Home School Records Retention & Diplomas FAQs,” <https://www.doa.nc.gov/divisions/non-public-education/home-schools/faqs/records-retention-diplomas>: the State does not issue a diploma or a transcript; the home-school chief administrator does. NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*, http://fs.ncaa.org/Docs/eligibility_center/Student_Resources/Home_School_Toolkit.pdf, treats proof of graduation as a family- or umbrella-issued artifact.

⁴Jiashan Cui and Rachel Hanson, *Homeschooling in the United States: Results from the 2012 and 2016 Parent and Family Involvement Survey*, NCES 2020-001 (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), Table 9: among K–12-equivalent homeschoolers taught *that year*, foreign language 32 percent overall and 35 percent in grades 9–12; K–2 22 percent (NCES interpret-with-caution flag); 3–5 40 percent; 6–8 30 percent. Table 8: foreign language *ever* taught during home instruction, grades 9–12, 51 percent. The 2023 First Look did not republish the subject-taught tables. <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2020/2020001.pdf>.

it. Then they say it, while it is true. You ask one good question —not “what is the grammar name?” but “what’s on the table?” Then you wait. Three seconds feels long. It is the work. Practice mixes the new phrase with last week’s one. The hour ends with one short task they do alone: a spoken line, unaided. You stop talking sooner than feels polite. The child listens and talks. You hold the key. That is the hour. The next long piece of this front matter, *The Language Hour*, will teach it in full. Later chapters will not reinvent it.



Figure 2: A kitchen-table language hour

Ears first, then the mouth, then the page. A word list with no ears and no mouth is not a year. An hour that is only a recording, or only a worksheet, is not the hour. The chapters will give you wording. The hour will stay this shape.

What you will actually get

Each teaching chapter does eight jobs, always in the same order, so you are never hunting for the move.

You will learn why this week’s idea is worth the struggle —what it unlocks later. You will understand the idea yourself, in plain language, with one everyday picture and one precise picture, and with the wrong phrases you should be able to hear. You will get a session you can run this week, including exact wording, named activities, and a talk box with this week’s opening line in the language. You will get practice that builds learning, not a slog of coverage. Your student will get a short section of their own. If it isn’t clicking, you will get three diagnostics and a next move for each, with no shame in the room. Tools, including AI, stay optional and adult-side. And you will get a plain checklist for “done enough,” so you can place by skill rather than by birthday.

The seven language chapters follow the work, not twelve thin grade labels: Spanish, French, Italian, German, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, each with moves for grades 1–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12. Then a chapter on choosing and sequencing —one language deeply, when to add a second, a map for college. Records and resources come last.

This week you can learn the session shape and today’s idea well enough to hear a wrong phrase. Today the child can hear one phrase, say it while it is true, and answer one real question without you filling the silence.

What this book will not do

This book will not hand you 180 days of worksheets. A year of photocopies is not a teaching method, and I will not pretend it is. Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour.

It will not sell you a curriculum. Later, a short resources chapter names common programs by fit —parent load, style, how they place a student —so you can choose. Breaking the Barrier, Classical Academic Press, a textbook path, GENKI, Integrated Korean, a tutor, a co-op are tools. None of them is this book, and this book is not a catalog in disguise. A family may combine. Combining does not turn a brand into a course name. The transcript still says Spanish or Korean.

It will not promise fluency. There is no guaranteed accent, no guaranteed ACTFL rating, no guaranteed AP number, and no guaranteed college letter inside these pages. Two high-school years of one language is a common U.S. model and often still a Novice-range outcome —useful phrases, not a bilingual adulthood.⁵ What

⁵ACTFL, *ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners* (2012): “The

this book can promise is a path: the ideas in order, at the skill the child actually has, until they can do the next idea unaided.

It is not an immersion-or-bust tract. Input matters. So does a chance to say something. It is not a talent myth. Starting in grade 1 or grade 9 is time on the language, not a magic window. A path through a language is the promise. A native accent is not.

It will not treat a chatbot as a native speaker, a fluency certificate, or the child's only conversation partner. Fluent output is not the child's knowledge.

And this is not a sequel. *English for Homeschooling*, *Critical Thinking for Life*, and *Autonomous AI and Education* are other books. Reading in English, evaluation of a claim, and AI session rules live inside the language hour when they earn their keep—one listening move, a phrase said for real—not as a course titled Conversation 101, and not as a course titled AI Spanish. AI is a lane here: one language-hour box in this front matter, then a short tools box in each teaching chapter.

This is not a book that lectures your child about you, or you about your character. The student is a person, not a percentile. When this book speaks to them, it speaks with respect. No baby-talk. No research sermon.

The promise

If you only remember one sentence, remember this: a path through a language is the promise.

The work is to take this child through a language—listening and playing, then phrases said for real, then a high-school sequence a registrar can read—without skipping the talking because they are “a good reader,” and without parking them in a book that is too easy because a catalog printed a grade on the cover. You

most common program model for language learning in this country continues to be two years of instruction at the secondary level. This model limits students to performance in the Novice range.” <https://www.actfl.org/uploads/files/general/Documents/AppendixN-ACTFLPerformanceDescriptorsLanguageLearners.pdf>. ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, fourth edition: Novice use is formulaic and rote words, lists, and phrases; Intermediate use is sentence-level communication on predictable topics. Performance (rehearsed, familiar tasks) is not proficiency (unrehearsed use). The Guidelines are a map, not a homeschool statute and not a kitchen-table badge.

will sometimes slow down. You will sometimes skip ahead. Both are teaching. Birthday is not placement.

Three things have to hold. You understand this week's idea well enough to hear a wrong phrase. The child does the listening and the talking before the tool. Any helper—including an AI agent—stays on your side of the table: a supplement you host and constrain, not a native speaker, not a tutor product, and not a substitute for the child's mouth.

You can do this. You do not have to know next year's idea today. You have to know this week's idea well enough to sit still while they struggle, then ask one good question. Start here. Read *How to Use This Book This Week*, then the one-page list of five things, then *The Language Hour*. After that, open the chapter that matches the skill in front of you. You will know more after one chapter than you know this morning. Your child will have something to try today. We can do this.

How to Use This Book This Week

Start at the skill in front of you, not on page one of Grade 1 because a catalog, a birthday, or a well-meant relative said so.

This book is a handbook you open to this week's language, not a novel you read cover to cover. The teaching chapters run: Spanish; French; Italian; German; Chinese; Japanese; Korean; then choosing and sequencing. Records and resources come last. Grade labels inside each language chapter —1–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12 —are sequence anchors. They tell you where an idea usually sits. They do not tell you where *this* child sits.

Pick one of the seven and stay with it. One language deeply is the hour. Two languages, each a thin taste, is not a path. A later chapter will help you choose and sequence. This week, open one language and teach it.

This book does not replace the program already on the shelf. If Breaking the Barrier, Classical Academic Press, a textbook path, GENKI, Integrated Korean, a tutor, or a co-op is already working, keep it. Use this book to hear a wrong phrase, to run the hour, and to name the credit a stranger can read. The transcript still says Spanish or Korean, not a brand.

Pick the chapter by skill, not by birthday

Open the language you are teaching. Skip to **What “done enough” looks like** at the end of the previous band, or to **If it isn't clicking** in the band you opened. If the child can already do those checks unaided, you are too early. If the checks from two bands back are still failing, drop back.

If they still live in listening-and-play —if a grammar name is noise and an apple, a door, and a greeting are the lesson —they are still in the 1–2 band of that language,

whatever their age. What they can say depends on what they have already been invited to hear and try, not on a birthday. A short sit with a real object is in range. An unrehearsed paragraph is not, yet.

If they cannot yet recombine a short sentence —a phrase they built, not only a phrase they copied —they are still Novice, whatever the transcript year. That is ordinary. Elementary students who are not heritage speakers often stay Novice for a long stretch.⁶ A sixth-grader who still recites a dialogue from the page is not “behind in Spanish II.” They are still learning to talk.

If they can hear today’s phrase, say it while it is true, and answer a real question, and they are still in a “grade 4” reader only because the cover says so, skip ahead. Instruction for a six-year-old need not be “first grade” ; it should match what the student actually needs and already knows.⁷ A publisher’s “grade 6” book is a scope, not a legal grade. Use this book’s checklists, or a placement test from the program you own, and then teach.

Two children may need two bands. That is ordinary. The session shape in *The Language Hour* still holds; the phrase on the table changes. You may run a twenty-five-minute listening sit with one child and a forty-five-minute talk with the other. You do not need two personalities. You need two first phrases.

Maps are maps

ACTFL is a map of unrehearsed use, not a curriculum and not national law. Novice is formulaic words, lists, and phrases. Intermediate is creating with sentences on familiar topics. A rehearsed kitchen-table dialogue is performance. Proficiency is whether they can still do it when the prompt is new.⁸ The Can-Do statements are

⁶California Department of Education, *World Languages Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (2019): “It is common in the elementary school context for students who do not have a heritage language background to remain at the Novice level for an extended period of time.” Guidance, not a homeschool statute. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/wlstandards.pdf>.

⁷New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers,” <https://www.nysed.gov/nonpublic-schools/home-instruction-questions-and-answers>: instruction for a six-year-old need not be “first grade” ; “instruction should be geared to the level appropriate to the student’s needs and previous level of achievement.” NYSED Q&A: “Are students instructed at home required to take a second language? No.”

⁸ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, fourth edition: proficiency is “the ability to use language to accomplish communication objectives” ; Novice —formulaic and rote utter-

a framework, not a lesson bank. Do not print “Intermediate Mid” on a transcript from a talk box. Do print “Spanish III” and, if honest, “class performance toward Intermediate Low.”

California, Texas, and Virginia do not print the same year. That is not a problem for you to solve. It is a reason not to treat any one of them as national law.

Two years of the same language is a common college ask, not a federal requirement and not a homeschool statute. The University of California asks for two years of one language other than English, and recommends a third. The Common Data Set asks each college to print its own number.⁹ Look up the colleges on this family’s list. None of Texas, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, or New York requires a world language of a homeschool.¹⁰ NCAA lists world language as additional core, not as a required year-count. A student can meet Division I with zero language years.

You choose the map that matches the work on your table. Then you teach the phrases.

ances, lists, and phrases; Intermediate —sentence-level communication on predictable topics. Performance “measures what an individual is able to do within familiar task types, contexts, and content areas, using language that has been learned and rehearsed” ; it “does not provide comprehensive evidence of ability to use language outside of that context (that is, comprehensive evidence of proficiency).” NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (2026): “Can-Do Statement examples are not a prescribed curriculum” ; they “Serve as a framework, not a curriculum.” <https://www.actfl.org/uploads/files/general/Professional-Learning/Can-Do-Intro-Overview.pdf>.

⁹University of California, A-G subject E (Language Other than English): two years, or equivalent to the second level of high school instruction, of the same language other than English are required; a third year is recommended. <https://hs-articulation.ucop.edu/guide/a-g-subject-requirements/e-language-other-than-english/>. Common Data Set 2024–25, item C5, asks each participating college to report units required and units recommended for “Foreign language.” That is each college’s own number, not a national law.

¹⁰Texas Education Agency, “Home Schooling,” <https://tea.texas.gov/families-and-students/finding-school-your-child/home-schooling>; *Leeper* names reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and good citizenship; a language other than English is not named. North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education annual test is English grammar, reading, spelling, and mathematics —not a world language. Pennsylvania 24 P.S. § 13-1327.1: secondary *may include* foreign languages at the supervisor’s discretion; graduation is arts-and-humanities, not a language. Virginia: the parent writes a list of subjects; world language is not named as required. NCAA Eligibility Center, Division I Academic Standards fact sheet (September 2023): 16 core courses include 4 additional from any listed area or “courses listed in additional discipline (world language, comparative religion or philosophy).” World language is named. It is not a required year-count.

How you use the parent half

Most of each teaching chapter is for you. Read it *before* the lesson, not over the child's shoulder.

Why this matters tells you what this idea unlocks. **For the parent: understand it yourself** gives one everyday picture, one precise picture, and three to five wrong phrases you should be able to hear. Sit with those.

How to teach it this week assumes the session shape from *The Language Hour*. It will not rebuild the hour. It will give you this week's named activities, the wording for *this* idea, and a talk box: an opening line in the language with a gloss, a few follow-ups, how to wait, and what a stuck silence usually means. Later chapters supply this week's lines. They do not reinvent the shape.

Practice that actually builds learning is a short blocked set of the new phrase, then mixed work so the child has to choose. A kitchen object can motivate. It does not replace the unaided sentence. **Tools, including AI** is optional, short, and for the adult. The rules live once in *The Language Hour*. **What "done enough" looks like** is how you leave: unaided work, not a perfect Tuesday. Placement is by skill, not birthday.

You do not have to read the whole chapter tonight. You do have to read the parent half of *this week's* idea before you sit down with the child.

The five-minute parent warm-up

Make this a habit.

Five minutes. Child not yet in the chair. Phone face down.

1. Read today's idea until you can say it in one sentence.
2. Say this week's three words —or this week's phrase —out loud. Hear yourself. Stay off the answer key until you have said them.
3. Glance at the "wrong phrases you should be able to hear." Name the one you would have given at fourteen.
4. Write one sentence you will actually say. Not a speech. Example: "What's on the table?" Or the opening line from this week's talk box.
5. Close the book to the student page. You are ready.

That five minutes is how you stay out of their working memory. If you are learning the phrase *while* they are stuck, you will talk too much. Prepare first. Then sit still.

How the student uses “For the student”

Every teaching chapter includes a short section written to the student, not about them. One or two pages. Warmer. Direct. What the idea is, a tiny worked example, two tries, an “explain it back” prompt, and one challenge. Hand it over after your short model, not instead of it. You stay in the room. The challenge is optional that day.

The student page is not something to send off with an unsupervised chatbot. The attempt is still theirs. You still hold the key.

When to skip ahead

Skip ahead when this band’s “done enough” checklist is already true *unaided*. Slow down when the same wrong phrase repeats after a clear listen and a real attempt. **If it isn’t clicking** will give you three likely causes and a next move. Missing ears or missing talk are skill problems, not character problems.

Diagnose the talking before you buy the high-school survey. If you need a human tutor, that is a normal high-school plan, not a failure of the kitchen.

For this week: pick one language. Pick the band by skill. Do the five-minute warm-up. Run the hour as *The Language Hour* describes it. Let the student page be theirs. Stop talking sooner than you want to. That is how you use the book.

If You Only Remember Five Things

Keep this page. The chapters will add wording, objects, and this week's talk box. They will not replace these.

1. Ears first, then the mouth, then the page. Hearing and saying grow together. Put something understandable on the table. Let them hear it. Then let them say it, while it is true. Then, if they need it, the letters, the characters, the hangul, the kana. A word list with no ears and no mouth is not a year. Waiting weeks to talk is not a gift. Scripts are tools. Teach the script as soon as the child needs it to read, not as a year of worksheets first.¹¹

2. The student talks. You ask one good question and wait. Three seconds. Maybe five. The silence is the work. An authentic question is one you have not already written the answer for.¹² “What is the grammar name?” is a quiz. “What’s on

¹¹Stephen D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982; internet edition 2009): we acquire by understanding messages a little beyond current competence; production “emerges.” Named theory of input, not a kitchen-table law and not a reason to keep a child silent for months. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026. ACTFL World-Readiness Standards name three modes: interpretive (ears), interpersonal (mouth), presentational (the line they can say alone). National Institute of Korean Language: Hangul is a phonemic writing system of consonant and vowel letters, composed into syllable blocks—an alphabet, teachable early, not a year of isolated worksheets. https://www.korean.go.kr/eng_hangeul/principle/001.html.

¹²Judith L. Shrum, “Wait-Time and the Use of Target or Native Languages,” *Foreign Language Annals* 18 (1985): first-year high-school Spanish and French; average 1.91 seconds after questions and 0.73 seconds after responses; wait-time longer after questions in the native language. Mary Budd Rowe, “Wait-Time and Rewards as Instructional Variables: Their Influence on Language, Logic, and Fate Control,” NARST paper, ERIC ED061103 (1972), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED061103.pdf>: wait three to five seconds after you ask and after they stop. Rowe studied elementary science classes. This book borrows the pause and says so. Martin Nystrand, Lawrence L. Wu, Adam Gamoran, Susie Zeiser, and Daniel A. Long, *Questions in Time: Investigating the Structure and Dynamics of Unfolding Classroom Discourse*, CELA

the table?” is closer—if you do not already have the sentence you want to hear. Struggle before rescue: ask, wait, hint, then model. You do not finish the sentence. You do not grab the talking.

3. A phrase said for real beats a chapter of grammar names. A greeting that is actually happening. An apple that is actually there. Then the mouth. Communication is the job; the grammar name is in the service of the phrase, not instead of it.¹³ A lecture on being grammatical, with nothing to say, is not the hour.

4. Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour. You cannot do every tense, every character, every standard. Two secondary years is a common U.S. model and often still Novice-range performance.¹⁴ The curriculum on the shelf is the map. Tuesday is one idea, one phrase, one question.

5. A path through a language is the promise. A percentile is not. Teach the phrase on the table. Birthday is not placement. ACTFL is a map of unrehearsed use, not a kitchen-table badge, and a score is not the path.¹⁵ You will sometimes slow down. You will sometimes skip ahead. Both are teaching. What this child can do depends on what they have already been invited to hear and say, not on a catalog grade.

The child listens and talks before the tool. You hold the key. A helper may explain this week’s idea *to you* from a named page. It is not a native speaker. It does not sit in the chair during the attempt.

If this week needs a compass, this is it. Five things. Then sit down and teach.

report ED461119 (2001), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED461119.pdf>: an authentic question is one “for which the asker has not prespecified an answer.”

¹³ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*: Novice use is formulaic and rote words, lists, and phrases said to meet a limited personal need. Texas 19 TAC §114.39: communication is “the overarching goal” ; students should converse, present, and interpret authentic materials; accuracy of grammar is in the service of communication. That is a public-school map, not a homeschool statute.

¹⁴ACTFL, *ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners* (2012): “The most common program model for language learning in this country continues to be two years of instruction at the secondary level. This model limits students to performance in the Novice range.” NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements (2026): a framework, not a curriculum.

¹⁵ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*: proficiency is unrehearsed use, not a rehearsed kitchen-table dialogue. A path through a language is the promise of this book. A percentile is not.

The Language Hour

The hour has a shape. Learn it once. Later chapters will give you today' s phrase, today' s named activity, and today' s talk box. They will not rebuild this hour. When a chapter says “run the session,” it means this.

You do not need a school bell. You need a listening start, a short model, a real attempt, one authentic question, mixed practice, and an unaided check. Younger children may finish in twenty-five minutes. Older students may need forty-five. The shape does not change. The phrase on the table does.

Sit down having already done the five-minute parent warm-up from *How to Use This Book This Week*. You know today' s idea. You have said this week' s three words out loud. The child listens and talks. You hold the key.

1. Warm-up listening

Three to five minutes. Something they already know how to hear: last week' s greeting, an object still on the table, a short recording from a named page. Mixed, not a quiz of names they cannot yet attach. This is retrieval, not a test of character.

Say:

“We’ re going to start with something you already know.”

“Listen. Then tell me what you heard.”

Keep this short. The warm-up is not the lesson. When you feel yourself teaching a new phrase here, stop. That phrase belongs in the model. A greeting they can already say is a story a first-grader can hold; a grammar name is a noise until it

attaches to something they already heard.¹⁶

2. Short model

Five to eight minutes. One new phrase, said while it is true. An apple on the table. A door you can open. Then you stop.

New, dense material —first gender pattern, first tone that changes the meaning, first particle as a job —is where a short model earns its keep. Show the move. Then fade.

Say:

“I’ m going to say this one short. Then you’ ll try.”

“Watch how I say it while I point. Then you say it.”

On the second pass, leave a hole:

“Your turn to tell me what’ s on the table. I’ ll point. You say it.”

When the idea is new, show one incorrect example and ask what wouldn’ t count as today’ s phrase.

If you are still talking at minute twelve, you are giving a lecture. Close the model. Hand them the object, the talk box, or the student page.

3. Student attempt

This is the center of the hour. Eight to twelve minutes. The first saying is theirs.

Hand them “For the student” if the chapter has it, or the first named activity from **How to teach it this week**. Then you talk less than you want to.

Say: “This one is yours. I’ ll be quiet.” Then be quiet.

¹⁶Stephen D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1982; internet edition 2009): a necessary but not sufficient condition to move from stage i to i+1 is understanding input containing i+1, focused on meaning not form; production “emerges” ; targeting i+1 with a structure of the day “is not necessary” and “may even be harmful.” Named theory, not a kitchen-table coefficient, and not a reason to keep a child silent until spring. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026. Session shape in this chapter is pedagogical design for the kitchen table, not a national language-minutes study (none was found).

If they stall, use this order: ask, wait, hint, then model. Not the reverse.

Ask:

“Show me what’ s on the table.”

“Say it while it’ s true.”

“What would you say to them?”

Wait. Count a slow three in your head —five if you can stand it. The silence is the work. If you fill it, you took the sentence back.

Hint, one hint: “Point at it. You already know this week’ s word.” Or: “Is it this one, or that one?”

Then, if they are still stuck after a real try: “I’ m going to say this one phrase. Then you take it from here.” Say the phrase. Return the talking.

If they have no idea to hang the sound on, that is a hole, not useful struggle. Fill it with a short retell, then return to the task.¹⁷ Keep your hands off their sentence. Taking it feels kind. It teaches them to watch. The child listens and talks. You hold the key.

If they say it wrong, two different moves. If the error does not block meaning and is not this week’ s form, recast once in the flow —say it the ordinary way —and go on. Do not expect them to notice. If it is this week’ s form, or meaning broke, prompt: repeat what they said with a rising tone; start the sentence and wait; offer two choices. Then, if still stuck, give the form and have them say it for real. You do not interrupt every utterance.¹⁸

¹⁷Michael H. Long, “Native Speaker/Non-native Speaker Conversation and the Negotiation of Comprehensible Input,” *Applied Linguistics* 4, no. 2 (1983): 126–41 (abstract): comprehensible input is probably required; modifications of interactional structure matter more than simplified speech alone. Repair —a pointing, a choice of two, a slower repeat —is the next move, not a lecture. There is no kitchen-table language randomized trial in these pages.

¹⁸Roy Lyster and Leila Ranta, “Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake: Negotiation of Form in Communicative Classrooms,” *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19, no. 1 (1997): 37–66: four primary French-immersion classrooms, 18.3 hours, 686 feedback moves; recasts 55 percent (375); recast uptake 31 percent; repair 18 percent, and those repairs were repetitions of the teacher, not student-generated. Prompts (elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, repetition) lead to student-generated repair more successfully. Limits: French immersion, primary, Canada; uptake is an immediate discourse move, not a delayed posttest.

4. One authentic question

Two or three minutes for the question itself; the talk around it can run longer, using the talk shape below. Not “did you get it?” They will say yes. You will learn nothing.

An authentic question is one for which you have not already written the answer.¹⁹ “What is the grammar name?” is recitation. “What’ s on the table?” is closer — if you do not already have the sentence you want to hear.

Say the opening line from this week’ s talk box. Then wait. Three to five seconds after you ask. Three to five again after they stop. Mary Budd Rowe found that elementary science teachers waited about one second; when they reached three to five, students talked longer, guessed less, and asked more of their own questions. That was science class. This book borrows the pause and says so. Judith Shrum, in first-year high-school Spanish and French, found about 1.91 seconds after questions and 0.73 seconds after answers —and teachers waited *longer* after questions in English than after questions in the language. After a target-language question, wait longer, not shorter. After they answer, wait again. That second pause is where revision happens.²⁰

One question. Maybe a follow-up. Then stop. If they cannot say it back, they copied a line. Return to the ears —object first, then the word —and give one more attempt.

¹⁹Martin Nystrand, Lawrence L. Wu, Adam Gamoran, Susie Zeiser, and Daniel A. Long, *Questions in Time: Investigating the Structure and Dynamics of Unfolding Classroom Discourse*, CELA report ED461119 (2001), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED461119.pdf>: an authentic question is one “for which the asker has not prespecified an answer.”

²⁰Mary Budd Rowe, “Wait-Time and Rewards as Instructional Variables: Their Influence on Language, Logic, and Fate Control,” NARST paper, ERIC ED061103 (1972), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED061103.pdf>: over 300 tapes of elementary science classes; mean wait-time about one second after a teacher question and 0.9 seconds after a student response. When mean wait-times of three to five seconds were achieved, nine student variables changed, including longer responses, fewer failures to respond, and more student questions. Rowe is science class. This book borrows the pause and says so. Judith L. Shrum, “Wait-Time and the Use of Target or Native Languages,” *Foreign Language Annals* 18 (1985): first-year high-school Spanish and French; over 7,500 classroom events; average 1.91 seconds (SD 1.64) after questions; 0.73 seconds (SD 0.63) after responses; wait-time significantly longer after questions in the native language. Full method tables not opened as a quote source; kitchen-table translation is the opened abstract’ s seconds.

5. Mixed practice

Ten to fifteen minutes. First a short blocked set of the new phrase —four to six tries that use today’ s idea —so they learn to execute. Then mix. Yesterday’ s greeting. Last month’ s object.

Blocked practice teaches execution. Mixed practice teaches *when* to use the phrase. A page of twenty identical blanks feels like mastery at 9 p.m. It often is not still there in two weeks.

Say: “These first few are today’ s phrase.” Then: “These are mixed on purpose. First decide what kind of job it is. Then say it.”

Stop while they can still think. Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour.

6. Unaided check

Three to five minutes. One short task. Book closed. No hints. No chatbot. No looking at the model.

Tonight’ s helped practice is not this check.²¹ Say: “One phrase. I won’ t help. That’ s the point.” A spoken line in the early years. A short sentence they built in the middle years. A small unrehearsed exchange in high school. When they finish, you look. If it is wrong, you diagnose which wrong phrase this is, and you note tomorrow’ s first move. Fade until the check does not need you.

Performance in a familiar frame is fine today. Proficiency is whether they can still do it tomorrow without the book. Do not call the child Intermediate because the textbook’ s cover says Level 2.

When to stop talking

After you ask, wait. If you fill the silence, you took the sentence back.

²¹Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, “Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–99: current performance is “often an unreliable index” of learning. The unaided check is the check this hour trusts. A fluent model turn is performance. The unaided phrase the next morning is the test.

During the attempt, your job is almost nothing. If you hear yourself explaining while they try, you have moved back into the model. Stop. Let them talk.

Instead of “I took two years and froze,” say today’s sentence: “What’s on the table?” Praise a clear try—not speed. Stop talking when the next sentence would be a rescue. Hands in your lap. Count five.

If you remember only one move from this page, remember that one.

The script, once

Later chapters will name this week’s marks, hangul, kana, or characters. They will not reprint this spine.

Scripts are tools. Teach the script as soon as the child needs it to read, not as a year of worksheets first. Hangul is an alphabet in blocks; teach it early, attached to greetings and names. Japanese: kana first, then kanji as needed; conversation runs in parallel from the start. Chinese: the tone is part of the word from week one; pinyin is a map, not a substitute; pick simplified or traditional once and stay with it. Spanish, French, Italian, and German use the Roman alphabet plus this week’s marks —ñ, a liaison you can hear, an umlaut you can see—not a second year of English phonics. Mandarin, Japanese, and Korean take more calendar time to read and write. Listening and speaking still go first. They do not wait for a finished inventory of characters.²²

²²National Institute of Korean Language, “About Hangeul,” https://www.korean.go.kr/eng_hangeul/principle/001.html: Hangul is a phonemic writing system of consonant and vowel letters, uniquely composed into syllabic units. The Japan Times / Banno et al., GENKI official lesson structure (publisher page): hiragana Lesson 1, katakana Lesson 2, kanji from Lesson 3; conversation and grammar in parallel from Lesson 1. <https://genki.japantimes.co.jp/site/whatis05.en.html>. Liu, Yao, et al., *Integrated Chinese*, Volume 1, 4th ed. (Boston: Cheng & Tsui, 2017), Basics (publisher textbook): tones are crucial; mā / má / mǎ / mà; pinyin represents sounds; two character sets in use. College Board, *AP Chinese Language and Culture Course and Exam Description* (effective Fall 2020): use the selected writing system (simplified or traditional) consistently. Texas 19 TAC §114.39: students of logographic languages such as Chinese and Japanese “will require more time to achieve proficiency, especially in reading and writing”; initially “the skill focus should be placed on speaking and listening without ignoring reading and writing.”

The talk shape, once

Later chapters will fill this week's opening line. They will not reprint this shape. When a chapter prints a talk box, it means this.

Opening line. In the target language, with a gloss in English in brackets. Formulaic and real can be the same sentence at Novice: there is a child, they have a name. As they move toward Intermediate, questions with more than one honest answer become possible. Examples of the *shape*, not required topics: «¿Qué hay en la mesa?» [What's on the table?] «Qu'est-ce que c'est?» [What is this?]

Three to five follow-ups. Pick; you do not need all five every Tuesday. Not five new vocabulary items. One meaning, checked. Is it this, or that? What color? Where is it? Do you like it? Are there two?

How to wait. After you ask, count a slow three. After they answer, wait again. If the silence is hard, look at the object or the script still-life, not at the child. Say, "Take your time. I'll wait."

What a stuck silence usually means. Search for a word—Novice speakers pause often while they hunt.²³ Wait time has been too short for years—count. The question was not the situation on the table—they did not understand. A recast passed unnoticed. Or the question was a grammar-name quiz in disguise. The next move is a pointing, a choice of two, a slower repeat, a rehearsed frame—not a lecture.

Done enough today: the child says one of the lines, or a cousin of it, without looking.

The AI rules, once

Later chapters will point here in one sentence. They will not reprint this box.

Child first. You hold the key. AI is optional for the adult. The tool is not a native speaker.

The child listens, speaks, and writes before any tool is in the room.
You keep the answer key. A chatbot does not sit beside them as the

²³ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*: Novice Mid speakers "pause often as they search for vocabulary or appropriate structure." Silence is often search, not refusal.

only speaker.

Use a tool, if you use one at all, on your account, after the child has tried:

1. **Explain this week’ s idea to you** from a named textbook page. One paragraph in English, two mistakes this age makes, one tiny check you can mark without the model in the room. If the model and the book disagree, the book wins. Named page, not “explain Spanish.”
2. **Extra practice of the same shape, new words from this week’ s pages, answers hidden.** You hold the key. The child never sees it. Do not photograph tonight’ s assigned worksheet for a key.
3. **A short dialogue SCRIPT to perform after the child has tried.** Six lines. Labelled GENERATED, with the date, the tool, and “checked against [book, page].” Not a native speaker. Gloss each line. You cut anything you cannot check. Then you and the child *perform* it, twice, swapping parts. Then the script goes away. The unaided exit is one line without looking. This is a still-life, not a chatbot.
4. **Role-play after the attempt, parent in the room.** Grades 1–5: skip the live chat. Do the script and the parent-child performance. High school: a timer, five or ten minutes, this week’ s situation only, you sit beside the child. The model plays a shopkeeper, a ticket clerk, or a classmate —not a named person and not a native-speaker biography. Short turns. If stuck, yes/no or two choices; do not take the turn. No fluency score. When the timer ends, the tab closes. Then an unaided sentence to you with the machine off. AP families: the course project must be the student’ s own work; generative tools may help explore a topic or search for sources in the language; they may not write the Test.²⁴

²⁴College Board, *AP World Languages and Cultures* course project policy for 2026–27: the project must be the student’ s own work; generative AI may be used to explore topics and to search for target-language sources; students are responsible for developing their own presentation. College Board, *AP Exam Terms and Conditions* for 2026 exams (updated 27 April 2026), Section 4: no part of Test answers, work, or submission may be generated in whole or in part using AI tools. ACTFL, “The Role of Technology in Language Learning” (19 May 2017): “Research does

5. **A hint script you say.** Four steps: what did you try; point at the pattern (gender, particle, tone, case, ending); a smaller try of the same shape; stop. Never the full sentence. Never “here is how a native would say it.”
6. **Diagnose work already done.** Name the most likely problem in one sentence. One question for you to ask the child. One retest of the same shape. Do not rewrite the paragraph to an A.
7. **Stroke-order lookup pointing to a named source**—a ministry table, a Genki page, an Integrated Korean hangul page, the page on the table. You verify. If the model is not sure, see the book. The child writes on paper. The printout is not handwriting practice.
8. **Talk-box questions you vet.** Eight follow-ups, three marked as opening questions, glossed, inside this week’s pages. You delete coverage slog. You ask; the child talks to you, not to the tab.

Never leave an unsupervised chatbot as the only conversation partner, especially in grades 1–5. Never say “translate this whole page” or “write my essay in French.” Never tell the model it is from Paris, Seoul, or Guadalajara. Never grade pronunciation from a “% native” score you have not opened a paper for. Never generate a certificate of fluency. Also out: photographing the worksheet for a key; an open-web agent in the child’s hands; a companion persona; a detector as cop on the child’s second-language paragraph; treating generated audio or a generated character sheet as the child’s work.

In a high-school math study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice about 48 percent and then cut the unaided exam about 17 percent; a hint tutor that withheld full solutions raised practice without that exam drop. That study is mathematics, not a language hour. The crutch still governs the hour: if the model produces the sentence, the translation, or the conversation, the child is a spectator.²⁵

not support the isolated use of technology for acquiring a language” ; a language educator plans, instructs, assesses, and facilitates. In a homeschool, the parent is that educator for the hour.

²⁵Hamsa Bastani, Osbert Bastani, Alp Sungu, Haosen Ge, Özge Kabakçı, and Rei Mariman, “Generative AI without guardrails can harm learning: Evidence from high school mathematics,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Field experiment, nearly 1,000 Turkish high-school math students, GPT-4-0613: a ChatGPT-like tool raised

Language models invent citations. Walters and Wilder found that more than half of GPT-3.5 citations and nearly one in five GPT-4 citations were fabricated. Treat a generated “I am a native speaker from Guadalajara,” a perfect dialogue, and a fluency certificate as untrusted until you find the phrase in a named book or the child’s own mouth.²⁶

Hermes 4 is a chat model. Hermes Agent is a different runtime. Grok the assistant is not Grok Bot. Grok Bot has no education product and is not a school-safe tutor. Its advertised Game-artist job is pictures, not a language course. If you use any of these, they live on your machine or your account. They are not the child’s language partner, and they are not a companion.

Detectors fail often enough —and they fail especially on writing that is not the writer’s first language —that they are not a verdict on a child’s page.²⁷

assisted practice grades 48 percent relative to control, then cut unaided exam grades 17 percent; a hint tutor that withheld full solutions raised practice 127 percent and was statistically indistinguishable from control on the unaided exam (point estimate -0.004). GPT Base was correct on 51 percent of the practice set. The paper notes that math has objective scoring “which is unavailable in creative subjects such as writing.” This is a math RCT, not a language RCT; the transferable caution is the crutch. Author PDF: https://hamsabastani.github.io/education_llm.pdf.

²⁶William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, “Fabrication and errors in the bibliographic citations generated by ChatGPT,” *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045: 55 percent of GPT-3.5 citations and 18 percent of GPT-4 citations were fabricated; of the real citations, 43 percent (GPT-3.5) and 24 percent (GPT-4) had substantive errors. Same paper: fabricated methods and results in some outputs. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-023-41032-5>. A generated native-speaker biography is the same machinery.

²⁷Weixin Liang, Mert Yuksekgonul, Yining Mao, Eric Wu, and James Zou, “GPT detectors are biased against non-native English writers,” *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023): 100779: average false-positive rate on human TOEFL essays 61.3 percent (61.22 percent in the preprint, arXiv:2304.02819). Thuy Thi-Nhu Ngo, Howard Hao-Jan Chen, and Kyle Kuo-Wei Lai, “The effectiveness of automatic speech recognition in ESL/EFL pronunciation: A meta-analysis,” *ReCALL* 36, no. 1 (2024): 4–21: overall Hedges’ $g = 0.69$; small on suprasegmentals ($g = 0.37$); practicing alone $g = 0.44$; under 18 $g = 0.67$; authors: children’s non-native speech “has not been highly effective” for current ASR. TTS is a second listen, not a grade. Hermes Agent: <https://hermes-agent.org/> (open-source agent runtime, February 2026). Hermes 4 is a separate chat/reasoning model family; Nous Portal docs state it is not recommended inside Hermes Agent. Grok Bot: xAI, “Introducing Grok Bot,” 11 August 2026, <https://x.ai/news/introducing-grok-bot>, and Grok Bot FAQ, <https://docs.x.ai/grok-bot/faq> —cloud computer; no education product and no FERPA claim on the pages opened 1 September 2026; advertised jobs include a “Game artist” that makes pictures. Grok the assistant, Grok Bot, and the El Salvador school partnership for Grok the assistant

You can teach this entire book with no AI. Many families will. The hour still has the same shape.

A Tuesday, said plainly

Here is an illustration, not a reported family. A parent has spent five minutes saying this week's three words out loud. The child warms up by hearing last week's greeting. The parent shows a short model—one phrase, said while it is true—then puts the object on the table. The child tries and talks. The parent asks, "What's on the table?" and waits. Mixed practice: today's phrase next to yesterday's one. Exit: "One line. I won't help." Right or wrong, the hour had a shape.

On a high-school day the same shape holds. Warm-up on two familiar questions. Model a short exchange. They try. Question from the talk box. Exit: one unaided sentence, machine off.

You can run that hour. You need today's idea, a sentence you refuse to grab, and the willingness to stop talking. Dose is not a 180-day script. There is no national table of language minutes for the kitchen.²⁸ Later chapters will say: run the session as in *The Language Hour*. That sentence is this page. The phrase will change. The hour will not.

are three different objects.

²⁸No IES, NCES, or NCAA page opened on 1 September 2026 prescribed a national homeschool language-minutes table. North Carolina DNPE *recommends* (not law) five hours across all subjects; Pennsylvania statute names 180 days or 900/990 hours for the whole program; New York's unit is 6,480 minutes. None of these is a national language block.

Chapter 1

Spanish



Figure 3: A kitchen-table still-life from a high three-quarter view: three real objects (a pencil, an apple, a cup), a folded paper with «¿Qué hay en la mesa?» and a short English gloss, an unbranded map edge showing more than one Spanish-speaking place. No people. No logos. No brand spines.

Why this matters

Spanish is how a student learns to hear a useful phrase, say it while it is true, and then —later— build a short sentence of their own. It is not a year of grammar names. It is not a brand. It is not an exam title unless you chose that exam.

That is worth the struggle because a path through a language hangs on a mouth that is allowed to work. A child who can point at a pencil and say «Hay un lápiz» [There's a pencil] has more Spanish than a child who can chant *masculine* and *feminine* with nothing on the table. A child who can still do it tomorrow without the book has more than a child who recites a dialogue once. The first is the start of unrehearsed use. The second is a performance. Both have a place. Only the first is the promise.²⁹

There is no national Spanish syllabus. ACTFL's 2024 guidelines are a map of what a person can do when the talk is not a recitation: Novice language is learned words, lists, and formulaic phrases; Intermediate language is short created sentences in a familiar situation. Those are ordinary descriptions, not kitchen-table badges. A rehearsed table dialogue is performance. Proficiency is whether they can still do a cousin of it without the script.³⁰ The most common U.S. public-school model is two secondary years, and that model commonly leaves students in the Novice range of *performance*. That is a map of what two years often buy. It is not a verdict on your table.³¹

²⁹ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, 4th ed. (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2024). Proficiency is “the ability to use language to accomplish communication objectives” in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, scored on FACT (functions and tasks; accuracy; context and content; text type). Novice: “express basic personal information and satisfy a limited number of personal needs using formulaic and rote utterances, lists, and phrases.” Intermediate: “participate in short conversations on predictable topics, ask and answer simple questions, and handle simple transactions using sentence-level communication.” Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026.

³⁰ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*. Performance “measures what an individual is able to do within familiar task types, contexts, and content areas, using language that has been learned and rehearsed” ; it “does not provide comprehensive evidence of ability to use language outside of that context (that is, comprehensive evidence of proficiency).” A person may look Intermediate on a practiced task and still be rated Novice if they cannot sustain Intermediate criteria “consistently in unrehearsed communication tasks.”

³¹ACTFL, *ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners* (2012): “The most common program model for language learning in this country continues to be two years of instruction at the secondary level. This model limits students to performance in the Novice range.” Continuity from elementary with at least 90 minutes per week can reach Advanced-range *performance*,

California treats Spanish as a Category I language —closer to English in calendar terms than Mandarin or Korean on that state’s map —and reminds teachers that elementary students without a heritage background often stay Novice for an extended period. That is guidance, not a homeschool law, and not a talent myth.³² Texas maps a first credit, Level I, to Novice Mid through Novice High: ask and answer about everyday life; identify key words; describe people, objects, and simple situations with a mixture of words, phrases, and simple sentences. Level I has no prerequisite. It may be offered in elementary, middle, or high school. That is a public-school course shape. It is not a homeschool statute.³³

The University of California asks, for its A–G pattern, two years of the *same* language other than English, and recommends a third. That is a named flagship, not a federal law. Other colleges print their own number. Look up the colleges on this family’s list.³⁴ College Board offers two Spanish Advanced Placement objects: Spanish Language and Culture, which it describes as approximately equivalent to

with the caution that reaching each range is more than matching hours, and that age and cognitive development matter.

³²California Department of Education, *World Languages Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (adopted 9 January 2019). Guidance; connected to student performance, not grade level. Category I includes French, Italian, and Spanish (languages described as closely related to English on that FSI-derived map). “It is common in the elementary school context for students who do not have a heritage language background to remain at the Novice level for an extended period of time.” Novice on that map: learned words and phrases (formulaic). Intermediate: sentences and strings (created). Superior is described as unlikely even in long high-school sequences. Public-school map, not homeschool law.

³³19 Tex. Admin. Code §114.39 (Level I). Level I may be offered in elementary, middle, or high school; one high-school credit; no prerequisite. Students in Level I are expected to reach Novice Mid to Novice High (ACTFL 2012 / Performance Descriptors). Novice Mid: memorized and recalled words and phrases. Novice High: learned and recombined phrases and short sentences. Interpersonal knowledge and skills include asking and responding to questions about everyday life; presentational skills include describing people, objects, and simple situations with a mixture of words, phrases, and simple sentences. Communication is “the overarching goal.” Heritage speakers “may be allowed to accelerate based on their ability to demonstrate a proficiency.” Public-school map, not homeschool law. Foundation High School Program, 19 Tex. Admin. Code §74.12 (effective 1 August 2025): two LOTE credits in the same language (or listed computer-programming courses) for the public diploma —not a homeschool statute, and not “coding equals Spanish.”

³⁴University of California, A–G subject requirements, area E, plus *Quick Reference Guide* (August 2026): two years, or equivalent to the second level of high school instruction, of the same language other than English required; a third year recommended. Seventh/eighth-grade language may count if the high school accepts it as equivalent; prior to seventh grade will not. Common Data Set 2024–2025 template, item C5, asks each participating college for units required and units recommended in foreign language. Two years is a common ask, not a universal law.

an upper-intermediate college course, and Spanish Literature and Culture, a separate survey. Only Spanish among the seven languages in this book has that second exam. Both are optional. Credit is by college. A path through Spanish does not require the letters AP.³⁵

The registrar word is **Spanish**. Numbered high-school years —Spanish I, Spanish II, Spanish III, Spanish IV —are ordinary English a stranger can read. NCAA’s homeschool sample transcript uses those titles. Never write a curriculum brand in the title column. Never write Conversation 101. Never write “AP Spanish” unless the student is actually sitting that course-and-exam.³⁶

Spanish is spoken in Spain and across Latin America. That is this week’s map sentence. Then you teach. A continent quiz is not the hour. This week’s greeting is this week’s greeting. If someone in the house already speaks Spanish, that is a gift and a different job —accelerate by what they can already do, not by four years of Level I as seat-time. Chapter 8 holds that conversation. This chapter still uses the ordinary title, and the child still talks.

Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour. You will not finish every tense. You will finish some phrases, said for real, with an object on the table. High-frequency talk first. Gender as a pattern you can hear. *Ser* and *estar* later, in ordinary language, when location, feeling, and identity are this week’s idea —not as a year of copula theory.

This week you can learn how *el* versus *la* is a pattern you can hear, and why «Es un mesa» is a wrong turn, not a cute slip. Today the student can name two objects on the table with the article, looking at the objects, not at a list.

³⁵College Board, AP Central, “AP Courses and Exams,” opened 1 September 2026: AP Spanish Language and Culture; AP Spanish Literature and Culture. College Board describes AP Spanish Language as approximately equivalent to an upper-intermediate college-level course. AP Spanish Literature is a separate survey; among the seven languages treated in this book, only Spanish has this second AP. Language-and-Culture courses revised for 2026–27. Credit is by college. SAT Subject Tests were discontinued June 2021.

³⁶NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*, sample transcript titles include Spanish I, Spanish II, Spanish III, College Spanish. Course name on the worksheet should match the transcript title. Locked titles in this book: Spanish, French, Italian, German, Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Korean, World Language.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a speaker of Spanish. You do need to understand today's idea well enough to hear «Es un mesa» and «Yo soy en la silla» not as cute slips.

Many adults feel rusty around a language they never studied, or studied as a chart. That feeling is common. It is not a verdict. Five minutes of this section, then the warm-up at the end, is enough for tomorrow. The child still does the talking.

Everyday picture. Three things sit on the table: a pencil, an apple, a cup. You point at the pencil and say, while it is true, «Hay un lápiz» [There's a pencil]. You point at the apple: «Hay una manzana» [There's an apple]. You are not teaching a part of speech. You are attaching a small, useful phrase to a thing the child can see. Then you ask «¿Qué hay en la mesa?» [What's on the table?] and you wait. The work is the pointing and the mouth. The grammar name can wait.

Precise picture. Spanish nouns come with a small word in front —*el* or *la* for “the,” *un* or *una* for “a/an.” That small word is the gender pattern you can hear. Many words that end in *-o* take *el/un* (*el lápiz* is an exception in spelling, not in the article: it is still *el lápiz*, *un lápiz*). Many words that end in *-a* take *la/una* (*la mesa*, *una mesa*, *la manzana*). There are exceptions you will meet later —*el mapa*, *el día*, *la mano* —and you will not spend week one on a list of them. You will hear «el mesa» or «un mesa» as a mismatch, the way you hear “a apples” in English as a mismatch. The repair is the phrase again, attached to the object, not a lecture titled *masculine/feminine*.

A few high-frequency frames will carry the first months:

- «Hola.» [Hello.]
- «Buenos días.» [Good morning.]
- «Me llamo ____.» [My name is ____.]
- «¿Cómo te llamas?» [What's your name?]
- «Hay un / una ____.» [There's a ____.]
- «Es un / una ____.» [It's a ____.]
- «¿Te gusta?» [Do you like it?]
- «Sí.» / «No.» [Yes. / No.]

Those are formulaic. At Novice, formulaic and real can be the same sentence. There is a child. They have a name. There is an apple. They like it or they do not.

Ser and *estar* both translate as “to be.” That is why English speakers mash them.

In ordinary language, save them until the child can already name things. Then teach them as this week's idea, not as a theory of copulas:

- *Ser* for who or what something is: «Soy tu hija.» [I am your daughter.] «Es un lápiz.» [It is a pencil.]
- *Estar* for where something is, and for how someone feels right now: «Estoy en la cocina.» [I am in the kitchen.] «Estoy cansado.» / «Estoy cansada.» [I am tired —masculine / feminine speaker.]

A useful pair, both true at once: «Ella es mi hermana. Está en la silla.» [She is my sister. She is in the chair.] Identity with *ser*. Location with *estar*. You do not need the rest of the uses this week. You need to hear «Soy en la silla» as the wrong verb for location.

Input matters. Stephen Krashen argued that we acquire language by understanding messages a little beyond where we are, with attention on meaning. That is a named theory of input, not a household law, and not a reason to keep a first-grader silent until spring. Ears first, then the mouth. Production is allowed this week.³⁷

When the child misses this week's form, you have two adult moves, not a slogan. A recast is you saying their idea again, correctly, without stopping the talk. A prompt is you making them try the form —two choices, a start, a rising repeat —when this week's pattern is the one that slipped. If the miss does not block meaning and is not this week's form, recast once and go on. If it is this week's form, or meaning broke, prompt; then, if they are still stuck, give the form and have them say it for real. You will not interrupt every utterance. You will not pretend correction never helps.³⁸

³⁷Stephen D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (Pergamon, 1982; internet edition 2009). A necessary but not sufficient condition to move from stage *i* to *i*+1 is understanding input containing *i*+1, with attention on meaning. If communication succeeds and there is enough input, "*i* + 1 will be provided automatically" ; deliberately targeting *i*+1 with a structure of the day "is not necessary" and "may even be harmful." "Production ability emerges. It is not taught directly." Named theory, not a kitchen-table coefficient, and not a reason to keep a homeschool first-grader silent for months.

³⁸Roy Lyster and Leila Ranta, "Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake: Negotiation of Form in Communicative Classrooms," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19, no. 1 (1997): 37–66. Four primary French-immersion classrooms, 18.3 hours, 686 feedback moves. Recasts 55 percent (375). A recast is "the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error." Recast uptake 31 percent; repair 18 percent, and those repairs were repetitions of the teacher, not student-generated. Prompts (elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, repetition) lead to student-generated repair more successfully in that set. Limits: French immersion,

After you ask in Spanish, wait longer than feels polite. First-year high-school Spanish and French teachers in one opened study averaged about two seconds after a question and less than one second after the student answered. Three to five seconds is a science-class aim this book borrows on purpose: look at the object if the silence is hard. After they answer, wait again. That second pause is where a revision can still happen.³⁹ Silence at Novice is often search for a word, not refusal.⁴⁰

A generated paragraph in fluent Spanish is a scene. It is not the child's language. A model is not a speaker from Guadalajara.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. The article and the noun do not match. «Es un mesa.» «El manzana.» «Hay una lápiz.»

What it usually means. The child treated *un/una* as English *a*, which does not change. They have not yet heard the pattern as a pair.

What to say. Point. «¿Un mesa o una mesa?» [A table—which small word?] Wait. If they are still stuck: «Una mesa.» They say it. You go on. You do not open a gender lecture.

2. *Ser* for location, or *estar* for identity. «Yo soy en la silla.» «Estoy estudiante.»

What it usually means. English has one “am.” The child used the first “to be” they learned for every job. This is a later-band miss. If you have not taught the

primary, Canada; uptake is an immediate discourse move, not a delayed posttest. Roy Lyster and Kazuya Saito, “Oral Feedback in Classroom SLA: A Meta-analysis,” *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 32 (2010): 265–302, abstract: 15 classroom studies, N = 827; corrective feedback significant and durable; effects larger for prompts than recasts. Coefficients beyond the abstract not used here.

³⁹Judith L. Shrum, “Wait-Time and the Use of Target or Native Languages,” *Foreign Language Annals* 18 (1985). Abstract: first-year high-school Spanish and French; average 1.91 seconds after questions, 0.73 seconds after responses; wait-time significantly longer after questions in the native language. Full method tables not opened for this book. Mary Budd Rowe, “Wait-Time and Rewards as Instructional Variables, Their Influence on Language, Logic, and Fate Control,” NARST paper, ERIC ED061103, 1972. Elementary *science* classrooms; wait of three to five seconds after a question and after a student stops talking. Borrowed as an aim and labelled as science class.

⁴⁰ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, Novice Mid speaking: speakers pause often as they search for vocabulary or appropriate structure. Silence is often search, not refusal.

pair yet, recast and go on: «Sí, estás en la silla.» If this week's idea is the pair, prompt: «¿Soy en la silla o estoy en la silla?»

3. A list with no ears and no mouth. Twenty nouns copied. No object on the table. No question. The child can read *lápiz* and cannot say «Hay un lápiz» while pointing.

What it usually means. Coverage won. The hour became English phonics in Spanish clothing.

What to say. Three real objects. One frame. «¿Qué hay en la mesa?» The list waits.

4. A fluent page nobody in the house said. A chatbot paragraph. A “native speaker” dialogue with a birthplace attached to the model. A certificate of fluency.

What it usually means. The work was outsourced. Language models invent speakers the way they invent citations. A fluent turn is performance, not the child's knowledge.⁴¹

What to say. “Show me the objects. Say one line with the machine off.” If they cannot, the paragraph comes off. They try again.

5. The map ate the hour. Twenty minutes on capitals. No greeting. No object. Or a heritage speaker seated in Level I for four years because a sequence chart said so.

What it usually means. A cultures unit, or a seat-time habit, replaced talk. Spanish lives in more than one place; this week's phrase is still this week's phrase. A child who already speaks is not a first-year student in disguise.

What to say. One map sentence. Then the table. For a speaker already in the house, skip ahead by what they can do. Chapter 8 will help you name that honestly.

⁴¹William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, “Fabrication and Errors in the Bibliographic Citations Generated by ChatGPT,” *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045. GPT-3.5: 55 percent of citations fabricated; GPT-4: 18 percent. Of the real citations, 43 percent (GPT-3.5) and 24 percent (GPT-4) had substantive errors. The same paper reports fabricated methods and results in some outputs. A generated “native speaker” biography is the same machinery in language clothes. Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, “Learning Versus Performance: An Integrative Review,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): 176–199. Performance during instruction is often an unreliable index of long-term learning.

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, with three objects and a scrap of paper, no student in the room.

1. Point at each object and say, out loud, the phrase you will actually use: «Hay un lápiz.» «Hay una manzana.» «Hay una taza.» [There's a cup.] If you are unsure of an article, check this week's page in the book you already own, or skip that object. You are installing the pair, not becoming a dictionary.
2. Write today's opening on the scrap: «¿Qué hay en la mesa?» Under it, the gloss: What's on the table? Say the question once. Count a slow three. That silence is the lesson.
3. Write the wrong turn you must be able to hear: «Es un mesa.» Next to it, the repair you will actually say: «¿Un mesa o una mesa?»
4. If this week's band includes *ser/estar*, write one true pair: «Soy _____. Estoy en _____.» If it does not, leave that pair in the folder.
5. Put the pencil down. You are ready. The child still talks.

If those five minutes are fluent for you, you can hear a mismatched article and a coverage slog. That is the job.

How to teach it this week

Run the language hour from the front of this book. This chapter fills it with Spanish. Warm-up ears. Short model while it is true. Student attempt. One good question, then wait. Recast in the flow, or prompt if it is this week's form. Unaided exit. The curriculum on the shelf is the map. The hour is triage.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday's object in one phrase. «¿Qué hay?» pointing at one thing they already named. No tool. No new list.

Short model (5–8 minutes). You put three real objects on the table. Think aloud in two languages only as much as you must: “I am going to say the phrase while I point, because it is true.” «Hay un lápiz.» Pause. «Hay una manzana.» Pause. Then the question: «¿Qué hay en la mesa?» You are showing talk, not delivering a lecture on gender.

Fade as soon as you can. Second sitting: they point while you say. Third: they say while you point. Fourth: they name one object unaided, book closed. Include one incorrect example you say on purpose: «Hay una lápiz» —then you wrinkle your

face and repair it: «Hay un lápiz.» The child hears the mismatch. You do not turn that into a worksheet.

Exact wording you can steal.

On the table: «¿Qué hay en la mesa?» Then wait.

On a mismatch: «¿Un mesa o una mesa?» Then wait.

On a recast that is not this week's form: «Sí, hay una manzana.» And you go on. You do not stop the talk to name the error.

On a name: «¿Cómo te llamas?» Then wait. If they stall: «Me llamo _____. ¿Y tú?» [My name is _____. And you?]

On like/not like: «¿Te gusta?» Point. Wait.

On location, later: «¿Dónde está?» [Where is it?] If they answer with *ser*: «¿Está en la mesa o es en la mesa?»

On the chatbot: “If we cannot hear you say it, it is not tonight's Spanish. The model stays closed until you have tried.”

First problem for the student, after the model. Two objects still on the table. Product goal on a sticky note: name each one with *un* or *una*, looking at the object. Book closed for the attempt. You wait. Struggle before rescue. You do not grab the sentence.

One good question. After the attempt: «¿Qué hay?» —now without pointing first. The student generates the phrase.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three short namings of the new type, unaided, after the fade. Then mix: yesterday's greeting, last week's color if you have one, one “un mesa” repair, one object they have not named today.

Exit ticket (3–5 minutes, unaided). One question, objects still in view, one phrase they say alone. Tool closed. You grade the unaided phrase. A fluent generated dialogue is performance. The phrase they can still say is the test.

How to fade help. You say and point → they point while you say → they say while you point → they name unaided → they ask *you* the question. When they can attach *un/una* without your prompt, put the scaffold away. Bring it back when a new kind of phrase arrives —a location, a feeling, a created sentence.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. You hold the key: is there an object, a phrase said for real, and an unaided try? You are not the textbook.

Grade-band moves

These are sequence anchors, not twelve mini-books. Place by skill, not by birthday. A fourteen-year-old who cannot yet name an object is still in the first band of this chapter for the *talk*. They may still put Spanish I on a high-school transcript if the year's work is a first credit. A nine-year-old who can recombine short sentences is not "behind" because a catalog printed grade 4 on a cover.

Grades 1–2. Play and listen. Greetings, names, objects on the table. Songs if you like them, attached to something true —a hello at the door, a name in a circle —not as a concert. Novice Low to Novice Mid is a generous description of unrehearsed use. California's reminder is useful here: non-heritage elementary students often stay Novice for an extended period. That is expected. Short sits. Then stop. The child points. The child says one line. You wait. You do not start *ser/estar*. You do not start a gender worksheet. *El/la* arrives as a sound next to the object.

Grades 3–5. More phrases. Short present-tense sentences the book actually taught: «Me gusta la manzana.» [I like the apple.] Gender as a hearing pattern: *el lápiz / la mesa*. Still Novice. Novice High —recombined phrases and short sentences, consistently —is a lot of language for a ten-year-old in a foreign-language hour. Celebrate a created sentence when it appears. Do not call the year Intermediate because a chapter title jumped.

Grades 6–8. Middle-school Level I, if you are starting now, or a FLES continuation if the elementary hours were real. Texas notes that Level I may be offered in middle school. Recombination begins if the hours have included ears and mouth. *Ser/estar* can earn a sitting here: identity versus location, two short sentences that are both true. Keep the ordinary title honest: write middle-school Spanish, or Spanish I, only if the family intends that credit under their state's rule. A continuation that died in grade 5 and restarts in grade 7 is a new Level I in skill, whatever the old folder said.

Grades 9–12. Carnegie units a stranger can read —Spanish I through Spanish IV. Years 1–2 cover the common college ask of two years of the same language when the work is real. Years 3–4 aim at Intermediate *performance* if time-on-task holds: created sentences, a short unrehearsed exchange on a familiar topic. AP Language and/or Literature are optional overlays. They are not this chapter's floor.

A heritage speaker accelerates by demonstrated proficiency, not by four years of Level I. If the student sits an AP exam, College Board forbids AI-generated test answers, and the course project remains the student's own work.⁴²

Named activities

Run one or two in a sitting. They are not a 180-day bank.

Activity 1 —Table Talk

Time. 10–15 minutes.

Materials. Three real objects on the table. A scrap with «¿Qué hay en la mesa?»

The fun of it. Pointing at what is actually there. The apple is not a flashcard of an apple.

The skill it builds. A rehearsed phrase said for a real reason. Novice talk. Not a vocabulary list with no mouth.

How to run it. Model one line per object. Ask the opening question. Wait. If they stall, point, or offer two choices: «¿Es un lápiz o una manzana?» They name. You recast or prompt. Stop while there is still an object un-named if the sit is going long. That leftover is tomorrow's warm-up.

Activity 2 —Name Circle

Time. 8 minutes.

Materials. None, or a paper name card.

The fun of it. Saying who they are.

The skill it builds. Formulaic self-introduction. Not a conjugation chart.

How to run it. You: «Me llamo _____. ¿Cómo te llamas?» Wait. They: «Me llamo _____.» If there is a sibling, they ask the sibling. Grades 1–2 may stop at the

⁴²College Board, AP World Language and Culture revisions, 2026–27: the course project must be the student's own work; generative AI, if used, is to support learning, not to bypass it; students are responsible for developing their own presentation in a way that demonstrates their language abilities. AP Exam Terms and Conditions 2026, Section 4 (updated 27 April 2026): no part of test answers may be generated with AI tools.

name. Grades 6–12 may add «Mucho gusto» [Nice to meet you] and, later, «Soy estudiante» [I am a student] when *ser* is this week's idea.

Activity 3 —El/La Sort

Time. 10 minutes.

Materials. The objects themselves, or object cards you made. Two paper tents: *el / un* and *la / una*.

The fun of it. The click when the article matches.

The skill it builds. Gender as a pattern the parent can hear. Wrong *el mesa*. Not “masculine/feminine” as a lecture.

How to run it. Place *lápiz* under *el/un*. Place *mesa* (or a picture of a table, or just say it while touching the table) under *la/una*. The child sorts the rest. You listen for «el manzana». Prompt: two choices. Grades 1–2: sort three objects and stop. Grades 9–12: after the sort, one unaided sentence per object.

Activity 4 —Where vs What (*ser/estar* later)

Time. 15 minutes. Grades 6–12, or a younger student who already names objects fluently.

Materials. A person in a place —a sibling in a chair, or the student standing by the door.

The fun of it. Two short sentences that are both true.

The skill it builds. Identity versus location in ordinary language. Not a year of copula theory.

How to run it. You model: «Ella es mi hermana. Está en la silla.» The student says the pair about themselves: «Soy _____. Estoy en _____.» Then mix: you ask «¿Quién es?» [Who is it?] versus «¿Dónde está?» [Where is it?]. Hear «Soy en la silla» as the miss. Prompt, then go on.

Activity 5 —One Map Sentence

Time. 5 minutes, once.

Materials. An unbranded map.

The fun of it. Spanish lives in more than one place.

The skill it builds. One cultures sentence, then back to this week' s phrase. Not a geography unit.

How to run it. Point at Spain. Point at a stretch of Latin America. Say, in English, one sentence: Spanish is spoken in Spain and across Latin America; today' s greeting is still today' s greeting. Then put the map away. Return to «¿Qué hay en la mesa?» A high-school student may later read a short authentic notice from one place. That is a later sitting. It is not this five minutes.

Activity 6 —Two-Choice Repair

Time. 5–8 minutes.

Materials. One object. Two index cards with the pair you will actually hear wrong this week (*un / una*, or later *soy / estoy*).

The fun of it. Catching the small word.

The skill it builds. A prompt instead of a grab. Student-generated repair when this week' s form slipped.

How to run it. They say the line. If it is right, recast-as-yes and go on: «Sí, hay una manzana.» If this week' s form slipped, hold up the two cards. Wait. They pick. They say the line again. You do not announce “that was a prompt.”

Activity 7 —Color and Count

Time. 8–10 minutes. Grades 3–12, once numbers 1–5 and two colors are already in the ears.

Materials. Two apples, or two pencils of different colors.

The fun of it. More than one of a real thing.

The skill it builds. A follow-up that still checks one meaning: color, or how many. Not five new vocabulary items.

How to run it. After they name the object: «¿De qué color es?» [What color is it?] Wait. «¿Hay dos?» [Are there two?] Wait. Accept a word, a phrase, or a

pointing plus one word. Mix in last week's article.

Talk box —Table, this week

This box is an illustration of a sitting. Label it that way if you reuse the lines in a family notebook: a composite, not a reported child.

Opening (say this, then wait).

«¿Qué hay en la mesa?»
[What's on the table?]

Follow-ups (pick three to five; one meaning, checked).

1. «¿Es un lápiz o una mesa?» [Is it a pencil or a table?]
2. «¿De qué color es?» [What color is it?]
3. «¿Dónde está?» [Where is it?]
4. «¿Te gusta?» [Do you like it?]
5. «¿Hay dos?» [Are there two?]

How to wait. After you ask, count a slow three. If the question was in Spanish, wait longer, not shorter. Look at the objects, not at the child's face, if the silence is hard. After they answer, wait again. That second pause is where a self-repair can still happen. First-year classrooms in the opened study barely gave it. You can.

What a stuck silence usually means. Search for the word —Novice Mid already names that pause. Or the question was not the situation on the table (they did not understand). Or wait time has been too short for years. Or a recast passed unnoticed. Or the question was a grammar-name quiz in disguise (“Is *mesa* feminine?”).

Next move. Point. Offer two choices. Repeat more slowly. Give a rehearsed frame: «Hay un ____.» Then, if still stuck, model the line and have them say it for real. You do not lecture.

Done enough today. The child names one object with its article, unaided.



Figure 4: Three objects on a kitchen table as a still-life, a folded talk-box slip with «¿Qué hay en la mesa?», a pencil, no people, no logos, no brand spines.

Practice that actually builds learning

Blocked practice first, when the move is new. The same frame, three objects, one after another: «Hay un lápiz. Hay una manzana. Hay una taza.» That is how a new pair gets a foothold. Mixed practice as soon as the frame is sayable: yesterday's greeting, today's object, last week's color, one mismatch to diagnose. Brief retrieval of what they already know, unaided, at the start of the hour. Kitchen and food can motivate a sitting—an apple is a good object—they do not replace the unaided phrase.

One incorrect example, on purpose, to diagnose. You say «Hay una lápiz» while pointing at the pencil, then you stop. “What would you change?” If they hear the mismatch, the pattern is working. If they do not, you are still in blocked practice. That is information, not a verdict.

A keyword list —*el* means masculine, *estar* means temporary —is a false friend.

The child will hunt the English word and miss the object. Keep the article attached to the noun they can see. Keep *estar* attached to a person in a chair.

Grade-band practice.

1–2. Three objects, one frame, one sitting. Retrieval is yesterday’ s hello. Mixed practice is the name plus one object. Stop early.

3–5. Blocked: six objects over two sittings, same frame. Mixed: article plus color plus like/not like. One incorrect article to diagnose. Still Novice. A written copy of the phrase is allowed after they have said it. A written copy instead of the mouth is not the practice.

6–8. Blocked: the *ser/estar* pair, four true sentences. Mixed: name, location, identity, one object-with-article from last month. Retrieval: «¿Qué hay?» with new objects. Diagnose: «Soy en la cocina.»

9–12. Blocked for a new form the book actually reached this week —a past time frame, a request, a short opinion —then mixed with Year 1 objects so the old phrases do not die. Retrieval every sitting: one unrehearsed question on a familiar topic. Diagnose a fluent paragraph whose objects no one can point at. The unaided sentence is still the kitchen object. If they sample AP-style items, treat them as a check on the same skills, not as the Spanish course.

A program on the shelf —a homeschool Spanish series that assumes most parents do not speak Spanish, an upper-elementary chant path, or a free college-novice open text —can supply the map and the audio. Each level a publisher calls “one full academic year” is that publisher’ s scope. The transcript still says Spanish I. A television course that was a common recommendation in an earlier decade is permanently closed as of 2026; use what you actually have. There is no open-text Spanish language book from the large college library this book’ s research opened. Combine honestly. The hour still needs an object and a mouth.⁴³

⁴³Programs named by fit, not ranked: Breaking the Barrier Homeschool Spanish (publisher describes most parents as non-speakers and each level as a full academic year / full high-school credit —publisher copy; transcript still says Spanish I); Classical Academic Press Spanish for Children (upper-elementary, grammar-and-chants path); Trayectos (COERLL / Texas A&M, CC-BY-SA, college-novice open text, not a four-year cycle). Annenberg Learner *Destinos*: “The program is permanently closed” as of the page opened 1 September 2026. No OpenStax Spanish language book on the OpenStax library opened for this book.

For the student

Spanish is how you name what is in front of you, and then how you say a short true thing about it. It is not a list of grammar titles, and it is not an exam brand unless you chose that exam.

A small word rides in front of the name of a thing. *Un lápiz* [a pencil]. *Una mesa* [a table]. *Un* and *una* are not the same. They match the word they sit with. You can hear a mismatch the way you hear “a apples.” You do not need the words *masculine* and *feminine* to start. You need the pair, said while you point.

At the beginning, useful lines are allowed to be memorized. That is not cheating. That is how first talk works. «Me llamo ____.» «Hay una manzana.» «¿Te gusta?» Later you will build a sentence nobody wrote for you. That later skill is called Intermediate in the maps teachers use: short created sentences in a situation you know. You will not get there by skipping the phrases. You will not get there by letting a computer talk in your place.

Two verbs in Spanish do the job English does with *am / is / are*. *Ser* is for who or what. *Estar* is for where, and for how you feel right now. «Soy tu hermano.» [I am your brother.] «Estoy en la cocina.» [I am in the kitchen.] If you say «Soy en la cocina», you used the who-verb for a where-job. That is a useful miss. You will fix it by saying the pair while it is true.

Spanish is spoken in Spain and across Latin America. Today’ s line is still today’ s line. You do not have to win a geography quiz to say what is on the table.

A paragraph a computer wrote in Spanish is a scene to look at. It is not your Spanish. If you cannot say one line with the machine off, you are not done. That is not a verdict. It is tonight’ s try.

Tiny worked example. Question: *What’ s on the table?*

The table has a pencil and an apple.

You point at the pencil: «Hay un lápiz.»

You point at the apple: «Hay una manzana.»

Someone asks «¿Te gusta?» You say «Sí» or «No», then, if you can, «Me gusta la manzana.»

The because-step is not “because *manzana* is feminine.” The because-step is: you

looked, you used the small word that belongs with that object, you said it while it was true.

Try 1. Two objects. Name each one with *un* or *una*. Look at the objects, not at a list.

Try 2. Someone asks «¿Qué hay en la mesa?» Answer without looking at this page.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why «Es un mesa» is a mismatch, and how you would check a computer's Spanish paragraph tonight without treating it as your voice.

Challenge. Name one object with its article, then say one more true thing about it—a color, a like/not like, or, if you have started the pair, where it is. Machine off. If you cannot point at the object, you are still in list country. Stay there until the pointing works.

You are allowed to struggle. A missing word is information, not a verdict. Listen. Point. Say the line. The tool does not take this try. You do.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 —there is no object, or no mouth. The student can recite a chapter title and cannot say «Hay un lápiz» while pointing. The “year” is a table of contents.

Next move. Stop the slog. Three objects. One frame. Talk before writing. A calendar-grade 9 student who cannot name a cup is not “behind in Spanish II.” They are still in first-talk. The survey waits until the phrase is sayable. Small talk can continue: one question, one object, oral credit.

Diagnostic 2 —the article never matches, or *ser* does every job. Every noun gets *un*. Or, in a later band, every sentence gets *soy*.

Next move. Put the two tents on the table: *un* and *una*. Sort objects for a week. Prompt with two choices; recast the rest. For the verb pair, one sitting: a person,

a chair, two true sentences. English *is* is doing both jobs. You will ask the where-question more than once.

Diagnostic 3 —a fluent page the house cannot hear. The paragraph arrived. The “native” dialogue has a city of birth. The citations of “how they say it in Mexico” look professional.

Next move. Objects in the hands. One unaided line, machine off. If it cannot be said, it comes off. A model-supplied speaker is untrusted until the phrase matches a named page or the child’s mouth. Detectors are not a verdict on a second-language paragraph; the reopenable phrase is.⁴⁴

When to get a human tutor. You cannot hear «un mesa» even after the five-minute warm-up. Or the student has weeks of table sittings, and the unaided ticket is still a blank or a copied list. A tutor, a co-op, or a later dual-enrollment Spanish survey is a normal plan. Stay the supervisor who can still ask «¿Qué hay?» Dual-enrollment Spanish is a *college* transcript object, distinct from this kitchen year. AP Spanish is an overlay, not a requirement.

When to go ahead. Objects get named with a matching article. A greeting happens at the door without a hunt. In later bands, identity and location use different verbs. Unaided phrases appear without the book. Then lengthen: a short unrehearsed exchange; a second time frame; an optional AP-style sitting if you chose that exam. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student listens and talks. You hold the key. The full rules live once in *The Language Hour* at the front of this book. This box does not rebuild them. It points back, and it adds one Spanish-specific prompt you can vet.

The child attempts first. You may, on your account, after that attempt: ask a tool to explain this week’s idea to *you* from a named textbook page; make extra isomorphic practice with answers hidden; draft a six-line dialogue *script* labelled generated, which you check against the page, then perform; run a short role-play after the attempt with you in the room (skip live chat in grades 1–5); write a hint script

⁴⁴Weixin Liang et al., “GPT Detectors Are Biased Against Non-Native English Writers,” *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023). High false-positive rates on human TOEFL essays in that study (about 61 percent). One sentence: do not police the child’s Spanish paragraph with a detector.

that withholds the sentence; diagnose work already done; draft talk-box follow-ups you vet. A fluent model turn is performance, not the child's Spanish. A model is not a speaker from anywhere.

Leave a chatbot as the only speaker, especially in the early grades, and you have replaced the mouth. "Translate this paragraph" and "write my essay in Spanish" are the same crutch. So is a native-speaker identity, a pronunciation grade you have not opened a paper for, and a certificate of fluency. In a high-school mathematics study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam. That study is math, not a Spanish trial. The same crutch is available here. The unaided phrase the next morning is the test.⁴⁵

AI box —Spanish

Point back to the language-hour box for the allowed moves and the bans. Then this extra prompt, if you want it, on *your* account, after the child has already named two objects unaided. You will read the output. You will cut anything you cannot check against this week's page. The child will not see the key.

Explain to me, in one English paragraph, the difference between un and una as a hearing pattern, using only the nouns lápiz, mesa, and manzana. Then list two mistakes a beginner this age makes (I need to hear «Es un mesa»). Then write six numbered extra items in the frame «Hay un/una ____» using kitchen objects, with the correct article in a separate answer key I can fold over. Do not invent a speaker from a Spanish-speaking city. Do not write a fluency score. If you are unsure of an article, say SEE THE BOOK.

You hold the folded key. The child tries the six items from the objects, or from your spoken cues, not from the model's paragraph. Then the unaided exit is still «¿Qué hay en la mesa?» with the machine off.

A named textbook page and a real apple are research tools. A chatbot list of "what you would have said" is not. Isolated technology is not the course.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Hamsa Bastani et al., "Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning: Evidence from High School Mathematics," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. GPT Base: +48 percent on practice, -17 percent on an unaided exam. Math, not a Spanish RCT. The paper notes that creative subjects lack math's objective scoring. The crutch still governs the language hour: the student attempts first; the unaided ticket is the test.

⁴⁶ACTFL, "The Role of Technology in Language Learning," 19 May 2017. "ACTFL strongly

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 9 Spanish” book is a publisher’s scope, not a legal grade and not a national sequence. Done enough is skill, plus phrases actually said, plus writing the student produced when writing has begun.

Checklist before moving on.

- Names at least two real objects with a matching *un/una* or *el/la*, unaided, looking at the objects.
- Answers «¿Qué hay en la mesa?» with a phrase, not with an English list.
- Uses a greeting and a name without a hunt, in a real doorway.
- Hears «Es un mesa» as a mismatch, or accepts the two-choice prompt and repairs.
- In later bands: keeps *ser* for who/what and *estar* for where/how-I-feel in a short true pair.
- Treats a rehearsed dialogue as practice, and still does one unrehearsed cousin with the book closed.
- Treats a generated paragraph as a scene, not as the student’s Spanish.
- Transcript line, when a high-school year is claimed: **Spanish** or **Spanish I** (then II, III, IV). Never a brand.

What can still be thin: every tense in a table of contents; a second literature AP; college-density readers. Those can travel. A year of lists with no mouth cannot count as done. Two high-school years of real work commonly still sit in Novice *performance*. That is not a failure of the table. Intermediate created sentences are a later aim, earned with hours that included ears and mouth.

NCAA may count world language toward additional core, not as a required year-count. A student can meet Division I with zero language years if the other cells are filled. CLEP is not core. Records will handle the worksheet. The year on the table is still Spanish.⁴⁷

recommends that a language educator be responsible for the planning, instruction, assessment, and facilitation of any language course, leveraging technology to support language learning.”“Research does not support the isolated use of technology for acquiring a language.” In a homeschool, the parent is that educator for the hour.

⁴⁷NCAA Eligibility Center, Division I Academic Standards fact sheet (September 2023, still hosted 1 September 2026): 16 core courses; world language may fill part of four additional-core units from listed areas or additional disciplines (world language, comparative religion, or philosophy). It does not require a year of world language the way it requires four English. CLEP and credit-

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know why «Es un mesa» is a wrong turn. I know what a coverage slog usually means. I know what to say tomorrow —an object, a question, a wait. The student still does the talking. We can do this.

by-exam are not NCAA-approved core courses. High School Review Committee, first-year world language sufficient-for-approval includes write and speak (greetings, name, age, simple questions); not alone sufficient includes workplace-only courses and shallow many-language introductions.

Chapter 2

French



Figure 5: A kitchen-table still-life from a high three-quarter view: two cups, a folded paper with «Qu’ est-ce que c’ est ?» and a short English gloss, a small unbranded map. No people. No logos. No brand spines.

Why this matters

French is how a student learns to hear a useful phrase—including the places where French joins two words that English would leave apart—say it while it is true, and then, later, build a short sentence of their own. It is not a year of phonetics. It is not a brand. It is not an exam title unless you chose that exam.

That is worth the struggle because French rewards the ear before it rewards the chart. A child who can hear *les amis* as one joined shape, and then say «C’ est un livre» [It’ s a book] while pointing, has more French than a child who can name *liaison* and *tu/vous* with nothing on the table. A child who can still do it tomorrow without the book has more than a child who recites a café dialogue once. The first is the start of unrehearsed use. The second is a performance. Both have a place. Only the first is the promise.⁴⁸

There is no national French syllabus. ACTFL’ s 2024 guidelines are a map of unrehearsed use: Novice language is learned words, lists, and formulaic phrases; Intermediate language is short created sentences in a familiar situation. A rehearsed café dialogue is performance. Proficiency is whether they can still do a cousin of it without the script.⁴⁹ Two secondary years is the common U.S. public-school model and commonly leaves students in the Novice range of *performance*. That is a map of what two years often buy. It is not a verdict on your table.⁵⁰

California treats French as a Category I language, on the same band of that state’ s map as Spanish and Italian. Elementary students without a heritage background often stay Novice for an extended period. That is guidance, not a homeschool law.⁵¹ Texas maps Level I to Novice Mid through Novice High, with no prerequisite, and allows the credit in elementary, middle, or high school. Communication is the overarching goal: ask and answer about everyday life; describe people, ob-

⁴⁸ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, 4th ed. Novice: formulaic and rote utterances, lists, and phrases. Intermediate: short conversations on predictable topics, sentence-level communication. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026.

⁴⁹ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*. Performance is rehearsed, familiar-task language use; proficiency is sustained ability on unrehearsed tasks. A practiced café dialogue may look Intermediate and still rate Novice if the Intermediate criteria are not sustained unrehearsed.

⁵⁰ACTFL, *ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners* (2012): the most common U.S. program model remains two secondary years, limiting students to Novice-range *performance*.

⁵¹California Department of Education, *World Languages Standards for California Public Schools* (2019). Category I includes French, Italian, and Spanish. Elementary non-heritage students often remain Novice for an extended period. Public-school map, not homeschool law.

jects, and simple situations with a mixture of words, phrases, and simple sentences. Public-school shape, not a homeschool statute.⁵²

The University of California asks two years of the *same* language other than English, and recommends a third. That is a named flagship, not a federal law. Other colleges print their own number.⁵³ College Board offers AP French Language and Culture, revised for 2026–27. There is no AP French Literature exam on the opened list. AP is optional. Credit is by college. A path through French does not require the letters AP.⁵⁴

The registrar word is **French**. Numbered high-school years —French I, French II, French III, French IV —are ordinary English a stranger can read. Never write a curriculum brand in the title column. Never write Conversation 101. Never write “AP French” unless the student is actually sitting that course-and-exam.⁵⁵

French lives in France and in a wider francophone world. That is this week’s map sentence. Then you teach. A continent quiz is not the hour. This week’s greeting is this week’s greeting.

Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour. You will not finish every tense. You will finish some phrases, said for real, with a cup on the table. Liaison as ears. *Tu* and *vous* as a social map, not a grammar insult. Gender as a pattern you can hear, as in Spanish, with different articles.

This week you can learn how *les amis* joins, and how to hear a pause in the middle as a wrong turn. Today the student can say what two objects are, after hearing the join once.

⁵²19 Tex. Admin. Code §114.39 (Level I): elementary, middle, or high school; no prerequisite; Novice Mid to Novice High; communication as the overarching goal; ask and respond about everyday life; describe people, objects, and simple situations with words, phrases, and simple sentences.

⁵³University of California A–G area E, plus *Quick Reference Guide* (August 2026): two years of the same language required, three recommended. Common Data Set 2024–2025 C5: each college prints its own required and recommended units. Not a universal law.

⁵⁴College Board, AP Central, opened 1 September 2026: AP French Language and Culture. Language-and-Culture courses revised for 2026–27. No AP French Literature course on the opened list. SAT Subject Tests discontinued June 2021. Credit by college.

⁵⁵NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*. Transcript titles a stranger can read: French, French I–IV. Never a brand. Never Conversation 101.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a speaker of French. You do need to understand today's idea well enough to hear a pause inside *les amis*, and «C' est un table», not as cute slips.

Many adults feel rusty around French they remember as a chart, or never studied. That feeling is common. It is not a verdict. Five minutes of this section, then the warm-up, is enough for tomorrow. The child still does the talking.

Everyday picture. Two cups on the table. You point at one and say, while it is true, «C' est une tasse» [It' s a cup]. You point at a book: «C' est un livre» [It' s a book]. Then you ask «Qu' est-ce que c' est ?» [What is this?] and you wait. The work is the pointing and the mouth. The grammar name can wait.

Precise picture. Three ideas will carry this chapter. They are not a phonetics course, a politeness sermon, or a gender lecture.

Liaison is ears. French often joins a normally silent consonant to the next word when that word starts with a vowel. *Les amis* is not “lez” plus a pause plus “amis.” It is one shape: the s of *les* sounds like a z and attaches to *amis*. *Vous avez* [you have] does the same join. *Un ami* [a friend] links the n. You do not need the International Phonetic Alphabet. You need a named audio of the phrase —a textbook track, not a chatbot as the only ears —and a chance to catch the join. A pause in the middle is the wrong turn you should be able to hear. You will not promise a Parisian accent. You will promise an ear for the join this week.

Tu and vous are a social map. Both can mean “you.” *Tu* is the singular familiar form —family, children, close friends, God in some prayers, the person already in the *tu* habit with you. *Vous* is the plural you, and it is also the singular formal you —a store clerk, a new adult, a teacher the book is addressing as *vous*. The miss is not a moral failure. It is a map miss: the child used the family word with a stranger, or the stranger word with a sibling, because English has one *you*. In grades 1–2 you may live almost entirely in *tu* at the table. In later bands you teach the map on purpose: two paper cards, a real person in the room, a choice.

Gender is a pattern, as in Spanish, with different articles. *Le* and *un* sit with one group of nouns (*le livre, un livre*). *La* and *une* sit with another (*la table, une table, la tasse, une tasse*). Many -e endings take *la/une*; many others take *le/un*. There are exceptions you will not dump in week one. You will hear «C' est un table» as a mismatch. The repair is the phrase again, attached to the object.

A few high-frequency frames will carry the first months:

- «Bonjour.» [Hello. / Good day.]
- «Je m' appelle _____.» [My name is _____.]
- «Comment tu t' appelles ?» [What' s your name? —*tu*]
- «Comment vous appelez-vous ?» [What' s your name? —*vous*]
- «C' est un / une _____.» [It' s a _____.]
- «Qu' est-ce que c' est ?» [What is this?]
- «Tu aimes ?» [Do you like it? —*tu*]
- «Oui.» / «Non.» [Yes. / No.]

Those are formulaic. At Novice, formulaic and real can be the same sentence. There are two cups. They like one of them or they do not.

A few more lines you can actually hear this month, with glosses. You do not owe them all this week. You owe the ones on the table.

- «Bonsoir.» [Good evening.]
- «Au revoir.» [Goodbye.]
- «S' il te plaît.» [Please —*tu*.] «S' il vous plaît.» [Please —*vous*.]
- «Merci.» [Thank you.]
- «C' est rouge.» / «C' est bleu.» [It' s red. / It' s blue.]
- «Il y a deux tasses.» [There are two cups.]
- «Où est le livre ?» [Where is the book?]
- «J' ai un livre.» [I have a book.] —later than the table names, when *avoir* [to have] is this week' s page.
- «Nous avons.» [We have.] Hear the join in *vous avez* and, when the page has it, in *nous avons*.

Liaison you can install without a year of IPA: *les amis* [the friends] joins; *les livres* [the books] does not join the same way, because *livres* starts with a consonant. You are listening for a join when the next word starts with a vowel. That is enough. *Un ami* [a friend] joins; *une amie* [a friend —feminine] also joins. If the child says *les* then a hole then *amis*, you heard the miss.

Tu/vous in two doorways, both true. At breakfast, to a sibling: «Tu aimes le pain ?» [Do you like the bread?] At a pretend bakery: «Vous avez du pain ?» [Do you have bread?] The miss is using breakfast' s *tu* with the baker because it was the only *you* in the house. Recast if it is not this week' s map: «Oui —avec le boulanger, vous.» Prompt if it is: hold up the two cards.

Input matters. Stephen Krashen argued that we acquire language by understanding messages a little beyond where we are, with attention on meaning. That is a named theory of input, not a household law, and not a reason to keep a first-grader silent until spring. Ears first, then the mouth.⁵⁶

When the child misses this week's form, you have two adult moves. A recast is you saying their idea again, correctly, without stopping the talk. A prompt is you making them try the form—two choices, a start, a rising repeat—when this week's pattern is the one that slipped. If the miss does not block meaning and is not this week's form, recast once and go on. If it is this week's form, or meaning broke, prompt; then, if they are still stuck, give the form and have them say it for real. You will not interrupt every utterance. You will not pretend correction never helps.⁵⁷

The wait numbers from first-year high-school French (and Spanish) apply here: about two seconds after a question was already more than many teachers gave; less than one second after the answer. After you ask in French, wait longer, not shorter. After they answer, wait again. Three to five seconds is a science-class aim this book borrows on purpose.⁵⁸ Silence at Novice is often search for a word, not refusal.⁵⁹

A generated café scene in fluent French is a scene. It is not the child's language. A model is not a teacher from Lyon.

⁵⁶Stephen D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (1982; internet edition 2009). Named theory of input ($i+1$); not a kitchen-table coefficient; production “emerges” in that theory—this book still asks for a mouth this week.

⁵⁷Roy Lyster and Leila Ranta, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19, no. 1 (1997): recasts 55 percent of feedback in four primary French-immersion classrooms; recast uptake 31 percent; repair 18 percent (repetitions of the teacher). Prompts led to student-generated repair more successfully in that set. Roy Lyster and Kazuya Saito (2010) abstract: classroom corrective-feedback effects larger for prompts than recasts; coefficients beyond the abstract not used here.

⁵⁸Judith L. Shrum, *Foreign Language Annals* 18 (1985), abstract: first-year high-school Spanish and French; 1.91 seconds after questions, 0.73 seconds after responses. Mary Budd Rowe, NARST 1972 / ERIC ED061103: three to five seconds in elementary *science* class, borrowed as an aim and labelled.

⁵⁹ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, Novice Mid speaking: pauses while searching for vocabulary or structure.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. A pause inside the join. *Les amis* said as two chunks with a hole in the middle. *Vous avez* with a stop after *vous*.

What it usually means. The child read the words as English would space them. The ear has not yet caught the join.

What to say. Play the named track again. Hum the join without a lecture: «les-zamis.» Ask them to say it once while it is still in the ear. You do not open a year of IPA.

2. The article and the noun do not match. «C' est un table.» «Le tasse.»

What it usually means. The child treated *un/une* as English *a*, which does not change.

What to say. Point. «Un table ou une table ?» Wait. If still stuck: «Une table.» They say it. You go on.

3. The social map is off, and it is this week' s idea. *Tu* to a store-clerk role-play the book is teaching as *vous*. Or *vous* to a sibling as the only *you* they will use at breakfast.

What it usually means. English has one *you*. The child picked the first form they learned for every person.

What to say. If *tu/vous* is not this week' s idea, recast and go on: «Oui —et avec le marchand, vous.» If it is this week' s idea, hold up the two cards. «Tu ou vous ?» They pick. They say the line again. You do not preach manners.

4. A list with no ears and no mouth. Twenty nouns copied. No cup. No question. Or liaison taught as a chart of rules with no audio.

What it usually means. Coverage won.

What to say. Two cups. One named track. «Qu' est-ce que c' est ?» The chart waits.

5. A fluent page nobody in the house said. A chatbot paragraph. “You are a teacher from Lyon.” A certificate of fluency. A promised Parisian accent.

What it usually means. The work was outsourced, or a hope got treated as a method.

Language models invent speakers. Accents are not a kitchen-table guarantee.⁶⁰

What to say. “Show me the cups. Say one line with the machine off.” If they cannot, the paragraph comes off.

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, with two cups, a book, and a scrap of paper, no student in the room.

1. Play, if you have it, a named textbook track of *les amis* or *vous avez*. Say the join once yourself. Listen for the hole you must not leave in the middle.
2. Point at the book: «C’ est un livre.» Point at a cup: «C’ est une tasse.» Write today’ s opening: «Qu’ est-ce que c’ est ?» Gloss: What is this?
3. Write the wrong turn: a pause in *les amis*, or «C’ est un table.» Next to it, the repair you will actually say: a slower joined repeat, or «Un table ou une table ?»
4. If this week’ s band includes *tu/vous*, label two scraps *tu* and *vous*. Put *tu* next to a family name. Put *vous* next to “the grocer.” If the band does not include the map yet, leave the scraps in the folder.
5. Count a slow three after the question. Put the pencil down. You are ready. The child still talks.

If those five minutes are fluent for you, you can hear a broken join and a mismatched article. That is the job.

How to teach it this week

Run the language hour from the front of this book. This chapter fills it with French. Warm-up ears. Short model while it is true. Student attempt. One good question, then wait. Recast in the flow, or prompt if it is this week’ s form. Unaided exit.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday’ s object in one phrase. «Qu’ est-ce que c’ est ?» pointing at one thing they already named. No tool.

⁶⁰William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045. Fabricated citations and, in some outputs, fabricated methods. A generated “teacher from Lyon” is a fabricated biography. Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): performance during instruction is often an unreliable index of learning.

Short model (5–8 minutes). Two cups, a book. You say «C’ est un livre.» Pause. «C’ est une tasse.» Pause. If liaison is this week’ s ear, play *les amis* once and say it joined. Then the question: «Qu’ est-ce que c’ est ?» You are showing talk, not delivering a lecture on phonetics.

Fade as soon as you can. Second sitting: they point while you say. Third: they say while you point. Fourth: they name one object unaided, book closed. Include one incorrect example you say on purpose: «C’ est un tasse» —then you repair: «C’ est une tasse.»

Exact wording you can steal.

On the table: «Qu’ est-ce que c’ est ?» Then wait.

On a mismatch: «Un table ou une table ?» Then wait.

On the join: play the track. «Encore une fois.» [One more time.] They say it. You do not name *liaison* unless they are old enough that the name helps them listen.

On a recast that is not this week’ s form: «Oui, c’ est une tasse.» And you go on.

On a name, family: «Comment tu t’ appelles ?» Wait. On a later *vous* sitting: «Comment vous appelez-vous ?»

On like/not like: «Tu aimes ?» Point. Wait.

On the chatbot: “If we cannot hear you say it, it is not tonight’ s French. The model stays closed until you have tried. It is not from Lyon.”

First problem for the student, after the model. Two objects still on the table. Name each one with *un* or *une*, looking at the object. Book closed for the attempt. You wait. Struggle before rescue.

One good question. After the attempt: «Qu’ est-ce que c’ est ?» —now without pointing first.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three short namings, unaided. Then mix: yesterday’ s greeting, last week’ s join if you have one, one “un table” repair, one object they have not named today.

Exit ticket (3–5 minutes, unaided). One question, objects still in view, one phrase they say alone. Tool closed.

How to fade help. You say and point → they point while you say → they say while you point → they name unaided → they ask *you* the question. Bring the

scaffold back when a new kind of phrase arrives —a *vous* line, a created sentence.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. You hold the key: is there an object, a phrase said for real, and an unaided try?

Grade-band moves

Place by skill, not by birthday.

Grades 1–2. Songs, greetings, objects. Hear liaison as a join; do not name it. *Tu* at the table is enough. Novice Low to Novice Mid is a generous description of unrehearsed use. Short sits. Then stop. The child points. The child says one line. You wait.

Grades 3–5. Short phrases. *Tu* with family. *Vous* as a later social map —one sitting with two cards is enough for the idea to exist. Gender as a hearing pattern: *le livre / la table*. Still Novice. Novice High is a lot of language for a ten-year-old in a foreign-language hour.

Grades 6–8. Level I if you are starting now, or a continuation if the elementary hours were real. Gender pattern on purpose. A few formulaic questions. Liaison named once, as ears, then practiced with a track. A grammar-and-translation middle-school French book can sit on the shelf as a map; it is not an AP sequence, and it is not two high-school credits unless your state's rule and the actual work say so.⁶¹

Grades 9–12. French I through French IV. Years 1–2 cover the common college ask of two years of the same language when the work is real. Years 3–4 aim at Intermediate *performance* if time-on-task holds. AP French Language and Culture is optional. UC's two-year floor can be met by the end of year 2 if the work is real —that is UC's ask, not every college's. A heritage or prior-French speaker accelerates by what they can do.

Named activities

Run one or two in a sitting. They are not a 180-day bank.

⁶¹Memoria Press First Start French I, publisher description: grades 6–8, grammar-and-translation, modeled after *Latina Christiana*. This book does not treat I + II as two high-school credits unless an opened page and the family's state rule both say so. It is not an AP sequence.

Activity 1 —Ears Join (liaison)

Time. 10 minutes.

Materials. A named audio of *les amis* and/or *vous avez* (textbook track, not a chatbot as the only ears). Two word cards you can push together.

The fun of it. Catching the join.

The skill it builds. Liaison as ears. Not a phonetics course.

How to run it. Play the track once. Push the cards together as the join happens. Play it again. They say it once. If they leave a hole, you hum the join and they try again. Grades 1–2: hear and copy, no name. Grades 9–12: after the copy, one new joined pair from this week’s page, still with audio first.

Activity 2 —Tu or Vous Card

Time. 8 minutes.

Materials. Two paper cards: *tu* and *vous*.

The fun of it. Picking the person in the room.

The skill it builds. Social map. Not a politeness sermon.

How to run it. Point at a sibling: *tu*. Point at “the baker” as a role, or at a visiting adult if that is true and kind: *vous*. They pick a card and say the matching hello: «Salut» or «Bonjour, monsieur / madame» as the book actually taught. Grades 1–2 may skip this activity. Grades 3–5 do it once. Grades 6–12 mix: they ask «Comment tu t’ appelles ?» and «Comment vous appelez-vous ?» in two different pretend doorways.

Activity 3 —Le/La Sort

Time. 10 minutes.

Materials. Objects. Two paper tents: *le / un* and *la / une*.

The fun of it. The article click.

The skill it builds. Gender as a pattern the parent can hear.

How to run it. *Livre* under *le/un*. *Table* or *tasse* under *la/une*. The child sorts the rest. Listen for «le tasse». Prompt: two choices.

Activity 4 —Table Talk

Time. 10–15 minutes.

Materials. Three objects. A scrap with «Qu’ est-ce que c’ est ?»

The fun of it. Pointing.

The skill it builds. A real phrase.

How to run it. Model one line per object. Ask the opening question. Wait. If they stall, two choices: «C’ est un livre ou une table ?» Stop while there is still an object un-named if the sit is going long.

Activity 5 —One Map Sentence

Time. 5 minutes, once.

Materials. An unbranded map.

The fun of it. French lives in more than one place.

The skill it builds. One cultures sentence, then teach. Not a geography unit.

How to run it. Point at France. Point at one other francophone place the map actually shows —a stretch of Canada, a West African coast, a Caribbean island, Belgium, Switzerland. Say, in English, one sentence: French lives in France and in a wider francophone world; today’ s greeting is still today’ s greeting. Put the map away. Return to the cups.

Activity 6 —Café Six

Time. 12–15 minutes. Grades 6–12, after the child has already tried the table phrases.

Materials. Two cups. A six-line script *you* checked against this week’ s page (handwritten, or a generated script you vetted and labelled generated).

The fun of it. A tiny café that is still real cups.

The skill it builds. Formulaic exchange in a familiar frame. Performance today; unaided cousin tomorrow.

How to run it. Perform the six lines twice, swapping parts. Then the script goes away. Unaided: «Qu' est-ce que c' est ?» and one like/not like. Live chat with a model is not this activity, especially in the early grades.

Activity 7 —Join or Hole

Time. 5 minutes.

Materials. The same named track. A card that says JOIN and a card that says HOLE.

The fun of it. Catching the wrong pause.

The skill it builds. Parent and child hearing the mismatch together.

How to run it. You say *les amis* once joined and once with a hole (on purpose). They hold up JOIN or HOLE. Then they say the joined shape. Stop. This is diagnosis, not a quiz of character.

Talk box —Cups, this week

This box is an illustration of a sitting. A composite, not a reported child.

Opening (say this, then wait).

«Qu' est-ce que c' est ?»
[What is this?]

Follow-ups (pick three to five; one meaning, checked).

1. «C' est un livre ou une table ?» [Is it a book or a table?]
2. «De quelle couleur ?» [What color?]
3. «Tu aimes ?» [Do you like it?]
4. «Il y en a deux ?» [Are there two?]
5. «Où est-ce ?» [Where is it?]

How to wait. After you ask, count a slow three. If the question was in French, wait longer, not shorter. Look at the cups if the silence is hard. After they answer, wait again. First-year French classrooms in the opened study barely gave that second pause. You can.

What a stuck silence usually means. Search for the word. Or they did not understand the question. Or wait time has been too short for years. Or a recast passed unnoticed. Or you asked a grammar-name quiz (“Is that liaison?”).

Next move. Point. Offer two choices. Repeat more slowly, joined if this week’ s ear is the join. Give a frame: «C’ est un ____.» Then, if still stuck, model the line and have them say it for real.

Done enough today. The child names one object with its article, unaided.



Figure 6: Two cups on a kitchen table as a still-life, a folded talk-box slip with «Qu’ est-ce que c’ est ?», no people, no logos.

Practice that actually builds learning

Blocked practice first, when the move is new. The same frame, three objects: «C’ est un livre. C’ est une tasse. C’ est une table.» For liaison, blocked means the same joined pair, heard then said, three times —not a page of rules. Mixed practice as soon as the frame is sayable: yesterday’ s greeting, today’ s object, last week’

s join, one mismatch to diagnose. Brief retrieval unaided at the start of the hour. A café can motivate a sitting. It does not replace the unaided phrase.

One incorrect example, on purpose. You say *les amis* with a hole, or «C’ est un tasse», then you stop. “What would you change?” If they hear the mismatch, the pattern is working. If they do not, you are still in blocked practice.

A keyword list —*tu* means informal, *liaison* means linking —is a false friend. Keep *tu* attached to a person in the room. Keep the join attached to a named track.

Grade-band practice.

1–2. Two objects, one frame, one sitting. Retrieval is yesterday’s *bonjour*. Mixed practice is the name plus one object. Hear a join; do not name it. Stop early.

3–5. Blocked: six objects over two sittings. Mixed: article plus like/not like plus one *tu* line. One incorrect article to diagnose. Still Novice. Writing copies the phrase after they have said it.

6–8. Blocked: *tu/vous* pairs, four true greetings. Mixed: name, article, one joined phrase from last month. Retrieval: «Qu’ est-ce que c’ est ?» with new objects. Diagnose: a hole in *vous avez*, or «C’ est un table.» If a grammar-and-translation book is the map, still run Table Talk once a week so the mouth does not die inside a paradigm. The paradigm is allowed. It is not the hour.

9–12. Blocked for a new form the book actually reached this week, then mixed with Year 1 cups so the old phrases do not die. Retrieval every sitting: one unrehearsed question on a familiar topic. Diagnose a fluent paragraph whose cups no one can point at. If they sample AP-style items, treat them as a check on the same skills, not as the French course.

A program on the shelf —a homeschool French series in three levels that assumes most parents do not speak French, an upper-elementary path with a weekly video of about forty to fifty minutes, or a grammar-and-translation middle-school book modeled on a Latin primer —can supply the map and the audio. Each “full academic year” is that publisher’s scope. Native-speaker authors on a publisher page are publisher copy, not a homeschool credential. The transcript still says French I.⁶²

⁶²Programs named by fit, not ranked: Breaking the Barrier Homeschool French (publisher: three levels, each a full academic year; most parents do not speak French; “native-speaker authors” is publisher copy); Classical Academic Press French for Children (grades 4 and up; Primer A weekly video described as 40–50 minutes corresponding to a weekly chapter); Memoria Press First Start

For the student

French is how you name what is in front of you, and how you hear two words join when French wants them joined. It is not a list of grammar titles, and it is not an exam brand unless you chose that exam.

«Qu’ est-ce que c’ est ?» means *What is this?* «C’ est un livre» [It’ s a book]. «C’ est une tasse» [It’ s a cup]. *Un* and *une* are not the same. They match the word they sit with.

Sometimes a letter you thought was quiet wakes up and attaches to the next word. *Les amis* does that. If you leave a hole in the middle, the shape is wrong. You do not need a special alphabet to start. You need to hear it, then say it.

French has two words for *you*. *Tu* is the one you use with family, and often with people your age. *Vous* is the one you use for more than one person, and for a person you would treat more formally—a shopkeeper in a role-play, a new adult. Picking the other card is a map miss, not a character verdict. You will learn which card the situation wants.

French lives in France and in other places where people use French. Today’ s line is still today’ s line. You do not have to win a geography quiz to say what a cup is.

A paragraph a computer wrote in French is a scene. It is not your French. A computer is not from Lyon. If you cannot say one line with the machine off, you are not done. That is tonight’ s try.

Tiny worked example. Question: *What is this?*

The table has a book and a cup.

You point at the book: «C’ est un livre.»

You point at the cup: «C’ est une tasse.»

Someone asks «Tu aimes ?» You say «Oui» or «Non.»

The because-step is not “because *tasse* is feminine.” The because-step is: you looked, you used the small word that belongs with that object, you said it while it was true.

French I as in note 61.

Try 1. Two objects. Name each one with *un* or *une*. Look at the objects, not at a list.

Try 2. Hear *les amis* once on a named track. Say it without a hole. Then answer «Qu’ est-ce que c’ est ?» without looking at this page.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why a pause in the middle of *les amis* is a wrong turn, and how you would check a computer’ s French paragraph tonight without treating it as your voice.

Challenge. Name one object with its article, then say one more true thing about it —a like/not like, a color, or, if you have started the map, a *tu* line versus a *vous* line. Machine off.

You are allowed to struggle. A missing word is information, not a verdict. Listen. Point. Say the line. The tool does not take this try. You do.

If it isn’ t clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame.

Diagnostic 1 —there is no object, or no mouth. The student can recite a chapter title and cannot say «C’ est une tasse» while pointing.

Next move. Stop the slog. Two cups. One frame. Talk before writing. A calendar-grade 9 student who cannot name a cup is still in first-talk. The survey waits.

Diagnostic 2 —the join never happens, or the article never matches, or every person gets *tu*. *Les amis* always has a hole. Every noun gets *un*. Or, in a later band, the grocer-role gets *tu* because that was breakfast’ s word.

Next move. Named track, cards pushed together, three copies of the join. Two tents for *un/une*. Two cards for *tu/vous* if that map is this week’ s idea. Prompt with two choices; recast the rest.

Diagnostic 3 —a fluent page the house cannot hear. The paragraph arrived. The model is “from Lyon.” The accent score looks official.

Next move. Cups in the hands. One unaided line, machine off. A model-supplied speaker is untrusted until the phrase matches a named page or the child’ s mouth.

Detectors are not a verdict on a second-language paragraph.⁶³

When to get a human tutor. You cannot hear the hole in *les amis*, even after the five-minute warm-up. Or the unaided ticket is still a blank after weeks of cups. A tutor, a co-op, or later dual-enrollment French is a normal plan. Stay the supervisor who can still ask «Qu’ est-ce que c’ est ?»

When to go ahead. Objects get named with a matching article. A join can be copied after one listen. In later bands, *tu* and *vous* can be chosen for a person in the room. Unaided phrases appear without the book. Then lengthen. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student listens and talks. You hold the key. The full rules live once in *The Language Hour*. This box points back, and it adds one French-specific prompt you can vet.

The child attempts first. You may, after that attempt, use a tool to explain this week’ s idea to *you* from a named page; make extra practice with answers hidden; draft a six-line generated script you vet and then perform; run a short role-play after the attempt with you in the room (skip live chat in grades 1–5); write a hint script; diagnose work already done; draft talk-box follow-ups you vet. A fluent model turn is performance, not the child’ s French. A model is not from Lyon.

“Translate this page” and “write my essay in French” are the crutch. So is a native-speaker identity, a pronunciation grade you have not opened a paper for, and a certificate of fluency. Unguarded help raised math practice and then cut the unaided exam in one high-school study. That study is math. The same crutch is available here.⁶⁴ Isolated technology is not the course.⁶⁵

AI box —French

⁶³Weixin Liang et al., *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023). Detectors’ high false-positive rates on human TOEFL essays. Do not police the child’ s French paragraph with a detector.

⁶⁴Hamsa Bastani et al., *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. GPT Base +48 percent practice / –17 percent unaided exam in high-school *math*. Mechanism for the language hour, not a French RCT.

⁶⁵ACTFL, “The Role of Technology in Language Learning,” 19 May 2017. Isolated use of technology is not supported as the course; a language educator plans, instructs, assesses, and facilitates. In a homeschool, the parent is that educator for the hour.

Point back to the language-hour box for the allowed moves and the bans. Then this extra prompt, if you want it, on *your* account, after the child has already named two objects unaided. You will read the output. You will cut anything you cannot check against this week's page. The child will not see the key.

Explain to me, in one English paragraph, how liaison works in les amis and vous avez as something I should hear, not as IPA. Then list two mistakes a beginner this age makes (I need to hear a pause in the middle of les amis, and «C' est un table»). Then write six numbered extra items in the frame «C' est un/une ____» using café objects, with the correct article in a separate answer key I can fold over. Do not invent a teacher from Lyon. Do not write a fluency score or a pronunciation percentage. If you are unsure of an article, say SEE THE BOOK.

You hold the folded key. The child tries the six items from the objects, or from your spoken cues. Then the unaided exit is still «Qu' est-ce que c' est ?» with the machine off.

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 9 French” book is a publisher's scope, not a legal grade. Done enough is skill, plus phrases actually said.

Checklist before moving on.

- Names at least two real objects with a matching *un/une* or *le/la*, unaided, looking at the objects.
- Answers «Qu' est-ce que c' est ?» with a phrase, not with an English list.
- Can copy *les amis* or *vous avez* without a hole after one named listen (grades 1–2: copy; later bands: notice the hole as a miss).
- In later bands: picks *tu* or *vous* for a person in the room, with a prompt if needed.
- Hears «C' est un table» as a mismatch, or accepts the two-choice prompt and repairs.
- Treats a rehearsed café dialogue as practice, and still does one unrehearsed cousin with the book closed.
- Treats a generated paragraph as a scene, not as the student's French.

- Transcript line, when a high-school year is claimed: **French** or **French I** (then II, III, IV). Never a brand.

What can still be thin: a Parisian accent; every tense; AP. Those can travel. A year of lists with no mouth cannot count as done. Two high-school years of real work commonly still sit in Novice *performance*. Intermediate created sentences are a later aim.

NCAA may count world language toward additional core, not as a required year-count. Records will handle the worksheet. The year on the table is still French.⁶⁶

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know why a pause in *les amis* is a wrong turn. I know what a coverage slog usually means. I know what to say tomorrow —a cup, a question, a wait. The student still does the talking. We can do this.

⁶⁶NCAA Eligibility Center, Division I Academic Standards fact sheet (September 2023, still hosted 1 September 2026): world language may fill additional core; it is not a required year-count. CLEP is not NCAA core. High School Review Committee: first-year write-and-speak includes greetings, name, age, simple questions.

Chapter 3

Italian



Figure 7: A kitchen-table still-life from a high three-quarter view: three labelled objects whose spellings match their sounds, a folded paper with «Che cos' è?» and a short English gloss, an unbranded outline of Italy. No people. No logos. No brand spines.

Why this matters

Italian is how a student learns to say a useful phrase, look at the letters, and hear that what they see is close to what they say —then, later, to build a short sentence of their own. It is not a year of English phonics in Italian clothing. It is not a brand. It is not an exam title unless you chose that exam.

That is worth the struggle because Italian gives the table a gift the other Romance languages in this book give more stingily: the page and the mouth are friends. A child who can read *casa* as the word they just said, and then say «È una mela» [It's an apple] while pointing, has more Italian than a child who can chant *definite article* with nothing on the table. A child who can still do it tomorrow without the book has more than a child who recites a market dialogue once. The first is the start of unrehearsed use. The second is a performance. Both have a place. Only the first is the promise.⁶⁷

The homeschool catalog for Italian is thinner than the Spanish or French catalog this book can name. That is a fact about opened programs, not a verdict on the language. A dedicated Italian-for-homeschool house analogue to the big Spanish and French homeschool series was not among the programs this book opened. Tutor, co-op, dual enrollment, and a college-style first-year textbook are real paths. You can still run the hour. The child still talks. A thin catalog is a reason to keep the mouth in the sitting, not a reason to skip speaking.⁶⁸

There is no national Italian syllabus. ACTFL's 2024 guidelines are a map of unrehearsed use: Novice language is learned words, lists, and formulaic phrases; Intermediate language is short created sentences in a familiar situation. A rehearsed market dialogue is performance. Proficiency is whether they can still do a cousin of it without the script.⁶⁹ Two secondary years is the common U.S. public-school

⁶⁷ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, 4th ed. Novice: formulaic and rote utterances, lists, and phrases. Intermediate: short conversations on predictable topics, sentence-level communication. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026.

⁶⁸Architecture and research brief for this book, 1 September 2026: a dedicated Italian-for-homeschool house analogue to Breaking the Barrier was not opened. Vista Higher Learning *Sentieri*, 4th edition (©2024), is a named first-year textbook path (twelve units, level 1–3 students, ACTFL/Can-Do named, online homework site). Parent load is higher if that site expects an instructor. Transcript still says Italian I. Twelve units are not a homeschool year-count and not a four-year cycle.

⁶⁹ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*. Performance versus proficiency: a rehearsed market dialogue may look Intermediate and still rate Novice unrehearsed.

model and commonly leaves students in the Novice range of *performance*. That is a map of what two years often buy. It is not a verdict on your table.⁷⁰

California treats Italian as a Category I language, on the same band of that state's map as Spanish and French. Elementary students without a heritage background often stay Novice for an extended period. Guidance, not a homeschool law.⁷¹ Texas maps Level I to Novice Mid through Novice High, with no prerequisite, in elementary, middle, or high school. Communication is the overarching goal.⁷²

The University of California asks two years of the *same* language other than English, and recommends a third. That is a named flagship, not a federal law.⁷³ College Board offers AP Italian Language and Culture, revised for 2026–27. AP is optional. Credit is by college. A path through Italian does not require the letters AP.⁷⁴

The registrar word is **Italian**. Numbered high-school years —Italian I, Italian II, Italian III, Italian IV —are ordinary English a stranger can read. Never write a curriculum brand in the title column. Never write Conversation 101. Never write “AP Italian” unless the student is actually sitting that course-and-exam.⁷⁵

Italian lives in Italy. That is this week's map sentence. Then you teach. A regions quiz is not the hour. This week's greeting is this week's greeting. Swiss Italian and other communities exist; they are a later cultures sitting, not a reason to skip «Che cos' è?»

Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour. You will not finish every tense. You will

⁷⁰ACTFL, *ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners* (2012): two secondary years remains the most common U.S. model and commonly limits students to Novice-range *performance*.

⁷¹California Department of Education, *World Languages Standards for California Public Schools* (2019). Category I includes French, Italian, and Spanish. Elementary non-heritage students often remain Novice for an extended period.

⁷²19 Tex. Admin. Code §114.39 (Level I): elementary, middle, or high school; no prerequisite; Novice Mid to Novice High; communication as the overarching goal.

⁷³University of California A–G area E, plus *Quick Reference Guide* (August 2026): two years of the same language required, three recommended. Common Data Set 2024–2025 C5: each college prints its own number.

⁷⁴College Board, AP Central, opened 1 September 2026: AP Italian Language and Culture. Language-and-Culture courses revised for 2026–27. Credit by college. SAT Subject Tests discontinued June 2021.

⁷⁵NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*. Transcript titles a stranger can read: Italian, Italian I–IV. Never a brand.

finish some phrases, said for real, with an object on the table. Sound-spelling as a gift. Articles as a pattern you can hear.

This week you can learn that Italian sound-spelling is a gift you can hear, and why a silent extra vowel is a wrong turn. Today the student can read two labels aloud, then say what is on the table without looking at the labels.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a speaker of Italian. You do need to understand today's idea well enough to hear *casa* said as English "case," and «È un tavolo», not as cute slips.

Many adults feel rusty around Italian they remember as restaurant words, or never studied. That feeling is common. It is not a verdict. Five minutes of this section, then the warm-up, is enough for tomorrow. The child still does the talking.

Everyday picture. Three things sit on the table, each with a small label: *mela*, *casa* (a toy house, or a drawing of a house), *libro*. You point at the apple and say, while it is true, «È una mela» [It's an apple]. You point at the label and read it the same way you just said it: *mela* is *meh-lah*, both vowels spoken, no silent extra *e* at the end. Then you ask «Che cos' è?» [What is this?] and you wait. The work is the pointing, the mouth, and the letters that match. The grammar name can wait.

Precise picture. Two ideas will carry this chapter.

Sound-spelling is a gift. Italian is not a year of English phonics. What you see is close to what you say. Every written vowel is spoken. *Casa* is two open syllables, not English "case." *Mela* is two syllables, not "mail-uh" with an English slide. *Pane* [bread] does not drop the final *e*. A silent extra vowel—treating the last letter as English often treats a final *e*—is the wrong turn you should be able to hear.

A few sound patterns help you listen without becoming a phonetics teacher:

- *c* before *a*, *o*, *u* sounds like *k*: *casa*, *come* [how / like]. *c* before *e*, *i* sounds like English *ch*: *ciao* [hi / bye], *città* [city]. *ch* before *e*, *i* is the *k* sound: *che* [what], *chi* [who].
- *g* follows a similar split: *gatto* [cat] with a hard *g*; *gelato* with the soft sound; *gh* keeps the hard *g*: *ghiaccio* [ice].
- *gli* is a *ly* shape: *figlio* [son]. *gn* is a *ny* shape: *gnocchi*, *lasagne*.

- Double consonants are held a little longer: *pala* [shovel] is not *palla* [ball]. You do not need a minimal-pair course. You need to hear that the double is not decoration.

You will not dump those patterns as a week of worksheets. You will attach them to words already on the table. When the child reads *che* as English “chee” with the wrong *c*, you have a sound-spelling miss, not a character problem.

Articles are a pattern. *Il* and *un* sit with one group of nouns (*il libro, un libro*). *La* and *una* sit with another (*la mela, una mela, la casa, una casa*). *Lo* and *l’* exist for a smaller set —*lo studente, l’ amico*—and you will meet them when the book on the table does, not as a first-grade wall. *I* and *le* are plurals for later. You will hear «È un tavolo» or «il mela» as a mismatch. The repair is the phrase again, attached to the object, not a lecture titled *masculine/feminine*.

A few high-frequency frames will carry the first months:

- «Ciao.» [Hi / bye —familiar.]
- «Buongiorno.» [Good morning / good day.]
- «Mi chiamo ____.» [My name is ____.]
- «Come ti chiami?» [What’ s your name?]
- «Che cos’ è?» [What is this?]
- «È un / una ____.» [It’ s a ____.]
- «Ti piace?» [Do you like it?]
- «Sì.» / «No.» [Yes. / No.]

Those are formulaic. At Novice, formulaic and real can be the same sentence. There is an apple. They like it or they do not.

A few more lines you can actually hear this month, with glosses. You do not owe them all this week.

- «Buonasera.» [Good evening.]
- «Arrivederci.» [Goodbye —a little more formal than *ciao*.]
- «Per favore.» [Please.]
- «Grazie.» [Thank you.]
- «È rosso.» / «È rossa.» [It’ s red —matching the noun.]
- «Ci sono due mele.» [There are two apples.]
- «Dov’ è il libro?» [Where is the book?]
- «Vorrei una mela.» [I would like an apple.] —later, when a market sitting has earned a request.

- «Come stai?» [How are you? —familiar.]

Sound-spelling you can install on words already in the mouth. *Ciao* they may already have from English. Use it. Then put *che* next to it so *ch = k* has a home. *Gnocchi* can wait until you actually cook them; *gn* as *ny* is easier on a word they will say for real. Double consonants: if this week's page has *palla* [ball], hold the *l* a little. If it does not, you are not hunting doubles for sport.

Tavola and *tavolo* both exist. Use the word printed on this week's page. This book's talk-box follow-up uses *tavola* as "table" in one line; if your page says *tavolo*, say *un tavolo*, *il tavolo*, and hear «una tavolo» as the miss. The parent job is the pair on the table, not a dictionary fight.

Input matters. Stephen Krashen argued that we acquire language by understanding messages a little beyond where we are, with attention on meaning. That is a named theory of input, not a household law. Ears first, then the mouth. The page may arrive the same week as the mouth in Italian, because the letters help. They do not replace the mouth.⁷⁶

When the child misses this week's form, you have two adult moves. A recast is you saying their idea again, correctly, without stopping the talk. A prompt is you making them try the form —two choices, a start, a rising repeat —when this week's pattern is the one that slipped. If the miss does not block meaning and is not this week's form, recast once and go on. If it is this week's form, or meaning broke, prompt; then, if they are still stuck, give the form and have them say it for real. You will not interrupt every utterance. You will not pretend correction never helps.⁷⁷

After you ask in Italian, wait longer than feels polite. The opened wait-time study sampled first-year Spanish and French, not Italian; the kitchen translation is the same. After a target-language question, wait longer, not shorter. After they answer, wait again. Three to five seconds is a science-class aim this book borrows on

⁷⁶Stephen D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (1982; internet edition 2009). Named theory of input; not a kitchen-table coefficient.

⁷⁷Roy Lyster and Leila Ranta, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19, no. 1 (1997): recasts 55 percent of feedback; recast uptake 31 percent; repair 18 percent (teacher repetitions). Prompts led to more student-generated repair in that French-immersion set. Roy Lyster and Kazuya Saito (2010) abstract: classroom effects larger for prompts than recasts; coefficients beyond the abstract not used here.

purpose.⁷⁸ Silence at Novice is often search for a word, not refusal.⁷⁹

A generated market scene in fluent Italian is a scene. It is not the child's language. A model is not a speaker from Florence.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. A silent extra vowel, or English phonics on an Italian word. *Casa* as “case.” *Pane* with a dropped *e*. *Ciao* as three English syllables.

What it usually means. English spelling habits did the reading. The gift of Italian sound-spelling has not been used yet.

What to say. Point at the letters. Say the word as you point at each vowel. «Ca-sa.» They copy. You do not open a year of phonics charts.

2. The article and the noun do not match. «È un tavola.» «Il mela.» «Una libro.»

What it usually means. The child treated *un/una* as English *a*.

What to say. Point. «Un tavola o una tavola?» Wait. If still stuck: «Una tavola.» They say it. You go on. (*Tavola* and *tavolo* both exist in Italian for table-like objects; use the word your page actually printed. If the page says *tavolo*, then *un tavolo, il tavolo.*)

3. Che read with the wrong c, or chi as “ch-ee.” The *ch* pattern has not attached.

What it usually means. English *ch* won. Italian *ch* is the *k* sound.

What to say. Write *che* and *ciao* side by side. Say them. *Ciao* has the *ch* they expect; *che* has the *k*. One sitting. Then back to the object.

4. A list with no ears and no mouth—or a year of sound charts with no phrase. Twenty nouns copied. Or twenty syllable drills and no «Che cos' è?»

⁷⁸Judith L. Shrum, *Foreign Language Annals* 18 (1985), abstract: first-year high-school Spanish and French; 1.91 seconds after questions, 0.73 seconds after responses. Mary Budd Rowe, NARST 1972 / ERIC ED061103: three to five seconds in elementary *science* class, borrowed as an aim and labelled. No Italian-specific wait-time trial was opened for this book; the kitchen translation follows the same hour.

⁷⁹ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, Novice Mid speaking: pauses while searching for vocabulary or structure.

What it usually means. Coverage won, or the gift was treated as a curriculum of its own.

What to say. Three labelled objects. Read what they just said. Then the labels come off. The phrase stays.

5. A fluent page nobody in the house said, or a sitting skipped because “we don’ t have a homeschool Italian book.” A chatbot paragraph. A “native” dialogue with a city attached. Or an hour of searching for a package this book could not name.

What it usually means. The work was outsourced, or the thin catalog became a reason not to talk. Language models invent speakers. A tutor, a co-op, dual enrollment, or a first-year textbook are enough of a map to start.⁸⁰

What to say. “Show me the apple. Say one line with the machine off.” If they cannot, the paragraph comes off. If the shelf is thin, the objects are still on the table.

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, with three objects, three labels, and a scrap of paper, no student in the room.

1. Write *casa, mela, libro* on labels. Say each one out loud, every vowel spoken. Hear the English “case” you must not say.
2. Point: «È una mela.» «È un libro.» «È una casa.» Write today’ s opening: «Che cos’ è?» Gloss: What is this?
3. Write the wrong turn: *casa* as “case,” or «È un tavolo.» Next to it, the repair: point at the vowels, or «Un tavolo o una tavola?»
4. Read *che* once with the *k* sound. If that is new for you, it is allowed to be new. You are installing one pattern, not becoming a linguist.
5. Count a slow three after the question. Put the pencil down. You are ready. The child still talks.

If those five minutes are fluent for you, you can hear a silent extra vowel and a mismatched article. That is the job.

⁸⁰William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045. Fabricated citations; in some outputs, fabricated methods. A generated “speaker from Florence” is a fabricated biography. Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): performance during instruction is often an unreliable index of learning.

How to teach it this week

Run the language hour from the front of this book. This chapter fills it with Italian. Warm-up ears. Short model while it is true. Student attempt. One good question, then wait. Recast in the flow, or prompt if it is this week's form. Script as needed—here the script is the Roman alphabet they already know, plus the new sound-spelling pairs. Unaided exit.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday's object in one phrase. «Che cos' è?» pointing at one thing they already named. No tool.

Short model (5–8 minutes). Three labelled objects. You say «È una mela» while pointing at the apple. Then you point at the label and read *mela* the same way. Pause. Repeat with *libro*. Then the labels stay for one more try, or they come off if the child already said the word. Then the question: «Che cos' è?» You are showing talk-plus-letters, not delivering a lecture on phonics.

Fade as soon as you can. Second sitting: they read the label after they say the word. Third: they say the word, then the label comes off. Fourth: they name one object unaided, labels in the folder. Include one incorrect example you say on purpose: *casa* as “case”—then you repair, pointing at both vowels.

Exact wording you can steal.

On the table: «Che cos' è?» Then wait.

On a mismatch: «Un libro o una libro?» Then wait. (They should land on *un libro*.)

On a silent vowel: Point at the letters. «Ca-sa. Due vocali.» [Two vowels.] They copy.

On a recast that is not this week's form: «Sì, è una mela.» And you go on.

On a name: «Come ti chiami?» Wait. If they stall: «Mi chiamo _____. E tu?»

On like/not like: «Ti piace?» Point. Wait.

On the chatbot: “If we cannot hear you say it, it is not tonight's Italian. The model stays closed until you have tried. It is not from Florence.”

On a thin shelf: “We have objects and a phrase. That is enough for this hour. The textbook can arrive this year; the mouth does not wait for a franchise.”

First problem for the student, after the model. Two labelled objects. Read each label aloud, then turn the labels down and name each object with *un* or *una*. You wait. Struggle before rescue.

One good question. After the attempt: «Che cos' è?» —labels down.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three short namings, unaided. Then mix: yesterday's greeting, last week's article, one "case" -for-*casa* repair, one object they have not named today.

Exit ticket (3–5 minutes, unaided). One question, objects still in view, labels down, one phrase they say alone. Tool closed.

How to fade help. You say and point → they read the label after the phrase → labels down, they say → they ask *you* the question. Bring the labels back when a new sound pair arrives —*che* versus *ciao*, a double consonant.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. You hold the key: is there an object, a phrase said for real, letters that match, and an unaided try?

Grade-band moves

Place by skill, not by birthday.

Grades 1–2. Sounds and objects. Read a short word they can already say. *Ciao, mela, casa*. Articles arrive as a sound next to the object, not as a worksheet. Novice Low to Novice Mid is a generous description of unrehearsed use. Short sits. Then stop.

Grades 3–5. Articles as a hearing pattern: *il libro / la mela*. Still Novice. Sound-spelling used on purpose: they write the word they just said, then read it back. Novice High is a lot of language for a ten-year-old in a foreign-language hour.

Grades 6–8. Level I shape if you are starting now, or a continuation if the elementary hours were real. Sound-spelling as a gift, not a year of phonics. A few formulaic questions. A first-year textbook with twelve units aimed at level 1–3 students can supply the map; those twelve units are not a homeschool year-count, and they are not a four-year cycle. Parent load is higher if an online homework site expects an instructor. The transcript still says Italian I.⁸¹

⁸¹Vista Higher Learning, *Sentieri* 4e, publisher description as opened for this book: twelve units; level 1–3 students; ACTFL/Can-Do named; Supersite. Combine honestly; the transcript still says

Grades 9–12. Italian I through Italian IV. Years 1–2 cover the common college ask of two years of the same language when the work is real. Years 3–4 aim at Intermediate *performance* if time-on-task holds. AP Italian Language and Culture is optional. A co-op or dual enrollment is a fit, not a franchise. In the last federal subject table this book uses, tutors and co-ops were already part of how some homeschoolers got teaching help —23 percent tutor, 31 percent co-op, in 2016. That is not a 2026 Italian-tutor census. It is permission to use a human when the shelf is thin.⁸²

Named activities

Run one or two in a sitting. They are not a 180-day bank.

Activity 1 —Say What You See

Time. 10 minutes.

Materials. Three labelled objects (sound-spelling match). Labels you can flip down.

The fun of it. Reading what they just said.

The skill it builds. Sound-spelling as a gift. Not a year of charts.

How to run it. They say the word while pointing. They read the label. They flip the label down. They say the word again. If *casa* becomes “case,” point at the two vowels and copy once. Grades 1–2: two objects. Grades 9–12: after the flip, one unaided sentence per object.

Activity 2 —Il/La Sort

Time. 10 minutes.

Materials. Objects. Two paper tents: *il / un* and *la / una*.

The fun of it. The article click.

Italian I.

⁸²Jiashan Cui and Rachel Hanson, *Homeschooling in the United States: Results from the 2012 and 2016 Parent and Family Involvement Survey*, NCES 2020-001 (2019), Table 9 and related who-teaches rows: among K–12-equivalent homeschoolers, tutor 23 percent, co-op 31 percent (2016). Not a 2026 Italian-tutor census. 2023 subject-taught tables were not republished in the same form.

The skill it builds. Gender as a pattern the parent can hear.

How to run it. *Libro* under *il/un*. *Mela* under *la/una*. The child sorts the rest. Listen for «il mela». Prompt: two choices.

Activity 3 —Table Talk

Time. 10–15 minutes.

Materials. Three objects. A scrap with «Che cos' è?»

The fun of it. Pointing.

The skill it builds. A real phrase.

How to run it. Model one line per object. Ask the opening question. Wait. If they stall, two choices: «È un libro o una mela?» Stop while there is still an object un-named if the sit is going long.

Activity 4 —One Map Sentence

Time. 5 minutes, once.

Materials. An unbranded map of Italy.

The fun of it. This is where this week' s greeting lives.

The skill it builds. One cultures sentence, then teach. Not a regions unit.

How to run it. Point at Italy. Say, in English, one sentence: Italian lives in Italy; today' s greeting is still today' s greeting. Put the map away. Return to «Che cos' è?» A high-school student may later read a short authentic notice from one city. That is a later sitting.

Activity 5 —Vowel Tap

Time. 6–8 minutes.

Materials. Two word cards: *casa* and *pane* (or two words from this week' s page with a final vowel English would be tempted to silence).

The fun of it. Tapping each vowel so none go quiet.

The skill it builds. Hearing a silent extra vowel as a miss.

How to run it. You say the word. They tap once per vowel. If they tap once for *casa*, the English habit is doing the reading. Two taps. They say it again. Stop.

Activity 6 —Market List

Time. 12 minutes. Grades 3–12, after the child can already name two foods.

Materials. Three real foods or food cards. A scrap that will become a list *they* said, not a list they copied first.

The fun of it. A tiny market that is still the kitchen.

The skill it builds. Formulaic naming in a small set. Performance today; unaided cousin tomorrow.

How to run it. You: «Che cos' è?» They name. You write what they said. Then the scrap turns over. They name two items from memory, objects still in view. A generated six-line café or market script may be used *after* this try, labelled generated, parent-vetted against this week' s page, then performed. It is not the first attempt. Live unsupervised chat is not this activity in grades 1–5.

Activity 7 —Che versus Ciao

Time. 8 minutes. Grades 3–12, once *ciao* is already in the mouth.

Materials. Two cards: *che* and *ciao*.

The fun of it. The same letter *c*, two sounds, both honest.

The skill it builds. Sound-spelling as a pair you can hear, not a chart of every Italian consonant.

How to run it. Say *ciao*. They hear the *ch*. Say *che*. They hear the *k*. They sort two or three words from this week' s page onto the matching card. You do not add *chiesa*, *chiave*, and a dozen more unless the page already has them.

Talk box —Market, this week

This box is an illustration of a sitting. A composite, not a reported child.

Opening (say this, then wait).

«Che cos' è?»

[What is this?]

Follow-ups (pick three to five; one meaning, checked).

1. «È un libro o una tavola?» [Is it a book or a table?]
2. «Di che colore è?» [What color is it?]
3. «Ti piace?» [Do you like it?]
4. «Ce ne sono due?» [Are there two?]
5. «Dov' è?» [Where is it?]

How to wait. After you ask, count a slow three. If the question was in Italian, wait longer, not shorter. Look at the objects if the silence is hard. After they answer, wait again.

What a stuck silence usually means. Search for the word. Or they did not understand the question. Or wait time has been too short for years. Or a recast passed unnoticed. Or you asked a phonics quiz (“How many vowels?”) instead of a meaning question.

Next move. Point. Offer two choices. Repeat more slowly, tapping vowels if this week's gift is the letters. Give a frame: «È un ____.» Then, if still stuck, model the line and have them say it for real.

Done enough today. The child names one object with its article, unaided. In this chapter, a cousin of done enough is: they read the label of a word they can already say, then say it with the label down.



Figure 8: Labelled kitchen objects as a still-life, a folded talk-box slip with «Che cos' è?», an unbranded Italy outline at the edge, no people, no logos.

Practice that actually builds learning

Blocked practice first, when the move is new. The same frame, three objects: «È una mela. È un libro. È una casa.» For sound-spelling, blocked means the same word, said then read, three times —not a page of syllable drills. Mixed practice as soon as the frame is sayable: yesterday' s greeting, today' s object, last week' s article, one “case” -for-*casa* repair. Brief retrieval unaided at the start of the hour. A market can motivate a sitting. It does not replace the unaided phrase.

One incorrect example, on purpose. You say *casa* as “case,” or «È un mela», then you stop. “What would you change?” If they hear the mismatch, the pattern is working. If they do not, you are still in blocked practice.

A keyword list —*il* means masculine, *c+i* means ch —is a false friend until it attaches to a word they can say. Keep the article attached to the apple. Keep the *c* attached to *ciao* and *che*.

Grade-band practice.

1–2. Three objects, one frame, labels as a gift then flipped down. Retrieval is yesterday’ s *ciao*. Stop early.

3–5. Blocked: six objects over two sittings, same frame, write-after-say. Mixed: article plus like/not like plus one sound pair. One incorrect article or one silenced vowel to diagnose. Still Novice.

6–8. Blocked: a new sound pair from this week’ s page, then articles on new nouns. Mixed: name, article, one market item from last month. Retrieval: «Che cos’ è?» with labels down. Diagnose: *pane* with a dropped *e*, or «il mela.»

9–12. Blocked for a new form the book actually reached this week, then mixed with Year 1 objects so the old phrases do not die. Retrieval every sitting: one unrehearsed question on a familiar topic. Diagnose a fluent paragraph whose apple no one can point at. If they sample AP-style items, treat them as a check on the same skills, not as the Italian course. A twelve-unit first-year book is a map, not a year-count you owe the publisher.

For the student

Italian is how you name what is in front of you, and how you see that the letters are trying to help. It is not a list of grammar titles, and it is not an exam brand unless you chose that exam.

«Che cos’ è?» means *What is this?* «È una mela» [It’ s an apple]. «È un libro» [It’ s a book]. *Un* and *una* are not the same. They match the word they sit with.

Italian words like to say every vowel you can see. *Casa* is *ca-sa*, not English “case.” If you leave a vowel quiet because English sometimes does, the shape is wrong. That is useful information. You will tap the vowels and say the word again.

Some letters change their sound depending on the next letter. *Ciao* and *che* both start with *c*, and they do not start the same. You will learn those pairs on words you already say, not as a year of charts before you are allowed to talk.

Italian lives in Italy. Today’ s line is still today’ s line. You do not have to win a regions quiz to say what an apple is.

A paragraph a computer wrote in Italian is a scene. It is not your Italian. A com-

puter is not from Florence. If you cannot say one line with the machine off, you are not done. That is tonight' s try.

If the shelf at home has fewer Italian books than Spanish books, you still get to talk. Objects are not a franchise.

Tiny worked example. Question: *What is this?*

The table has an apple and a book. Each has a label.

You point at the apple: «È una mela.» You read *mela*. You flip the label down. You say «È una mela» again.

You point at the book: «È un libro.» Same steps.

Someone asks «Ti piace?» You say «Sì» or «No.»

The because-step is not “because *mela* is feminine.” The because-step is: you looked, you used the small word that belongs with that object, you said every vowel, you said it again with the label down.

Try 1. Two labelled objects. Read each label aloud. Then turn the labels down and name each object with *un* or *una*.

Try 2. Someone asks «Che cos' è?» Answer without looking at this page and without looking at the labels.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why saying *casa* like English “case” is a wrong turn, and how you would check a computer' s Italian paragraph tonight without treating it as your voice.

Challenge. Name one object with its article, then say one more true thing about it —a like/not like, a color, or where it is. Machine off. Labels down.

You are allowed to struggle. A missing word is information, not a verdict. Listen. Point. Say the line. Read it. Say it again. The tool does not take this try. You do.

If it isn' t clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame.

Diagnostic 1 —there is no object, or no mouth, or the catalog hunt ate the year. The student can recite a chapter title and cannot say «È una mela» while pointing.

Or the family is still searching for a homeschool Italian package and has not put an apple on the table.

Next move. Stop the slog. Three objects. One frame. Talk before writing. A first-year textbook, a tutor, a co-op, or dual enrollment can be the map. The hour does not wait for a franchise this book could not name.

Diagnostic 2 —English phonics is doing the reading, or the article never matches. *Casa* is always “case.” *Pane* drops the *e*. Every noun gets *un*.

Next move. Vowel tap for a week. Two tents for *un/una*. Prompt with two choices; recast the rest. *Che* versus *ciao* once, then back to the apple.

Diagnostic 3 —a fluent page the house cannot hear. The paragraph arrived. The model is “from Florence.” The labels were never flipped down.

Next move. Apple in the hands. Labels down. One unaided line, machine off. A model-supplied speaker is untrusted until the phrase matches a named page or the child’s mouth. Detectors are not a verdict on a second-language paragraph.⁸³

When to get a human tutor. You cannot hear “case” for *casa*, even after the five-minute warm-up. Or the unaided ticket is still a blank after weeks of objects. A tutor, a co-op, or later dual-enrollment Italian is a normal plan —and for Italian it may be the main map. Stay the supervisor who can still ask «Che cos’ è?»

When to go ahead. Objects get named with a matching article. A short word they can say can be read. Labels can come down. Unaided phrases appear without the book. Then lengthen. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student listens and talks. You hold the key. The full rules live once in *The Language Hour*. This box points back, and it adds one Italian-specific prompt you can vet.

The child attempts first. You may, after that attempt, use a tool to explain this week’s idea to *you* from a named page; make extra practice with answers hidden; draft a six-line generated café or market script you vet and then perform; run a

⁸³Weixin Liang et al., *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023). Detectors’ high false-positive rates on human TOEFL essays. Do not police the child’s Italian paragraph with a detector.

short role-play after the attempt with you in the room (skip live chat in grades 1–5); write a hint script; diagnose work already done; draft talk-box follow-ups you vet. A fluent model turn is performance, not the child’s Italian. A model is not from Florence.

“Translate this page” and “write my essay in Italian” are the crutch. So is a native-speaker identity, a pronunciation grade you have not opened a paper for, and a certificate of fluency. Unguarded help raised math practice and then cut the unaided exam in one high-school study. That study is math. The same crutch is available here.⁸⁴ Isolated technology is not the course.⁸⁵

AI box —Italian

Point back to the language-hour box for the allowed moves and the bans. Then this extra prompt, if you want it, on *your* account, after the child has already named two objects unaided. You will read the output. You will cut anything you cannot check against this week’s page. The child will not see the key.

Explain to me, in one English paragraph, why Italian sound-spelling is a gift, using casa, mela, and che (the k sound). Then list two mistakes a beginner this age makes (I need to hear casa said like English “case,” and «È un tavolo»). Then write a six-line café script in Italian with an English gloss after each line, labelled GENERATED, using only this week’s kind of phrases (Che cos’ è?, È un/una ____, Ti piace?). Put a separate answer key I can fold over. Do not invent a speaker from Florence. Do not write a fluency score. If you are unsure of an article, say SEE THE BOOK.

You hold the folded key. You cut anything you cannot check. Then you and the child *perform* the six lines, twice, swapping parts, after the child has already tried the table. Then the script goes away. The unaided exit is still «Che cos’ è?» with the machine off.

⁸⁴Hamsa Bastani et al., *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. GPT Base +48 percent practice / –17 percent unaided exam in high-school *math*. Mechanism for the language hour, not an Italian RCT.

⁸⁵ACTFL, “The Role of Technology in Language Learning,” 19 May 2017. Isolated technology is not the course. In a homeschool, the parent is the educator for the hour.

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 9 Italian” book is a publisher’s scope, not a legal grade. Done enough is skill, plus phrases actually said.

Checklist before moving on.

- Names at least two real objects with a matching *un/una* or *il/la*, unaided, looking at the objects.
- Answers «Che cos’ è?» with a phrase, not with an English list.
- Reads a short word they can already say, then says it again with the label down.
- Hears *casa* as “case,” or «È un tavolo», as a mismatch —or accepts the two-choice prompt and repairs.
- Treats a rehearsed market dialogue as practice, and still does one unrehearsed cousin with the book closed.
- Treats a generated paragraph as a scene, not as the student’s Italian.
- Transcript line, when a high-school year is claimed: **Italian** or **Italian I** (then II, III, IV). Never a brand. Never a publisher’s unit count as the title.

What can still be thin: a dedicated homeschool-house Italian series; every tense; AP. Those can travel. A year of searching for a package, or a year of lists with no mouth, cannot count as done. Two high-school years of real work commonly still sit in Novice *performance*. Intermediate created sentences are a later aim.

NCAA may count world language toward additional core, not as a required year-count. Records will handle the worksheet. The year on the table is still Italian.⁸⁶

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know why a silent extra vowel is a wrong turn. I know what a coverage slog usually means. I know what to say tomorrow —an apple, a label, a question, a wait. The student still does the talking. We can do this.

⁸⁶NCAA Eligibility Center, Division I Academic Standards fact sheet (September 2023, still hosted 1 September 2026): world language may fill additional core; it is not a required year-count. CLEP is not NCAA core.

Chapter 4

German



Figure 9: A kitchen-table still-life from a high three-quarter view: three word cards with ä, ö, and ü, three more word cards in a verb-second line, a folded paper with «Was ist das?» and a short English gloss. No people. No logos. No brand spines.

Why this matters

German is how a student learns to hear a useful phrase, see a mark that changes a sound, feel a verb sit in second place in a statement, and then —later —to give a noun a job in a sentence without treating a four-case chart as week one. It is not a wall. It is not a brand. It is not an exam title unless you chose that exam.

That is worth the struggle because German has a reputation it does not deserve at a kitchen table: too hard for homeschool. California's map places German in Category II —languages with linguistic or cultural differences from English, on an FSI-derived scale that also puts Spanish, French, and Italian in Category I and Mandarin, Japanese, and Korean in Category IV. That is a calendar caution, not a veto, and not a talent myth. You may need more calendar than a Category I language to reach the same reading and writing range. You do not need a different kind of parent. You need this week's idea, well enough to hear a wrong phrase.⁸⁷

A child who can say «Das ist ein Buch» [That is a book] while pointing, and later line three word cards so the verb sits in seat two, has more German than a child who can chant *nominative* with nothing on the table. A child who can still do it tomorrow without the book has more than a child who recites a dialogue once. The first is the start of unrehearsed use. The second is a performance. Both have a place. Only the first is the promise.⁸⁸

The homeschool catalog for German is thinner than the Spanish or French catalog this book can name. A dedicated German-for-homeschool house analogue to the big Spanish and French series was not among the programs this book opened. A first-year open textbook from a university language-resource center is a named path: web-based, no fees, ten chapters, a grammar companion, college-novice in aim. Those ten chapters are not a four-year cycle and not a national sequence. The

⁸⁷California Department of Education, *World Languages Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (2019). Category I: languages closely related to English (includes French, Italian, Spanish). Category II: languages with linguistic or cultural differences from English (includes German). Category IV includes Mandarin, Japanese, Korean. The map reprints FSI-derived hour bands with a warning that FSI students are typically adults in very small classes at high weekly intensity. This book treats the categories as a calendar caution, not as a homeschool hour promise and not as a talent myth. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026.

⁸⁸ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, 4th ed. Novice: formulaic and rote utterances, lists, and phrases. Intermediate: short conversations on predictable topics, sentence-level communication. Performance versus proficiency: a rehearsed dialogue may look Intermediate and still rate Novice unrehearsed.

transcript still says German I. Tutor, co-op, and dual enrollment remain real. You can still run the hour. The child still talks.⁸⁹

There is no national German syllabus. ACTFL's 2024 guidelines are a map of unrehearsed use: Novice language is learned words, lists, and formulaic phrases; Intermediate language is short created sentences in a familiar situation. A rehearsed table dialogue is performance. Proficiency is whether they can still do a cousin of it without the script.⁹⁰ Two secondary years is the common U.S. public-school model and commonly leaves students in the Novice range of *performance*. That is a map of what two years often buy. It is not a verdict on your table, and it is not proof that German is the reason.⁹¹

Texas maps Level I to Novice Mid through Novice High, with no prerequisite, in elementary, middle, or high school. Communication is the overarching goal. Cases as jobs sit inside that communication, not instead of it.⁹² The University of California asks two years of the *same* language other than English, and recommends a third. That is a named flagship, not a federal law.⁹³ College Board offers AP German Language and Culture, revised for 2026–27. AP is optional. Credit is by college. A path through German does not require the letters AP.⁹⁴

The registrar word is **German**. Numbered high-school years —German I, German II, German III, German IV —are ordinary English a stranger can read. Never write

⁸⁹*Deutsch im Blick*, Center for Open Educational Resources and Language Learning (COERLL), University of Texas at Austin. Web-based first-year German, open access, no fees; textbook PDF 2nd edition 2017; ten chapters; Grimm Grammar companion; CC BY-NC-ND 3.0. College-novice OER, not a four-year cycle; transcript German I. A Breaking-the-Barrier-style German homeschool package was not opened for this book. Deutsch Aktuell was not confirmed as current homeschool publisher copy in the research for this book.

⁹⁰ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*.

⁹¹ACTFL, *ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners* (2012): two secondary years remains the most common U.S. model and commonly limits students to Novice-range *performance*.

⁹²19 Tex. Admin. Code §114.39 (Level I): elementary, middle, or high school; no prerequisite; Novice Mid to Novice High; communication as the overarching goal; ask and respond about everyday life; describe people, objects, and simple situations with words, phrases, and simple sentences. Accuracy of grammar is in the service of communication.

⁹³University of California A–G area E, plus *Quick Reference Guide* (August 2026): two years of the same language required, three recommended. Common Data Set 2024–2025 C5: each college prints its own number.

⁹⁴College Board, AP Central, opened 1 September 2026: AP German Language and Culture. Language-and-Culture courses revised for 2026–27. Credit by college. SAT Subject Tests discontinued June 2021.

a curriculum brand in the title column. Never write Conversation 101. Never write “AP German” unless the student is actually sitting that course-and-exam.⁹⁵

Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour. You will not finish four cases in week one. You will finish some phrases, said for real, with an object on the table. Umlauts as visible sound. The verb in second place as a tune. Cases as jobs, one at a time, when a sentence has a doer and a thing that got it.

This week you can learn that the verb likes second place, and why «Ich heute gehe» is a tune mistake, not a cute slip. Today the student can put three word cards in a verb-second line and say the sentence while it is true.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a speaker of German. You do need to understand today’s idea well enough to hear «Ich heute gehe», a *u* where the page has *ü*, and—in a later band—a doer wearing the object-word.

Many adults feel rusty around German they remember as a chart of der/die/das, or never studied. That feeling is common. It is not a verdict. Five minutes of this section, then the warm-up, is enough for tomorrow. The child still does the talking.

Everyday picture. A book on the table. You point and say, while it is true, «Das ist ein Buch» [That is a book]. Three cards sit in a row: *Ich —lese —das Buch* [I / read / the book]. The verb *lese* sits in the middle, seat two. You say the line. Then you ask «Was ist das?» [What is that?] and you wait. The work is the pointing, the mouth, and the tune of the line. The case names can wait.

Precise picture. Three ideas will carry this chapter. They are not a phonology seminar, a syntax dissertation, or a wall of charts.

Umlauts are visible sound. The dots are not decoration. *ä*, *ö*, and *ü* are different vowels from *a*, *o*, and *u*. *Schon* [already] is not *schön* [beautiful]. *Mutter* [mother] is not *Mütter* [mothers]. *Fuß* / *Fuß* uses *ß*, a letter that sounds like a sharp *s* after a long vowel; many pages also print *ss*. You need to see the mark and hear that the sound changed. You do not need a phonology seminar. A card with *schön* next to

⁹⁵NCAA Eligibility Center, *Home School Toolkit 2025–26*. Transcript titles a stranger can read: German, German I–IV. Never a brand.

schon is enough for the idea to exist. Grades 1–2 hunt the dots. Later bands use the word.

V2 is a tune: the verb likes second place in a statement. In a simple German statement, the conjugated verb sits in the second slot. «Ich gehe heute.» [I go today.] «Heute gehe ich.» [Today I go.] Both are honest. The verb *gehe* is still in seat two. «Ich heute gehe» puts the verb in seat three. That is the wrong tune. English often parks extra words between *I* and the verb (*I today go* is already odd in English; German is stricter about the verb's seat). You will hear the miss as a tune, the way you hear a skipped beat. You will not start a syntax dissertation. Three cards you can rearrange are enough.

Cases are jobs, not a wall. A noun in a German sentence has a job. The job shows up on the little word in front —and sometimes on the noun. This week, if you teach cases at all, you teach two jobs:

- *Who does it* (nominative): «Der Hund sieht …» [The dog sees …]
- *The thing that got it* (accusative): «…den Ball.» […the ball.]

«Der Hund sieht den Ball.» [The dog sees the ball.] Move the toys: the dog is the doer; the ball is what got seen. When the ball becomes the doer, the little word changes: «Der Ball rollt.» [The ball rolls.] You will not dump genitive and dative in the same sitting. You will not print a four-column chart as week one. You will hear a doer wearing the object-word —«Der Hund sieht den Ball» when they meant the dog did the seeing —as a job miss, in ordinary language: who did it, and what got it.

German also has three genders (*der, die, das*) that you will meet as articles next to objects, the way Spanish and French taught *el/la* and *le/la*. *Das Buch, der Tisch, die Tasse*. You will hear a mismatch. You will not make gender a fourth wall beside cases in the same hour.

A few high-frequency frames will carry the first months:

- «Hallo.» / «Guten Tag.» [Hello. / Good day.]
- «Ich heiße ____.» [My name is ____.]
- «Wie heißt du?» [What's your name?]
- «Was ist das?» [What is that?]
- «Das ist ein / eine ____.» [That is a ____.]
- «Ja.» / «Nein.» [Yes. / No.]
- «Ich gehe.» [I go. / I am going.]

- «Das ist schön.» [That is beautiful / nice.] —for the umlaut, when the word is true.

Those are formulaic. At Novice, formulaic and real can be the same sentence. There is a book. They can say what it is.

A few more lines you can actually hear this month, with glosses. You do not owe them all this week.

- «Guten Morgen.» [Good morning.]
- «Auf Wiedersehen.» [Goodbye.]
- «Bitte.» [Please. / You' re welcome.]
- «Danke.» [Thank you.]
- «Es ist rot.» [It is red.]
- «Es gibt zwei Bücher.» [There are two books.] —*Bücher* shows an umlaut that arrived with the plural; you do not need the plural chart to hear the dots.
- «Wo ist das Buch?» [Where is the book?]
- «Ich möchte das Buch.» [I would like the book.] —later, when a request has earned a sitting. Hear the umlaut in *möchte*.
- «Der Hund sieht den Ball.» [The dog sees the ball.] —when jobs are this week' s idea.

Seat two in two honest orders, both glossed: «Ich gehe heute.» [I go today.] «Heute gehe ich.» [Today I go.] The miss, glossed so you can hear it: «Ich heute gehe» puts *gehe* in seat three. Move the card. The child says an honest order. You go on.

Input matters. Stephen Krashen argued that we acquire language by understanding messages a little beyond where we are, with attention on meaning. That is a named theory of input, not a household law. Ears first, then the mouth. A case name is not a message. A dog seeing a ball is.⁹⁶

When the child misses this week' s form, you have two adult moves. A recast is you saying their idea again, correctly, without stopping the talk. A prompt is you making them try the form —two choices, a start, a rising repeat —when this week' s pattern is the one that slipped. If the miss does not block meaning and is not this week' s form, recast once and go on. If it is this week' s form, or meaning broke, prompt; then, if they are still stuck, give the form and have them say it for

⁹⁶Stephen D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition* (1982; internet edition 2009). Named theory of input; not a kitchen-table coefficient.

real. You will not interrupt every utterance. You will not pretend correction never helps.⁹⁷

After you ask in German, wait longer than feels polite. The opened wait-time study sampled first-year Spanish and French; the kitchen translation is the same. After a target-language question, wait longer, not shorter. After they answer, wait again. Three to five seconds is a science-class aim this book borrows on purpose.⁹⁸ Silence at Novice is often search for a word, not refusal.⁹⁹

A generated dialogue in fluent German is a scene. It is not the child's language. A model is not a speaker from Berlin. A certificate of fluency is not a transcript line.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. The verb skipped seat two. «Ich heute gehe.» «Heute ich gehe.»

What it usually means. English word order did the sitting. The tune has not been heard yet.

What to say. Move the cards. Verb in seat two. «Ich gehe heute.» «Heute gehe ich.» They say the line that is still true. You do not name V2 unless they are old enough that the name helps them hear the beat.

2. The dots were ignored, or ß was treated as a B. Schön as schon. Über as uber. Fuß as Fub.

What it usually means. The mark looked like decoration. English has no umlaut habit.

⁹⁷Roy Lyster and Leila Ranta, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19, no. 1 (1997): recasts 55 percent of feedback in four primary French-immersion classrooms; recast uptake 31 percent; repair 18 percent (teacher repetitions). Prompts led to more student-generated repair in that set. Roy Lyster and Kazuya Saito (2010) abstract: classroom effects larger for prompts than recasts; coefficients beyond the abstract not used here.

⁹⁸Judith L. Shrum, *Foreign Language Annals* 18 (1985), abstract: first-year high-school Spanish and French; 1.91 seconds after questions, 0.73 seconds after responses. Mary Budd Rowe, NARST 1972 / ERIC ED061103: three to five seconds in elementary *science* class, borrowed as an aim and labelled. No German-specific wait-time trial was opened for this book; the kitchen translation follows the same hour.

⁹⁹ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, Novice Mid speaking: pauses while searching for vocabulary or structure.

What to say. Point at the dots. Say both words if you have the pair: *schon* / *schön*. They hunt the mark, then they say the word. You do not open a phonology seminar.

3. The doer is wearing the object-word. In a later band: they wanted the dog to see the ball, and the little words swapped jobs. Or they dumped four case names as the hour, with no toys.

What it usually means. A chart arrived before a job. Or English *the* did every job.

What to say. Two toys. «Who did it? What got it?» Rebuild «Der Hund sieht den Ball.» If four cases arrived in week one, put three of them back in the folder. One job pair is enough.

4. A list with no ears and no mouth —or a wall of der/die/das as the year. Twenty nouns copied. No book. No question. Or a four-column chart before a greeting.

What it usually means. Coverage won. German' s reputation won.

What to say. One book. «Was ist das?» Three cards. The chart waits. Category II is a calendar, not a stop sign.

5. A fluent page nobody in the house said, or a sitting skipped because “German is too hard.” A chatbot paragraph. A “native” dialogue with a city attached. A certificate of fluency. Or an hour of searching for a homeschool package this book could not name.

What it usually means. The work was outsourced, or the reputation became the method. Language models invent speakers. A first-year open text, a tutor, or a co-op is enough of a map to start.¹⁰⁰

What to say. “Show me the book. Say one line with the machine off. Put the verb in seat two.” If they cannot, the paragraph comes off. If the shelf is thin, the cards are still on the table.

¹⁰⁰William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045. Fabricated citations; in some outputs, fabricated methods. A generated “speaker from Berlin” is a fabricated biography. Nicholas C. Soderstrom and Robert A. Bjork, *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 10, no. 2 (2015): performance during instruction is often an unreliable index of learning.

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, with a book, three word cards, and a scrap of paper, no student in the room.

1. Write *Ich, gehe, heute* on three cards. Line them: *Ich gehe heute*. Then: *Heute gehe ich*. Say both. Hear «*Ich heute gehe*» as the tune you must catch.
2. Write *schön* with the dots. Say it once. Write *schon* without. See the mark.
3. Point at the book: «*Das ist ein Buch.*» Write today's opening: «*Was ist das?*» Gloss: What is that?
4. Write the wrong turn: «*Ich heute gehe.*» Next to it, the repair: move the *gehe* card to seat two.
5. If this week's band includes cases as jobs, set a toy dog and a ball. Whisper: who did it, what got it. If the band does not, leave the toys in the folder. Count a slow three after the question. Put the pencil down. You are ready. The child still talks.

If those five minutes are fluent for you, you can hear a skipped beat and a missing umlaut. That is the job.

How to teach it this week

Run the language hour from the front of this book. This chapter fills it with German. Warm-up ears. Short model while it is true. Student attempt. One good question, then wait. Recast in the flow, or prompt if it is this week's form. Script as needed—here the new marks are ä, ö, ü, and ß. Unaided exit.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, unaided). Yesterday's object in one phrase. «*Was ist das?*» pointing at one thing they already named. No tool.

Short model (5–8 minutes). A book on the table. You say «*Das ist ein Buch.*» Pause. If umlauts are this week's eye, show *schön* and *schon*. If V2 is this week's tune, line *Ich gehe heute* and say it. Then the question: «*Was ist das?*» You are showing talk, not delivering a lecture on cases.

Fade as soon as you can. Second sitting: they point while you say. Third: they move the verb card to seat two. Fourth: they name one object unaided, or they say the three-card line while it is true. Include one incorrect example you say on purpose: «*Ich heute gehe*»—then you move the card: «*Ich gehe heute.*»

Exact wording you can steal.

On the table: «Was ist das?» Then wait.

On a mismatch of article: «Ein Buch oder eine Buch?» Then wait. (They should land on *ein Buch*.)

On the tune: move the card. «Wo ist das Verb?» [Where is the verb?] Seat two. They say the line.

On the dots: point. «Schön. Mit Punkten.» [With dots.] They hunt, then they say.

On a recast that is not this week' s form: «Ja, das ist ein Buch.» And you go on.

On a name: «Wie heißt du?» Wait. If they stall: «Ich heiße _____. Und du?»

On like/not like, later: «Gefällt dir das?» [Do you like that?] Point. Wait.

On the chatbot: “If we cannot hear you say it, it is not tonight’ s German. The model stays closed until you have tried. It is not from Berlin. It does not print a fluency certificate.”

On Category II: “This language may take more calendar. It does not take a different kind of us. Today’ s line is today’ s line.”

First problem for the student, after the model. Three word cards. Put them in a verb-second line and say the sentence while it is true. Or, if this week’ s band is still objects-only: name the book with *ein*. Book closed for the attempt. You wait. Struggle before rescue.

One good question. After the attempt: «Was ist das?» —now without pointing first. Or, for V2: «Wo ist das Verb?»

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three short namings or one rebuilt line, unaided. Then mix: yesterday’ s greeting, last week’ s umlaut if you have one, one «Ich heute gehe» repair, one object they have not named today.

Exit ticket (3–5 minutes, unaided). One question, objects still in view, one phrase or one three-card line they say alone. Tool closed.

How to fade help. You say and point → they move the cards while you say → they say the line → they ask *you* the question. Bring the scaffold back when a new job arrives —accusative as “the thing that got it.”

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. You hold the key: is there an object, a phrase said for real, a verb in seat two when that is this week's tune, and an unaided try?

Grade-band moves

Place by skill, not by birthday. Category II means more calendar, not a stop sign, and not “wait until high school.”

Grades 1–2. Sounds, umlauts as marks you can see, objects, greetings. Do not start a four-case wall. «Hallo.» «Was ist das?» «Das ist ein Buch.» Hunt the dots on three cards. Novice Low to Novice Mid is a generous description of unrehearsed use. Short sits. Then stop.

Grades 3–5. Short phrases. Accusative as “the thing that got it” in ordinary language if it earns its keep—a ball that got thrown, a book that got seen—and only if the child already names objects. Still Novice. Novice High is a lot of language for a ten-year-old in a foreign-language hour. Umlauts used in real words: *schön*, *fünf* [five], *Mädchen* [girl] if the page has them.

Grades 6–8. Level I if you are starting now, or a continuation if the elementary hours were real. V2 as a tune you can hear. Cases as jobs one at a time: who did it, what got it. A first-year open text with ten chapters can supply the map; those ten chapters are not a national sequence. The transcript, if a credit is intended, still says German I.

Grades 9–12. German I through German IV. Years 1–2 cover the common college ask of two years of the same language when the work is real. Years 3–4 aim at Intermediate *performance* if time-on-task holds. AP German Language and Culture is optional. Category II may mean the reading and writing take more calendar than French I–II; speaking and listening still start this week. A heritage or prior-German speaker accelerates by what they can do.

Named activities

Run one or two in a sitting. They are not a 180-day bank.

Activity 1 —Umlaut Hunt

Time. 8 minutes.

Materials. Three word cards with ä / ö / ü (from this week' s page: *Mädchen, schön, über*, or the three the book actually printed). One card without dots as a foil, if you have *schon*.

The fun of it. Finding the dots.

The skill it builds. Umlauts as visible sound. Not a phonology seminar.

How to run it. Spread the cards. They hunt the marks. They say the word after you. If they say *schon* for *schön*, you point at the dots and they try again. Grades 1–2: hunt and copy. Grades 9–12: after the hunt, one unaided sentence that uses one of the words while it is true.

Activity 2 —Who Did It (cases as jobs)

Time. 15 minutes. Grades 6–12, or a younger student who already names objects fluently.

Materials. Two toys (a doer, a thing): a dog and a ball, a sibling and a book.

The fun of it. Moving who does what.

The skill it builds. Nominative/accusative as jobs. Not a wall of charts.

How to run it. Model: «Der Hund sieht den Ball.» Move the toys. Ask, in English first if you must: who did it? what got it? They rebuild the line. Swap: now the ball is what you talk about as doer, if that sentence is true and simple: «Der Ball rollt.» You do not add dative today. You do not print four columns.

Activity 3 —Verb-Second Tune

Time. 10 minutes.

Materials. Three word cards you can rearrange: *Ich / gehe / heute*, or three words from this week' s page.

The fun of it. The verb sitting in seat two.

The skill it builds. V2 as a tune. Not a syntax dissertation.

How to run it. Line 1: *Ich gehe heute*. Say it. Line 2: *Heute gehe ich*. Say it. Then you make the miss on purpose: *Ich heute gehe*. They move the verb card.

They say the honest line. Grades 1–2 may skip this activity and stay with «Was ist das?» Grades 3–5 can do the first line only.

Activity 4 —Table Talk

Time. 10–15 minutes.

Materials. Three objects. A scrap with «Was ist das?»

The fun of it. Pointing.

The skill it builds. A real phrase.

How to run it. Model one line per object. Ask the opening question. Wait. If they stall, two choices: «Ist das ein Buch oder ein Tisch?» Stop while there is still an object un-named if the sit is going long.

Activity 5 —Seat-Two Repair

Time. 5–8 minutes. After Activity 3, or as mixed practice.

Materials. The same three cards.

The fun of it. Catching the skipped beat.

The skill it builds. Hearing «Ich heute gehe» as a tune miss.

How to run it. You lay the cards wrong. They fix them. They say the line. You lay them right but in the other honest order (*Heute gehe ich*). They say that line too. Stop.

Activity 6 —ß and Dots

Time. 6 minutes.

Materials. A card with ß (*Fuß* or *heiß* [hot], if the page has it) and one umlaut card.

The fun of it. Two marks English does not use.

The skill it builds. Seeing German' s extra letters as part of the word.

How to run it. They find ß. They do not call it B. They find the dots. They say each word after you. One sitting. Then back to «Was ist das?»

Activity 7 —Four-Word Isomorph

Time. 10 minutes. Grades 9–12, after V2 is sayable.

Materials. Four-word sentences from this week’ s page, extra copies with the same structure and new words you checked. Hidden key.

The fun of it. Same tune, new words.

The skill it builds. Blocked then mixed V2 without a chatbot writing the sentence.

How to run it. You hold the key. They build three lines with cards. Then one unaided line, cards away. A tool may generate the extra lines for *you*, answers hidden, after you name the page. It does not become a fluency certificate.

Talk box —Book, this week

This box is an illustration of a sitting. A composite, not a reported child.

Opening (say this, then wait).

«Was ist das?»

[What is that?]

Follow-ups (pick three to five; one meaning, checked).

1. «Ist das ein Buch oder ein Tisch?» [Is that a book or a table?]
2. «Welche Farbe hat es?» [What color is it?]
3. «Gefällt dir das?» [Do you like that?]
4. «Gibt es zwei?» [Are there two?]
5. «Wo ist das?» [Where is that?]

How to wait. After you ask, count a slow three. If the question was in German, wait longer, not shorter. Look at the book if the silence is hard. After they answer, wait again.

What a stuck silence usually means. Search for the word. Or they did not understand the question. Or wait time has been too short for years. Or a recast passed unnoticed. Or you asked a case-name quiz (“Is that accusative?”) instead of a meaning question.

Next move. Point. Offer two choices. Repeat more slowly. Give a frame: «Das ist ein ____.» If this week’ s tune is V2 and they stall on a longer line, go back to

three cards. Then, if still stuck, model the line and have them say it for real.

Done enough today. The child names one object, unaided. In later bands, a short V2 sentence about it.



Figure 10: Umlaut cards and three word cards in a verb-second line as a still-life, a folded slip with «Was ist das?», no people, no logos.

Practice that actually builds learning

Blocked practice first, when the move is new. The same frame, three objects: «Das ist ein Buch. Das ist ein Tisch. Das ist eine Tasse.» For V2, blocked means the same three cards, two honest orders, three times —not a page of syntax trees. For umlauts, blocked means hunt-then-say on three marks. Mixed practice as soon as the frame is sayable: yesterday' s greeting, today' s object, last week' s dots, one «Ich heute gehe» repair. Brief retrieval unaided at the start of the hour. Toys can motivate a sitting. They do not replace the unaided phrase.

One incorrect example, on purpose. You say «Ich heute gehe», or *schön* as *schon*,

then you stop. “What would you change?” If they hear the mismatch, the pattern is working. If they do not, you are still in blocked practice.

A keyword list —*nominative* means subject, V2 means verb-second —is a false friend until it attaches to a dog, a ball, or three cards. Keep the job attached to the toys. Keep the tune attached to the cards.

Grade-band practice.

1–2. Three objects, one frame, one umlaut hunt. Retrieval is yesterday’s *Hallo*. No case wall. Stop early.

3–5. Blocked: six objects over two sittings. Mixed: article plus like/not like plus one umlaut word. Accusative only if a toy sitting earned it. One incorrect article or one missing dots to diagnose. Still Novice.

6–8. Blocked: V2 on four true sentences. Mixed: name, tune, one job pair (doer / thing that got it). Retrieval: «Was ist das?» with new objects. Diagnose: «Ich heute gehe», or a doer wearing the object-word.

9–12. Blocked for a new form the book actually reached this week —a past time frame, a request, a second job if dative has honestly arrived —then mixed with Year 1 books so the old phrases do not die. Retrieval every sitting: one unrehearsed question on a familiar topic. Diagnose a fluent paragraph whose book no one can point at, or a four-case dump with no sentence. If they sample AP-style items, treat them as a check on the same skills, not as the German course. Ten open-text chapters are a map, not a year-count you owe a university site.

For the student

German is how you name what is in front of you, how you see a mark that changes a sound, and how you let the verb sit in seat two. It is not a wall of charts, and it is not an exam brand unless you chose that exam.

«Was ist das?» means *What is that?* «Das ist ein Buch» [That is a book]. «Das ist ein Tisch» [That is a table]. *Ein* and *eine* are not always the same. They match the word they sit with.

German puts dots over some vowels: ä, ö, ü. Those dots change the sound. *Schön* is not *schon*. If you skip the dots, the word is a different word, or it is not the word on the page. ß is a letter, not a B.

In a simple German sentence that tells you something, the verb likes seat two. «Ich gehe heute.» [I go today.] «Heute gehe ich.» [Today I go.] Both are allowed. «Ich heute gehe» skips the beat. You will move the card and say the line again.

Later, nouns get jobs. Who did it. What got it. «Der Hund sieht den Ball.» [The dog sees the ball.] You do not need four job names this week. You need two toys and one honest line.

German may take more calendar than Spanish or French to read and write the same amount. That is a map, not a verdict on you. You still get to talk this week.

A paragraph a computer wrote in German is a scene. It is not your German. A computer is not from Berlin. A certificate of fluency is not your transcript. If you cannot say one line with the machine off, you are not done. That is tonight's try.

Tiny worked example. Question: *What is that? And can you say a true line with the verb in seat two?*

The table has a book. Three cards: *Ich, lese, das Buch.*

You point: «Das ist ein Buch.»

You line the cards: *Ich lese das Buch.* You say it. You try the other honest order if you have a time-word: *Heute lese ich.* You do not say *Ich heute lese.*

The because-step is not “because V2.” The because-step is: you looked, you named the book, you put the verb in seat two, you said it while it was true.

Try 1. Put three word cards in a verb-second line. Say the sentence while it is true.

Try 2. Someone asks «Was ist das?» Answer without looking at this page.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why «Ich heute gehe» is a tune mistake, and how you would check a computer's German paragraph tonight without treating it as your voice.

Challenge. Name one object, then say one short V2 sentence about it. If you have started jobs, say who did it and what got it, with two toys. Machine off.

You are allowed to struggle. A missing word is information, not a verdict. Listen. Point. Move the card. Say the line. The tool does not take this try. You do.

If it isn't clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame.

Diagnostic 1 —there is no object, or no mouth, or the wall arrived first. The student can recite case names and cannot say «Das ist ein Buch» while pointing. Or the family skipped German because someone said it was too hard.

Next move. Stop the slog. One book. One frame. Three cards if V2 is this week's tune. Category II is a calendar. It is not a stop sign. A first-year open text, a tutor, or a co-op can be the map.

Diagnostic 2 —the verb never sits in seat two, or the dots never get seen, or four cases arrived in week one. «Ich heute gehe» every time. *Schön* as *schon*. A chart of der/die/das/den/dem/des before a greeting.

Next move. Card moving for a week. Umlaut hunt for a week. Put three cases back in the folder. Two toys, one job pair, when the child already names objects. Prompt with two choices; recast the rest.

Diagnostic 3 —a fluent page the house cannot hear. The paragraph arrived. The model is “from Berlin.” The certificate looks official. The cards were never moved.

Next move. Book in the hands. Cards in seat two. One unaided line, machine off. A model-supplied speaker is untrusted until the phrase matches a named page or the child's mouth. Detectors are not a verdict on a second-language paragraph.¹⁰¹

When to get a human tutor. You cannot hear «Ich heute gehe» even after the five-minute warm-up. Or the unaided ticket is still a blank after weeks of books. A tutor, a co-op, or later dual-enrollment German is a normal plan —and for German it may be the main map. Stay the supervisor who can still ask «Was ist das?» and «Wo ist das Verb?»

When to go ahead. Objects get named. Umlauts get seen. The verb can sit in seat two on a three-card line. In later bands, who-did-it and what-got-it can be rebuilt with toys. Unaided phrases appear without the book. Then lengthen. Diagnose. Then move.

¹⁰¹Weixin Liang et al., *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023). Detectors' high false-positive rates on human TOEFL essays. Do not police the child's German paragraph with a detector.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student listens and talks. You hold the key. The full rules live once in *The Language Hour*. This box points back, and it adds one German-specific prompt you can vet.

The child attempts first. You may, after that attempt, use a tool to explain this week's idea to *you* from a named page; make extra isomorphic four-word sentence practice with answers hidden; draft a six-line generated script you vet and then perform; run a short role-play after the attempt with you in the room (skip live chat in grades 1–5); write a hint script; diagnose work already done; draft talk-box follow-ups you vet. A fluent model turn is performance, not the child's German. A model is not from Berlin.

“Translate this page” and “write my essay in German” are the crutch. So is a native-speaker identity, a pronunciation grade you have not opened a paper for, and a certificate of fluency. Unguarded help raised math practice and then cut the unaided exam in one high-school study. That study is math. The same crutch is available here.¹⁰² Isolated technology is not the course.¹⁰³

AI box —German

Point back to the language-hour box for the allowed moves and the bans. Then this extra prompt, if you want it, on *your* account, after the child has already tried a three-card line unaided. You will read the output. You will cut anything you cannot check against this week's page. The child will not see the key.

Explain to me, in one English paragraph, why the verb likes second place in a German statement, using Ich gehe heute and Heute gehe ich. Then list two mistakes a beginner this age makes (I need to hear «Ich heute gehe», and schön said without the umlaut). Then write six numbered four-word practice sentences with the same verb-second tune and new words from a first-year page, with a separate answer key I can fold over. Do not invent a speaker from Berlin. Do not write

¹⁰²Hamsa Bastani et al., *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. GPT Base +48 percent practice / –17 percent unaided exam in high-school *math*. Mechanism for the language hour, not a German RCT.

¹⁰³ACTFL, “The Role of Technology in Language Learning,” 19 May 2017. Isolated technology is not the course. In a homeschool, the parent is the educator for the hour.

a fluency score or a certificate. If you are unsure of a form, say SEE THE BOOK.

You hold the folded key. The child builds the lines with cards, or says them from your spoken cues. Then the unaided exit is still «Was ist das?» —and, in later bands, one short V2 sentence —with the machine off.

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 9 German” book is a publisher’s scope, not a legal grade. Done enough is skill, plus phrases actually said. Category II is a calendar caution, not a reason to withhold “done enough.”

Checklist before moving on.

- Names at least one real object with a matching article, unaided, looking at the object.
- Answers «Was ist das?» with a phrase, not with an English list.
- Sees ä / ö / ü (and ß when it appears) as part of the word, not as decoration.
- In later bands: puts the verb in seat two on a short statement, and hears «Ich heute gehe» as a tune miss.
- In later bands: rebuilds one who-did-it / what-got-it line with toys, without a four-case wall.
- Treats a rehearsed dialogue as practice, and still does one unrehearsed cousin with the book closed.
- Treats a generated paragraph as a scene, not as the student’s German, and treats a fluency certificate as nothing.
- Transcript line, when a high-school year is claimed: **German** or **German I** (then II, III, IV). Never a brand. Never a ten-chapter count as the title.

What can still be thin: a dedicated homeschool-house German series; dative and genitive; AP. Those can travel. A year of charts with no mouth, or a year skipped because of Category II, cannot count as done. Two high-school years of real work commonly still sit in Novice *performance*. Intermediate created sentences are a later aim, earned with hours that included ears and mouth.

NCAA may count world language toward additional core, not as a required year-

count. Records will handle the worksheet. The year on the table is still German.¹⁰⁴

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know why «Ich heute gehe» is a wrong turn. I know what a case wall usually means. I know what to say tomorrow —a book, three cards, a question, a wait. The student still does the talking. We can do this.

¹⁰⁴NCAA Eligibility Center, Division I Academic Standards fact sheet (September 2023, still hosted 1 September 2026): world language may fill additional core; it is not a required year-count. CLEP is not NCAA core. High School Review Committee: first-year write-and-speak includes greetings, name, age, simple questions.

Chapter 5

Chinese



Figure 11: A kitchen-table still-life: four paper cards for mā / má / mǎ / mà, a slip of practice paper with one character, a pinyin line with a tone mark, a slip that reads 这是什么? / 這是什麼? . No people, no logos, no branded spines.

Why this matters

Mandarin Chinese is a language in which pitch is part of the word. The same syllable *ma*, said four ways, is four different words: mother, hemp, horse, scold. That is not a pronunciation flourish you add later. It is how meaning is made. Characters are a writing system with parts that recur, not a pile of pictures to memorize one by one. Pinyin —the roman letters with tone marks —is a map for the ear. It is training wheels. It is not the language on the page.

That is worth the struggle because a year of pinyin-only, or a year of character worksheets with no talking, or a year of flattened tones that all sound the same, will not give you a path a stranger can read. The path is listening and speaking first, with the tone already inside the word, and characters attached to words the child can already say. Texas’ s public-school map for logographic languages says the same thing in its own words: put the first skill focus on speaking and listening, without ignoring the writing system.¹⁰⁵ California places Mandarin in a slower-script category than Spanish or French. That is a calendar caution, not a talent myth and not a stop sign.¹⁰⁶

The registrar words are **Chinese** or **Mandarin Chinese**. Either is readable. Never a textbook brand. Never Conversation 101. Never “pinyin year.” If the work is Mandarin, Mandarin Chinese is the clearer of the two titles. Both are honest.

AP Chinese Language and Culture is an optional College Board object, described as about an intermediate college Mandarin course. It asks for tones that a listener can understand, and it asks the student to use one writing system —simplified or traditional —consistently.¹⁰⁷ It is a possible beyond. It is not this chapter’ s floor.

¹⁰⁵19 Tex. Admin. Code §114.39(a)(2), as displayed on Cornell LII: “Students of logographic languages such as Chinese and Japanese and non-Romance and non-Germanic languages such as Arabic and Russian will require more time to achieve proficiency, especially in reading and writing. Initially, the skill focus should be placed on speaking and listening without ignoring reading and writing in the target language’ s writing system.” Public-school map, not homeschool law. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026.

¹⁰⁶California Department of Education, *World Languages Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (2019). Category IV includes Mandarin. The document reprints Foreign Service Institute adult-intensive hour figures (Category I about 600 class hours to Superior; Category IV about 2,200) and warns that FSI students are typically about forty, in classes of no more than six, at about 25 hours a week. Those adult-intensive hours are not a homeschool promise and are not used as a kitchen forecast in this book. Category is a calendar caution, not a talent myth.

¹⁰⁷College Board, *AP Chinese Language and Culture Course and Exam Description*, effective

Handwriting is not what that exam scores. That is a school-exam fact. It is not a reason to skip a named character on paper at home.

This week you can learn that the pitch is the word —*mā* is not *mǎ* —and that pinyin without a tone mark is not finished. Today the student can say *mā* and *mǎ* after a named recording, then name one object on the table with its tone.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a speaker of Mandarin. You do need to understand today's idea well enough to hear a flattened *ma* where this week's word is *mǎ*, and to hear pinyin-without-a-tone as an unfinished map, not as a finished word.

Everyday picture. Think of English stress. *Record* the noun and *record* the verb are not the same word. The letters look alike. The voice does different work. Mandarin tones are that idea, taken further. The pitch pattern is not extra expression. It is the difference between mother and horse. If you say the English word *object* with the wrong stress, a kind listener can often guess. If you say Mandarin *mǎ* as *mā*, you have said a different word.

Precise picture. A Mandarin syllable typically has three parts: an initial consonant, a final, and a tone laid over the whole syllable.¹⁰⁸ Mandarin distinguishes

Fall 2020. Course aims Intermediate to Pre-Advanced performance as described in ACTFL Performance Descriptors; “strives not to overemphasize grammatical accuracy at the expense of communication.” Skills 5.A.5 and 7.B.3: pronunciation and tones that are comprehensible. Skills 6.C.1 / 8.D.1: use the selected writing system (simplified or traditional characters) consistently. Exam input methods include Pinyin Simplified, Pinyin Traditional, and Bopomofo. Handwriting is not assessed on the exam—a school-exam fact, not a reason to skip a named character at home. “Taught almost exclusively in Chinese” is a school-course condition, not a homeschool mandate. AP Central describes the course as approximately equivalent to an intermediate college-level course in Mandarin Chinese. Credit is by college. Optional beyond, not this chapter's floor. Language-and-Culture courses revised for 2026–27; the parent reads the current course page.

¹⁰⁸Yuehua Liu, Tao-chung Yao, et al., *Integrated Chinese*, Volume 1, 4th edition (Boston: Cheng & Tsui, 2017), Basics. A Modern Standard Chinese syllable typically has an initial, a final, and a tone superimposed on the entire syllable. “Tones are crucial in Chinese. The same initial-final combination with different tones may have different meanings. For instance, *mā* is ‘mother,’ *má* is ‘hemp,’ *mǎ* is ‘horse,’ *mà* is ‘to scold,’ and *ma* is an interrogative particle.” “In this book, Chinese sounds are represented by Hanyu Pinyin.” Pinyin uses twenty-five of the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet; the sounds can differ from English. Two sets of characters are in use: simplified and traditional. Publisher textbook path; the transcript still says Chinese or Mandarin Chinese. Cheng & Tsui also publishes *Go Far with Chinese Enhanced*, described on the opened publisher

four tones. In the labels linguists still use from Chao, Tone 1 is high and level, Tone 2 high and rising, Tone 3 low and dipping, Tone 4 high and falling.¹⁰⁹ The classic set, which you will put on the table this week:

- *mā* (Tone 1) —mother
- *má* (Tone 2) —hemp
- *mǎ* (Tone 3) —horse
- *mà* (Tone 4) —to scold

A fifth, unmarked *ma* is a question particle, a light “neutral” tone. The child will meet it immediately in *māma* (mom) and in 吗 / 嗎 at the end of a yes-no question. That light syllable is not a fifth full tone to drill on day one. It is a quiet beat you will hear in real words.

Pinyin uses twenty-five English letters. The letters can look like English and not sound like English. The mark sits on the main vowel. A syllable written *ma* with no mark is not this week’s word until the mark is there, or until you are honestly writing the light particle.

Characters are a system. Many are built from recurring parts —a meaning hint, a sound hint, a simple picture that got stylized. You do not need the six traditional formation categories this week. You need one character attached to a word they can say, copied from a checked model, so the page and the mouth stay friends.

Simplified or traditional, named once. Two sets of characters are in use. Simplified characters are the everyday print of the People’s Republic of China and of Singapore. Traditional characters are the everyday print of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and many overseas communities. Pick one and stay. Heritage, travel, family, the textbook already in the house —those are good reasons. A weekly debate is not. AP Chinese asks for the selected writing system used consistently. That is also good kitchen advice. If this is a Taiwan-facing home that already uses zhuyin (Bopomofo) as the sound map, you do not have to fight it. AP names Bopomofo

page as a middle- and high-school program, Novice Low to Intermediate Low, three volumes, simplified or traditional. *Chinese Made Easy* is a named path this book does not unpack as opened publisher copy.

¹⁰⁹Allard Jongman, Yue Wang, Corinne B. Moore, and Joan A. Sereno, “Perception and Production of Mandarin Chinese Tones,” submitted chapter, *Handbook of Chinese Psycholinguistics* (Cambridge University Press). “Lexical tones are pitch patterns that serve to provide contrasts in word meaning.” Mandarin “phonemically distinguishes four tones” (Chao, 1948): Tone 1 high-level, Tone 2 high-rising, Tone 3 low-dipping, Tone 4 high-falling. Same segmental *ma*: Tone 1 ‘mother’, Tone 2 ‘hemp’, Tone 3 ‘horse’, Tone 4 ‘scold’.

as an exam input method. Pinyin is the map this chapter will keep using in examples because most U.S. homeschool paths print it. The job of the map is the same.

This chapter prints both scripts in the talk box so you can see them. After this sitting, use the family's chosen set.

You will not finish every character. Reading and writing Mandarin take more calendar time than reading Spanish. That is true in the public maps this book opened. It is not a forecast of hours, and it is not a reason to skip the mouth.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. A flattened tone, treated as close enough. All four *ma* cards come out on one pitch. *Mā* and *mǎ* are treated as the same word said “more carefully.”

What it usually means. The parent heard pinyin as English spelling. Pitch was filed under “accent,” to be cleaned up later. Later never comes.

What to say. “The pitch is the word. Let's play the recording of *mā* and *mǎ* again. Point at mother. Point at horse. Match what you hear.”

2. Pinyin without a tone mark, treated as finished. The child writes *ma* or *wo* and the hour moves on. Or the year becomes a pinyin-only year because characters felt hard.

What it usually means. Training wheels were treated as the bicycle. The map replaced the place.

What to say. “Where is the mark? Put it on the main vowel. Then show me the character for this week's word, even if it is only one.”

3. Characters as a pile of pictures, or as a year of worksheets with no talking. “We'll speak after we know 200 characters.” Or every sitting is tracing, and no object on the table is ever named.

What it usually means. The script won. The mouth lost. Coverage of a character list felt like progress.

What to say. “Say the word while it is true. Then write the character that belongs to that word, from a model we have checked. We are not collecting an inventory this week. We are attaching a page to a mouth.”

4. Switching scripts midstream. Monday simplified, Thursday traditional, because a printout mixed them. Or a generated character the parent did not check.

What it usually means. Two systems were treated as fonts. A model invented a stroke.

What to say. “We picked one set. This is it. If a picture came from a tool, we check it against the textbook or a named stroke-order table before anyone copies it.”

5. A fluent chatbot line whose tone and character no one can reopen. The dialogue looks native. The child did not say it. The stroke order was invented. A “percent native” score appeared.

What it usually means. The work was outsourced. Fluent output is not the child’s knowledge of the language.

What to say. “You say it first. Then we listen to the named recording. A tool may explain the idea to me. It does not take this talking test.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, on paper, no student in the room:

1. Play a named recording of the *ma* set (the textbook audio, not a chatbot as the only ears). Point at mother, hemp, horse, scold. Hum Tone 1 as a high flat line. Hum Tone 3 as a low dip. You do not need a pretty accent. You need to hear that they are not the same.
2. Write this week’s syllable in pinyin *with* the tone mark. Then write, or look up in the book, the one character that belongs to this week’s spoken word, in the family’s chosen script.
3. Write tonight’s opening question: 这是什么? / 這是什麼? *Zhè shì shénme?* —What is this? Say it once along with the recording.

If those three are fluent enough for you to notice a flatten, a missing mark, and a character that does not match the book, you can hear a wrong turn. That is the job. The student still does the talking.

How to teach it this week

The language hour at the front of this book already taught the shape. This chapter fills it with Mandarin.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, ears). Yesterday’ s word, with its tone, while it is true. One listen of this week’ s new syllable from the named recording. No tool. No character inventory.

Short model (5–8 minutes). You put three real objects on the table. You play the recording of 这是什么? You point. You say the name of one object *after* the recording, with the tone. You write the pinyin with the mark. You show the one character, already checked.

Fade as soon as you can. Second sitting: they repeat after the recording, not after your guess. Third: they name the object looking at the object, not at the pinyin. Fourth: they name it unaided, recording paused.

Exact wording you can steal.

On tones: “The pitch is the word. *Mā* is mother. *Mǎ* is horse. Let’ s hear both.”

On a flatten: “That was one pitch. Play the card again. Match the recording, not my voice, if my voice is still learning.”

On pinyin: “The mark sits on the main vowel. No mark, not finished —unless we mean the light *ma* at the end of a question.”

On characters: “This character belongs to the word you just said. Copy from this model. We checked it.”

On the chatbot: “You talk first. A picture a model made is a scene. It is not tonight’ s handwriting until I check it.”

First problem for the student, after the model. One object on the table. Recording of the question, then of the word. They answer 这是什么? with the name and its tone. Pinyin card facedown. You wait.

One good question. After the attempt: “If I hide the pinyin, can you still say it?” The student generates the word.

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three objects of the new type, unaided, after the fade. Then mix: yesterday’ s greeting, last week’ s number, one *mā* / *mǎ* pair, one character they copy from the checked model.

Exit ticket (5 minutes, unaided). Name one object with its tone, matching the recording well enough that you can hear it is this week’s word. Tool closed. Recording paused for the attempt. You are listening for the pitch of *this* pair, not grading a native accent.

How to fade help. Recording plus your point → they point and repeat → they say it looking at the object → they say it with the pinyin hidden → they write the one character from memory of the checked model, then check. When they can name the object without the pinyin card, put the card away. Bring it back when a new syllable arrives.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. You hold the key: is the pitch in the word, is the mark on the vowel, is the character the one in the book?

Grade bands

Grades 1–2. Play and listen. The first *mā* includes the pitch. A few characters attached to words they already say—a name, 人 (person), 山 (mountain), a number—not a year of pinyin-only and not a year of isolated strokes. Novice Low to Mid is a generous description of unrehearsed use. California notes that elementary students without a heritage background often stay Novice for an extended time.¹¹⁰ That is permission to keep the phrases real and small.

Grades 3–5. More phrases. Pinyin plus the first characters. Still Novice. Do not rush a character inventory. Gender is not the pattern here; tone is. A ten-year-old who can name objects, greet, and write a handful of characters from words they say is doing the work.

Grades 6–8. A Level I shape. Speaking and listening first, without ignoring characters. Neutral tone in *māma* they will meet immediately. Tone sandhi—two third tones in a row, the first often rising like Tone 2, as in 你好 *nǐ hǎo*—is a later week, not day one. If you name it, name it as “the first one changes so they are easier to

¹¹⁰California Department of Education, *World Languages Standards* (2019), Introduction: it is common in the elementary school context for students who do not have a heritage language background to remain at the Novice level for an extended period of time. ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, fourth edition: Novice speakers express themselves using words, phrases, simple sentences, and questions they have encountered, rehearsed, and can recall. Novice Mid: isolated words, rehearsed phrases, short sentences; they pause often as they search for vocabulary. Performance (rehearsed, familiar tasks) is not proficiency (unrehearsed use). The Guidelines are a map, not a kitchen-table badge.

say,” then go back to this week’ s word. Do not call a middle-school year “high school Chinese I” on a transcript unless the family intends high-school credit under their state’ s rule.

Grades 9–12. Carnegie units a stranger can read: Chinese I–IV, or Mandarin Chinese I–IV. Years 1–2 cover the common college ask if the work is real. Years 3–4 aim at Intermediate *performance* if time-on-task holds —short unrehearsed exchanges, not a promise of a rating. AP Chinese is optional. Simplified or traditional is already chosen. Keyboarding is an AP exam skill. It is still not a substitute for a named character on paper if that is this week’ s work. Heritage speakers accelerate by what they can already do, not by four years of Level I as seat time. That decision sits more fully in Chapter 8.

Activity 1 —Tone Pair (mā / mǎ)

Time. 10 minutes.

Materials. A named audio of the *ma* set (textbook track or a labelled recording from the book’ s publisher, not a chatbot as the only ears). Four paper cards: mother, hemp, horse, scold —each with pinyin *and* the tone mark. The objects, if you have a toy horse.

The fun of it. Four meanings, one spelling. The click when horse is not mother.

The skill it builds. Tone as the word. The parent who is not a speaker learns to refuse pinyin-without-tone as a finished word, and to notice flattening on *this week’ s* pair.

How to run it. Play Tone 1. Point at mother. Play Tone 3. Point at horse. The child matches card to sound. Then they produce, after the recording, not instead of it. You are not running a pitch-tracking course. You are making meaning audible.

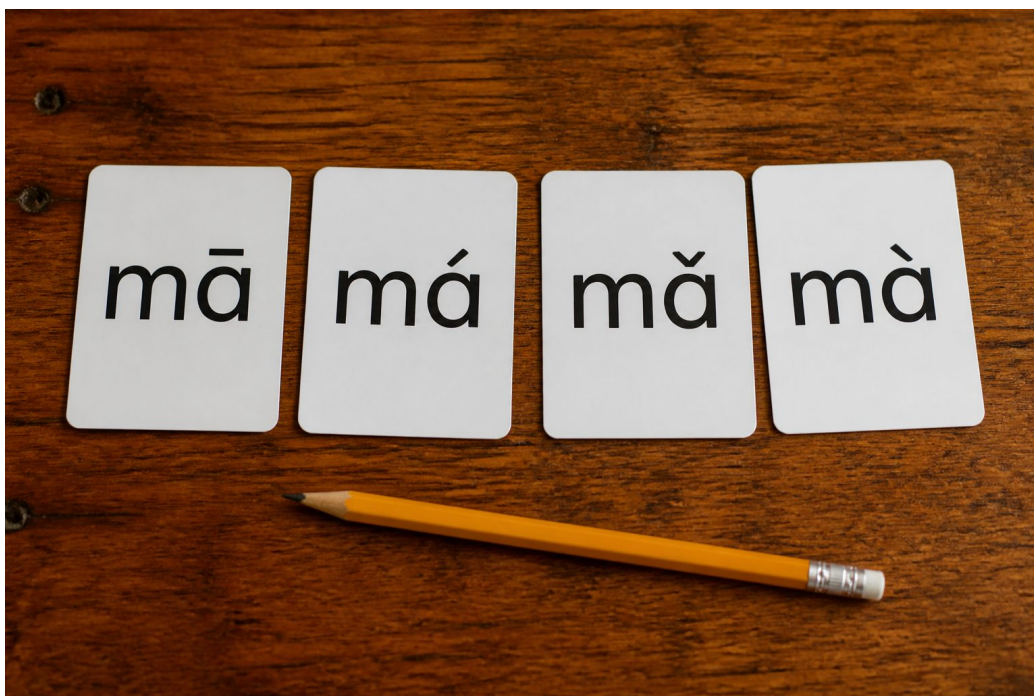


Figure 12: Four labelled ma cards on a table as a still-life, a small toy horse, a pencil. No people, no logos, no pitch-tracker screens.

Activity 2 —Pinyin as Map

Time. 10 minutes.

Materials. This week's syllable on paper with the tone mark. One card with the mark missing, as the incorrect example.

The fun of it. The mark sits on the main vowel. Finding it feels like catching a spelling.

The skill it builds. Pinyin as training wheels. Not a substitute for the character.

How to run it. They copy the syllable *with* the mark. You show the missing-mark card and ask what is unfinished. Then the character for the same word comes out, even if it is only one. The map and the place stay on the same table.

Activity 3 —Character on Paper

Time. 10 minutes.

Materials. Practice paper. One character from this week' s word. A checked model: the textbook page, or the PRC 2020 stroke-order table of 8,105 commonly used characters, or Taiwan' s 1995 Ministry handbook / Ministry stroke-order site, matching the family' s script.¹¹¹

The fun of it. The character appearing under the pencil.

The skill it builds. Handwriting from a checked model. A generated line is a display only after you check it. Tracing an unchecked printout is how a wrong stroke becomes a habit.

How to run it. You point at the model. They write slowly, saying the word they already can say. One character. Not twenty. If a tool drew the character, you check it against the named source before anyone copies. Label a generated scene as a scene.

¹¹¹PRC, *Stroke Orders of the Commonly Used Standard Chinese Characters* (通用规范汉字笔顺规范), Ministry of Education and National Language Commission, November 2020 / Commercial Press 2021, 8,105 characters. Taiwan: 常用國字標準字體筆順手冊 (1995, Ministry of Education) and the Ministry' s stroke-order learning site. Match the family' s chosen script. A generated character is a labelled scene until it matches one of these, or the named textbook page already on the table.



Figure 13: Practice paper with one checked character, a named textbook page or printed ministry-table excerpt as an object, a pencil. No people, no logos, no generated calligraphy treated as data.

Talk box —这是什么？ / 這是什麼？

Talk box

Illustration, labelled as such: three real objects on a table (a book, an apple, a cup), a slip with 这是什么？ / 這是什麼？, the family's chosen-script cards facedown. Composite table, not a reported family.

Opening. 「这是什么？」 / 「這是什麼？」 *Zhè shì shénme?* [What is this?]

Not: “Say the pinyin list.”

Follow-ups (pick three to five).

「是苹果还是书？」 / 「是蘋果還是書？」 *Shì píngguǒ hái shì shū?* [Is it an apple or a book?]

「什么颜色？」 / 「什麼顏色？」 *Shénme yánsè?* [What color?]

「你喜欢吗？」 / 「你喜歡嗎？」 *Nǐ xǐhuan ma?* [Do you like it?]

「有两个吗？」 / 「有兩個嗎？」 *Yǒu liǎng ge ma?* [Are there two?]

「在哪里？」 / 「在哪裡？」 *Zài nǎlǐ?* [Where is it?]

Print both scripts here so you can see them. After this sitting, use the family' s chosen set.

How to wait. Ask in Chinese. Then wait longer than feels comfortable—a slow three seconds after you ask, and again after they answer, so they can revise. First-year high-school language classrooms have been measured at about two seconds after a question and less than a second after an answer; longer is the move.¹¹² Three to five seconds is a finding from elementary science class, used here as a pause, not as a Mandarin-score promise.

Stuck silence usually means. They are searching for the word (that pause is ordinary Novice talk, not refusal).¹¹³ The question was not the object on the table. A recast of the tone passed unnoticed—you said *mǎ* correctly and they did not hear the difference. The pinyin card is doing the talking. A flattened tone is a wrong turn you can learn to notice on *this week*' s pair. It is not a native-speaker grade.

Next move. Point. Offer two choices (apple or book). Play the record-

¹¹²Judith L. Shrum, "Wait-Time and the Use of Target or Native Languages," *Foreign Language Annals* 18 (1985). Abstract: first-year high-school Spanish and French; 1.91 seconds after questions, 0.73 seconds after answers; wait-time longer after questions in the native language. Full method tables not opened for this book. Mary Budd Rowe, "Wait-Time and Rewards as Instructional Variables..." (NARST paper, ERIC ED061103, 1972): elementary science classrooms; wait three to five seconds. Borrowed here as a pause and labelled as science class, not as a Mandarin trial.

¹¹³ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, Novice Mid speaking: speakers pause often as they search for vocabulary or appropriate structure, and they may recycle their own and their partner' s words. Roy Lyster and Leila Ranta, "Corrective Feedback and Learner Uptake: Negotiation of Form in Communicative Classrooms," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19, no. 1 (1997): four primary French-immersion classrooms, 18.3 hours; recasts were 55 percent of teacher feedback (375 of 686); 31 percent of recasts led to uptake; 18 percent led to repair, and those repairs were repetitions of the teacher. Prompts (elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests, repetition) led to student-generated repair more successfully. Recast a flatten once in the flow; prompt if this week' s pair is the work.

ing slower. Hide the pinyin. Recast the tone once, in the flow; if this week’ s work is this pair, prompt: play the two cards and wait.

Done enough. The child says the name of one object with a tone you can match to the named recording, unaided.

Practice that actually builds learning

Hearing, saying, and a little writing grow together. A stack of character quizzes with no ears and no mouth is assignment, not teaching. A pinyin packet with no object on the table is the same problem in roman letters.

Blocked, for a new move. The day a student first holds Tone 1 against Tone 3, a short blocked set is honest: two more pairs, same move, different syllables from this week’ s page. Same for a first pinyin-with-mark sitting, a first character from a checked model, a first unaided 这是什么?

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week, mix: yesterday’ s greeting, the *mā / mǎ* pair, one object named, one character copied, one “missing tone mark” repair. Choosing *when* the pitch is the word is part of the skill.

Brief retrieval. Yesterday’ s object; Tuesday’ s tone pair; the character for the word they can already say. A short oral at the start of the hour. Pinyin that is not retrieved becomes wallpaper —and wallpaper is not the hour.

One incorrect example to diagnose. Show a fluent pinyin line with no tone marks, or a character traced from an unchecked generated printout, or a chatbot dialogue the child never said. Ask what they thought counted as the word. Then an isomorphic try: one object, one tone, unaided, recording paused.

Kitchen and family can motivate. A meal, a name, a grandparent on the phone — those are doors into a phrase said for real. They do not replace the unaided word. A heritage speaker at the table is Chapter 8’ s longer conversation. This chapter still requires the child to talk.

Activity 4 —Table Talk

Time. 10–15 minutes.

Materials. Three real objects.

The fun of it. Pointing at what is actually there.

The skill it builds. A rehearsed phrase said for a real reason, with its tone. Not a vocabulary list with no mouth.

How to run it. Objects out. Opening question. They answer looking at the apple, not at a list. You wait. You recast a flatten once. You do not grab the sentence.

Activity 5 —Script Choice, Once

Time. 10 minutes, once in the family’ s life.

Materials. One simplified and one traditional form of the same common character, labelled —这 / 這, or 马 / 馬, or 什么 / 什麼.

The fun of it. “We pick one and stay.”

The skill it builds. A consistent writing system. Not a weekly debate.

How to run it. Name the reasons that actually apply: the textbook in the house, family, travel, a community class. Choose. Write the choice on a slip that stays in the folder. Then go back to this week’ s phrase. You will not spend the year on a continent quiz, and you will not spend the year on a script war.

For the student

Mandarin is a language where the pitch is part of the word. *Mā* is mother. *Mǎ* is horse. They are not the same word said two ways. They are two words.

Pinyin is a map. The little mark on the vowel tells you the pitch. A map without the mark is not finished. The map is not the city. The character is how Chinese is written for real.

You will learn one writing system and stay with it —simplified or traditional. Your family picks once. You do not switch for fun.

You do not need a native accent this week. You need to match this week’ s pair well enough that mother is not horse. You need to say a real phrase about a real object. You need to copy one character from a model someone checked, not from a picture a computer invented.

A line a computer wrote in Chinese is a scene to look at. It is not your talking. It is not your handwriting until a person checks the strokes against a book or a named table.

Tiny worked example. On the table: a toy horse.

Heard: 「这是什么？」 / 「這是什麼？」

Answer, after the recording, looking at the horse: 「马。」 / 「馬。」 *Mǎ*.

Because: *the pitch dipped. If I had said mā, I would have said mother.*

The because-sentence is not “because it is Tone 3.” That restates a label. The because-sentence is the meaning: horse, not mother.

Try 1. Listen to *mā* and *mǎ*. Point at mother. Point at horse. Say each after the recording.

Try 2. Name one object on the table. Hide the pinyin. Keep the tone.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why *mā* and *mǎ* are different words, and why a pinyin syllable with no mark is not finished.

Challenge. Answer 「这是什么？」 about two objects, unaided, then write one of the characters from the checked model. If you cannot point at the object, you are still in list country. Stay there until the object does the work.

You are allowed to struggle. Searching for a word is ordinary. A missing tone mark is information, not a verdict. Hear it. Say it. Then the page. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn’ t clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 —the tones are all one pitch, or pinyin has no marks. The student can read a pinyin list in an English voice and cannot tell mother from horse.

Next move. Stop the list. Two cards. One recording. Mother and horse only. Play, point, say. A calendar-grade 6 or 9 student who flattens is not “behind in Chinese.” They are still in a first-pair stage. The inventory waits. Small talking can continue: one question, one object, oral credit.

Diagnostic 2 —the year is a script slog, or a pinyin-only year. Hundreds of characters traced, no object named. Or months of roman letters and no character at all, on a path that is supposed to include writing.

Next move. Attach one character to one spoken word. Hide the pinyin for the exit ticket. Keep speaking. Coverage of a character list is not a year. A map with no place is not a year either.

Diagnostic 3 —a fluent page the house cannot reopen. The dialogue arrived. The strokes were generated and never checked. A score said “native.”

Next move. Objects in the hands. Recording of this week’ s pair. Finger on the textbook character. If it cannot be opened, it comes off. Unaided miniature, tool closed. A model-supplied line is untrusted until it matches the child’ s mouth or a named page. Detectors are not a verdict; the reopenable trail is.¹¹⁴

When to get a human tutor. You cannot hear *mā* against *mǎ* even after the five-minute warm-up, and you have no named recording in the house. Or the student has weeks of object sittings, and the unaided ticket is still a flatten or a blank. A tutor, a co-op, or a later dual-enrollment Mandarin class is a normal plan. Stay the supervisor who can still ask “is that mother or horse?” Dual-enrollment Chinese is a *college* transcript object, distinct from this kitchen year. AP Chinese is an overlay, not a requirement.

When to go ahead. Tones on this week’ s pair are distinct enough to tell the words apart. Pinyin carries marks. One character is attached to a spoken word and copied from a checked model. Unaided 这是什么? gets a real answer. Then lengthen: more pairs, more characters that belong to words they say, a short unrehearsed exchange. Diagnose. Then move.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student listens and talks. You hold the recording and the character model.

¹¹⁴Weixin Liang et al., “GPT Detectors Are Biased Against Non-Native English Writers,” *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023). High false-positive rates on human TOEFL essays in that study. Detectors are not a kitchen verdict. William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, “Fabrication and Errors in the Bibliographic Citations Generated by ChatGPT,” *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045. GPT-3.5: 55 percent of citations fabricated; GPT-4: 18 percent. A generated “native” speaker is a fabricated biography. A generated fluency certificate is not a transcript.

AI box —Chinese

Use a tool to explain *this week’ s tone pair or this week’ s character to you* from a named textbook page, to generate extra object-naming items with answers hidden from the student, to write a hint script that withholds the word, or to diagnose a line already said or written.

Stroke order: point the lookup at a named source —*Integrated Chinese* or *Go Far with Chinese* if that is the book on the table, the PRC 2020 table of 8,105 characters, or Taiwan’ s 1995 handbook / Ministry site for traditional. The model does not invent the stroke. A generated character is a scene to look at together for two minutes, labelled generated, only after you check it. Then it comes off. The checked model stays.

The student talks. No “translate my paragraph,” no unsupervised chatbot as the only speaker (especially in grades 1–5), no “you are a native teacher from Beijing,” no “percent native” tone grade from a detector you have not opened, no certificate of fluency.

Text-to-speech is a second listen *after* a named recording. It is not the first ears and not a grade.

A named textbook and a named recording are language tools. A chatbot list of “how a native would say it” is not. In a high-school mathematics study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam.¹¹⁵ That study is math, not a Mandarin trial. The same crutch is available here, and harder to hear, because a wrong tone can hide inside a confident sentence. The unaided word the next morning is the test.

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 9 Chinese” book is a publisher’ s scope, not a legal grade and not a national sequence. Done enough is skill, plus words actually said, plus characters actually attached to those words.

¹¹⁵Hamsa Bastani et al., “Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning: Evidence from High School Mathematics,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. GPT Base: +48 percent on practice, –17 percent on an unaided exam. Math, not a Mandarin RCT. The paper notes that creative subjects lack math’ s objective scoring. The crutch still governs the language hour: the student attempts first; the unaided ticket is the test.

Checklist before moving on.

- Treats tone as meaning on this week's pairs: *mā* is not *mǎ*; a flatten is heard as a wrong word, not as an accent to fix later.
- Writes pinyin with the mark on the main vowel; treats unmarked pinyin as unfinished (or as the light particle, on purpose).
- Copies this week's character from a checked model in the family's chosen script; does not switch simplified and traditional as fonts.
- Answers 「这是什么？」 about a real object, unaided, with a tone you can match to the named recording.
- Treats a generated character as a scene, not as handwriting practice, until it matches a named source.
- The model did not open the spoken line the transcript will claim.

What can still be thin: a large character inventory; tone sandhi as a named rule; AP keyboarding; every unit on an AP list. Those can travel. A year of pinyin-only on a character path cannot count as done. A year of tracing with no talking cannot either.

Transcript. Write **Chinese** or **Mandarin Chinese**, plus I–IV when it is a high-school year. If the family used *Integrated Chinese*, *Go Far with Chinese*, or another named path *inside* the year, the description can say so. The title is still Chinese. Never the brand. If the student sits AP Chinese Language and Culture, put the exam on a separate line. Safer kitchen practice is a readable title plus the score as an artifact.

NCAA lists world language as additional core, not as a required year-count. Records will handle the worksheet. The year on the table is still Chinese.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know why the pitch is the word. I know what a flatten usually means. I know what to say tomorrow—a recording, an object, 这是什么？, and a wait. The student still does the talking. We can do this.

Chapter 6

Japanese



Figure 14: A kitchen-table still-life: a hiragana chart as an object (not a branded poster), two particle cards は and を, a slip of character practice paper, a slip that reads *これは何ですか*. No people, no logos, no textbook spines as ads.

Why this matters

Japanese is a language you can start talking while the writing system is still arriving. The talk does not wait on a year of charts. The page does wait on hiragana. A widely used first-year textbook, *Genki*, puts hiragana in Lesson 1, katakana in Lesson 2, and kanji from Lesson 3 —about fifteen characters a lesson, in that book’s own count. Conversation and grammar run from the first lesson at the same time.¹¹⁶ That is how that book is built. It is a useful shape: kana first, kanji as needed, the mouth working from day one. It is not a law that your kitchen must finish twenty-three lessons, or two hundred class hours, or a JLPT label. Those numbers are the publisher’s classroom assumptions. Your transcript still says **Japanese**.

That is worth the struggle because a year of isolated kana worksheets with no greeting, or a year of English-letter “romaji” with no kana, or a year of kanji lists with no particles, will not give you a path a stranger can read. Particles are small words with jobs. *wa* marks the topic —what we are talking about. *o* marks the thing the verb acts on. Polite form and plain form are a social map, like French *tu* and *vous*: who is in the room, not a grammar insult. California places Japanese in a slower-script category, with a note that it is typically more demanding than some neighbors in that category.¹¹⁷ Texas groups Japanese with logographic languages that need more calendar for reading and writing, and still

¹¹⁶The Japan Times Publishing, *GENKI: An Integrated Course in Elementary Japanese*, 3rd edition, official introduction and lesson-structure pages (opened 1 September 2026). Twenty-three lessons in two volumes. Reading and Writing Lesson 1 = hiragana; Lesson 2 = katakana; kanji from Lesson 3 onward, approximately 15 kanji per lesson. Conversation and grammar run in parallel from Lesson 1. Publisher placement language: Volume 1 “should place you at a skill level on par with JLPT N5 or CEFR A1”; Volume 2 with N4 or A2. Approximately 1,700 words; 317 kanji. Assumed study time, in class: about 200 hours for all 23 lessons. FAQ: solo learners “should have no difficulty”; although developed for university students, it is also used at some U.S. high schools. Those lesson counts, hour assumptions, and JLPT/CEFR labels are the publisher’s. They are not a homeschool year-cycle and not an ACTFL rating this book measured. Transcript: Japanese, not Genki. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026.

¹¹⁷California Department of Education, *World Languages Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (2019). Category IV includes Japanese, with California’s note that Japanese (with Hungarian, Thai, Vietnamese) is typically more difficult for native English speakers than other languages in the same category. The document reprints Foreign Service Institute adult-intensive hour figures with a warning about FSI students’ age, class size, and weekly hours. Those adult-intensive hours are not a homeschool promise and are not used as a kitchen forecast in this book.

asks for speaking and listening first without ignoring the writing system.¹¹⁸ That is a calendar caution, not a veto.

AP Japanese Language and Culture is an optional College Board object, revised with the other Language-and-Culture courses for 2026–27.¹¹⁹ It is a possible beyond. It is not this chapter’s floor. JLPT N5 on a homeschool transcript is not an ACTFL rating this book measured, and it is not a course title a registrar asked for.

This week you can learn that は marks the topic, and why a missing particle is a job left vacant, not a cute slip. Today the student can say 「これは本です」 while the book is in their hand, then find は on the card. A parent who felt rusty after a year of school Japanese, or who never studied it, can still hear that vacant job. You are not behind a national clock. You are starting this week’s sentence.

です and ます can be taught as chunks at first, the way a child learns “how are you” before they can name every word. 本です is “it is a book.” 食べます is “eat,” polite. Split them when the book splits them. A parent who can hear です missing, and は missing, already has this week’s ear.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a speaker of Japanese. You do need to understand today’s idea well enough to hear a sentence with the particle missing, and to hear a polite *desu* dropped too early as a social-map mistake, not as “now we are fluent.”

Everyday picture. Think of name tags at a table. は is the name tag for the topic: *this* (これは) —we are talking about this. を is the name tag for the thing being done-to: *apple* in “I eat an apple.” English often lets word order do that work. Japanese hangs a small tag on the job. If the tag is missing, the jobs get confused —who we are talking about, and what got acted on.

Precise picture. Japanese writing uses three scripts together. *Hiragana* is the

¹¹⁸19 Tex. Admin. Code §114.39(a)(2): students of logographic languages such as Chinese and Japanese will require more time to achieve proficiency, especially in reading and writing; initially, skill focus on speaking and listening without ignoring the writing system. Public-school map, not homeschool law.

¹¹⁹College Board, AP Courses and Exams page, opened 1 September 2026: AP Japanese Language and Culture is on the list. Language-and-Culture courses revised for 2026–27. Credit is by college. Optional beyond, not this chapter’s floor. SAT Subject Tests were discontinued in June 2021 and are not a live option.

rounded phonetic set you need in order to read ordinary Japanese words and endings. *Katakana* is the more angular phonetic set, used for many loanwords and some names. *Kanji* are Chinese-derived characters that carry meaning; Japanese uses them for many content words. The useful teaching order is the one *Genki* prints: hiragana, then katakana, then kanji attached to words already in the lesson—not two thousand characters in grade 3, and not a silent year until the chart is done.

Romaji (Japanese in roman letters) is a temporary bridge for the parent. It is not a substitute for hiragana once the child needs to read a word. A parent who is still learning can keep a romaji crib on *their* card. The child's card, as soon as they can match sound to kana, is hiragana.

The verb likes the end. 「りんごを食べます」 is apple-object + eat, not eat + apple. English ears wait for the verb early. Japanese ears wait a beat. That tune is a cousin of the Korean hour in the next chapter. You do not need a syntax lecture. You need to hear a verb that wandered to the front as a tune mistake, the way a missing は is a vacant job.

Polite form (*desu / masu*) is the default social map for this book's hour: talking to a teacher, a new person, the talk-box question. Plain form is how much family talk and inner speech runs. You will teach polite first because it is the form a stranger is owed, and because the textbook path most families meet starts there. Plain later is a map, not a promotion. A show, a sibling, a chatbot that answers in plain form—those are useful ears. They are not a reason to drop です in the talk box this week.

Katakana is not “the hard hiragana.” It is a second phonetic set with a job: many loanwords, many foreign names, some onomatopoeia, some emphasis in print. When the child can say *aisukurīmu*, that is a katakana week, not a separate semester. Attach the angular letters to the word in the mouth, the same way hiragana was attached.

Particles you can actually hear this week:

- は (*wa*, written with the hiragana *ha*) —topic
- を (*o*) —object of the verb
- か (*ka*) —question mark in speech, at the end

You do not need a particle encyclopedia. You need one job tagged on a real object.

California and Texas, once. Reading and writing take more calendar than Spanish. Speaking can still start this week. You will not paste an adult-intensive hour

chart onto a nine-year-old. A fourteen-year-old starting Japanese I is not too late. Grade 1 versus grade 9 is time on the language and years remaining, not a biological on/off switch this book invented. Starting later means you still play and listen, then you put Year 1 on a transcript as Japanese I.

One cultures sentence, then teach. Japanese is spoken in Japan and in communities far from Japan; this week's greeting is this week's greeting. You do not owe the hour a history of scripts. You owe the hour a phrase said while it is true.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. A year of kana charts with no conversation. Forty-six hiragana isolated, nothing said about an apple.

What it usually means. The script won. The mouth lost. Coverage of a chart felt like progress.

What to say. “Read the word you can already say. Then say 「これは何ですか」 about the object. The chart is an object on the table, not the year.”

2. Romaji as the writing system. The child can type *kore wa hon desu* forever and cannot read *これは*.

What it usually means. Training wheels were treated as the bicycle.

What to say. “Show me the hiragana for the word in your mouth. Romaji can help me. It is not your Japanese page.”

3. A missing particle, treated as close enough. 「これ本です」 with は gone. Or は and を swapped so the topic and the object trade jobs.

What it usually means. English word order was imported. The tags were treated as optional decoration.

What to say. “Who are we talking about? What got the action? Put the tag on the job.”

4. Plain form as a fluency badge. The child drops *desu* everywhere because a show used plain speech, or because a chatbot answered in plain form.

What it usually means. Register was treated as a level, not as a person in the room.

What to say. “Who is listening? For this hour we use the polite form unless the book has moved us. Plain is a map we will learn. It is not a prize.”

5. Kanji as 2,000 in grade 3, or as a generated stroke no one checked. A list, no words attached. Or a tool invented the order.

What it usually means. Inventory replaced attachment. A model drew a scene.

What to say. “A handful, from this week’ s words, copied from the textbook page. If a picture came from a tool, we check it before anyone copies.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, on paper, no student in the room:

1. Write は on a card and the word *topic* on the back. Write を and the word *object*. Say, once, along with a named recording: 「これは何ですか。」 *Kore wa nan desu ka.* —What is this?
2. Find this week’ s spoken word in hiragana on the chart or in the book. If kanji has started in this family’ s book, find that one character on the named page.
3. Decide who is in the room for the talk box: polite is the default.

If those three are fluent enough for you to notice a missing は, a romaji-only page, and a polite form dropped too early, you can hear a wrong turn. That is the job. The student still does the talking.

How to teach it this week

The language hour at the front of this book already taught the shape. This chapter fills it with Japanese.

A Tuesday sitting, as a picture. Chart on the table as an object, not as the hour. Three things that are actually there. You play 「これは何ですか。」 You wait. They point at the book. They say 「これは本です。」 You point at は. You hide the romaji. You stop talking. That is the sitting. The rest of this section is how to make that sitting hold for a six-year-old and for a ninth-grader without writing twelve mini-books.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, ears). Yesterday’ s word in hiragana, said while it is true. One listen of 「これは何ですか。」 from the named recording. No tool. No isolated chart drill. If yesterday was a particle job, they tag は on one object before anything new arrives.

Short model (5–8 minutes). Three real objects. You play the opening question. You point. You say 「これは本です」 after the recording, book in hand. You show the は card on これ. You show the hiragana for ほん or 本 if that is this week's page.

Fade as soon as you can. Second sitting: they repeat after the recording. Third: they say it looking at the book, hiragana visible. Fourth: hiragana card facedown, unaided polite sentence.

Exact wording you can steal.

On kana: “Hiragana is how we read the word you can already say. The chart is here so the word can appear. We are not collecting 46 isolated letters this week.”

On particles: “は tags what we are talking about. を tags the thing that got the action. If the tag is missing, a job is vacant.”

On polite form: “です is how we say it to a person we owe care. This hour uses that form.”

On kanji: “This character belongs to the word in your mouth. A handful. From the book.”

On the chatbot: “You talk first. A generated kanji is a scene until I check the textbook page.”

First problem for the student, after the model. Book in hand. Recording of the question. They answer with a short polite sentence. You wait.

One good question. After the attempt: “If I hide the romaji, can you still say it—and can you point at は?”

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three objects, unaided, after the fade. Then mix: yesterday's greeting, last week's hiragana word, one particle job, one polite sentence.

Exit ticket (5 minutes, unaided). Name one object in a short polite sentence, unaided. Tool closed. Recording paused for the attempt.

How to fade help. Recording plus your point → they point and repeat → they say it with the object → they point at は → they read the word in hiragana without romaji. When they can say 「これは本です」 without the English letters, put romaji away. Bring kana support back when a new word arrives.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. You hold the key: is the particle on the job, is the form polite for this room, is the word readable in hiragana?

Grade bands

Grades 1–2. Play, ears, mouth. Hiragana attached to a word they can already say —a name, あ for a sound they know, い if it earns its keep —not a year of charts with no language. おはようございます and こんにちは as real greetings at real times of day beat a row of isolated あいうえお. Kanji can wait. Particles: は as a name tag is enough. Novice phrases: greetings, this-is, I-am. Small and real. California’s reminder that elementary students without a heritage background often stay Novice for a long stretch applies here too. That is permission, not a ceiling you have to protect.

Grades 3–5. Hiragana functional enough to read this week’s words —meaning they can read これは andほん without going letter-by-letter through the whole chart every time. Katakana next, attached to a loanword they already say (ice cream, the child’s own name in katakana if that is the house custom). Still Novice. Kanji a handful, not 2,000: 人, 山, 本 if those words are in the mouth. Particles as one job at a time, with objects. A ten-year-old who can greet, name, and read this week’s kana is doing the work.

Grades 6–8. A Level I shape. Particles as jobs one at a time; を can arrive when a verb arrives. Polite form as the default social map. Hiragana and katakana both in use. Kanji from the equivalent of that textbook’s Lesson 3 onward, still attached to words. The verb-at-the-end tune is now something you can ask them to hear: “Where did the eating go? Last.” Do not print a middle-school year as Japanese I on a high-school transcript unless the family intends that credit under their state’s rule.

Grades 9–12. Japanese I–IV. Years 1–2 cover the common college ask if the work is real —unrehearsed sentences on familiar topics, not a promise of a rating. Years 3–4 aim at Intermediate *performance* if time-on-task holds. AP Japanese is optional. A family that uses *Genki* Volume 1 as a high-school year still writes **Japanese I**, not *Genki*, and not JLPT N5. Volume 2 does not become Japanese IV because the publisher printed twenty-three lessons. Plain form later, as a map: family, diary, the textbook’s own later lessons —not as “now we are fluent.” A ninth-grader may still need the hiragana chart as an object for a month. That

is placement by skill. Heritage speakers accelerate by what they can already do. Chapter 8 takes that decision.

Activity 1 —Hiragana on a Word

Time. 12 minutes.

Materials. One word they can already say. Hiragana chart as an *object* on the table —a page, not a branded poster you have to own. Pencil. The object itself if there is one.

The fun of it. The word appearing in kana. Reading what they just said.

The skill it builds. Kana as soon as they need to read. Not a year of isolated charts.

How to run it. Say the word. Find each kana. Write the word. Read it back. Then put the chart slightly aside and read the word again. Romaji, if you needed it, goes facedown.

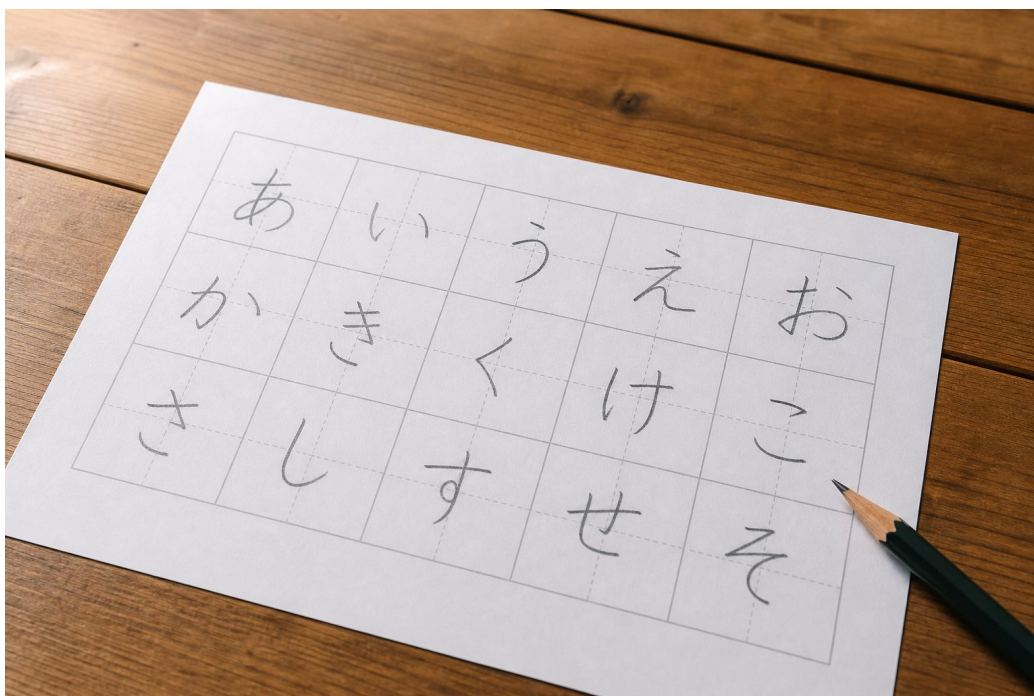


Figure 15: A hiragana chart as a still-life object on a table, one handwritten word beside it, a pencil, a real book. No people, no logos, no branded poster as an ad.

Activity 2 —Particle Job

Time. 10 minutes. Grades 3–12; grades 1–2 can tag は only, as a name tag.

Materials. Two cards (は / を) and two objects. A simple verb they have heard: 食べます *tabemasu* (eat), or 見ます *mimasu* (look at), if this week's page has one. If not, stay with これは _____ です and the は job only.

The fun of it. Tagging the topic versus the thing.

The skill it builds. Particles as jobs. Not a particle encyclopedia.

How to run it. Hold the book. Place は on これ. Say 「これは本です。」 Then, if the verb is this week's, place を on the apple: 「りんごを食べます。」 Swap the cards once on purpose as the incorrect example. Ask which job went vacant.

Activity 3 —Polite vs Plain Card

Time. 8 minutes. Later bands, once the polite sentence is solid.

Materials. Two cards: です / a plain form the book actually has (だ, or a plain verb, when the page prints it). Two people in the thought experiment: a teacher, a sibling.

The fun of it. Picking the person in the room.

The skill it builds. Social map. Not a hierarchy lecture.

How to run it. “Who is listening?” They pick a card. This hour’s default remains polite. Plain is named so they can hear it in a show or a family sentence without thinking the polite form was a lie.

Talk box —これは何ですか。

Talk box

Illustration, labelled as such: three real objects (a book, an apple, a cup), a slip with これは何ですか。 , particle cards facedown. Composite table, not a reported family.

Opening. 「これは何ですか。」 *Kore wa nan desu ka.* [What is this?]

Not: “Recite the kana chart.”

Follow-ups (pick three to five).

「本ですか、りんごですか。」 *Hon desu ka, ringo desu ka.* [Is it a book, or an apple?]

「何色ですか。」 *Nani-iro desu ka.* [What color is it?]

「好きですか。」 *Suki desu ka.* [Do you like it?]

「二つありますか。」 *Futatsu arimasu ka.* [Are there two?]

「どこですか。」 *Doko desu ka.* [Where is it?]

How to wait. Ask in Japanese. Then wait longer than feels comfortable—a slow three seconds after you ask, and again after they answer. First-year high-school language classrooms have been measured at

about two seconds after a question and less than a second after an answer; longer is the move.¹²⁰ Three to five seconds is a finding from elementary science class, used here as a pause, not as a Japanese-score promise.

Stuck silence usually means. They are searching for the word (ordinary Novice, not refusal).¹²¹ The question was not the object on the table. The particle job is vacant and they know something is missing. Romaji is doing the talking. A recast of は passed unnoticed.

Next move. Point. Offer two choices (book or apple). Point at the は card. Play the recording slower. Hide the romaji. Recast the particle once, in the flow; if this week's work is the job, prompt: hold up the empty card and wait.

Done enough. The child names one object in a short polite sentence, unaided.

Practice that actually builds learning

Hearing, saying, and kana grow together. A stack of chart quizzes with no object on the table is assignment, not teaching. A romaji packet with no hiragana is the same problem in English letters.

Blocked, for a new move. The day a student first tags は, a short blocked set is honest: two more objects, same sentence frame. Same for a first hiragana-on-a-word sitting, a first を, a first unaided 「これは何ですか。」

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week, mix: yesterday's greeting, the new kana word, one particle job, one polite sentence, one “romaji facedown”

¹²⁰Judith L. Shrum, “Wait-Time and the Use of Target or Native Languages,” *Foreign Language Annals* 18 (1985). Abstract: first-year high-school Spanish and French; 1.91 seconds after questions, 0.73 seconds after answers. Mary Budd Rowe, NARST 1972 (ERIC ED061103): elementary science; wait three to five seconds. Borrowed here as a pause and labelled as science class, not as a Japanese trial.

¹²¹ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, Novice Mid speaking: speakers pause often as they search for vocabulary or appropriate structure. Performance (rehearsed, familiar tasks) is not proficiency (unrehearsed use). Roy Lyster and Leila Ranta, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19, no. 1 (1997): recasts 55 percent of feedback; uptake 31 percent; repair 18 percent, as repetitions of the teacher. Recast a missing particle once in the flow; prompt if this week's job is the work.

reading.

Brief retrieval. Yesterday’s object; Tuesday’s は; the hiragana for the word they can already say. A short oral at the start of the hour.

One incorrect example to diagnose. Show 「これ本です」 with は missing, or a fluent romaji paragraph, or a kanji traced from an unchecked generated printout. Ask which job is vacant, or which script is doing the work. Then an isomorphic try: one object, one polite sentence, unaided.

Kitchen and family can motivate. A lunch, a name, an anime line you then put back into polite form for this hour —those are doors. They do not replace the unaided sentence. A heritage speaker at the table is Chapter 8’s longer conversation. This chapter still requires the child to talk, including the child who already understands a grandparent. Understanding is not the same as producing a polite sentence on purpose.

When kana is new, blocked practice looks like three words from this week, written, read, said. When the particle is new, blocked practice looks like three objects, same frame, は moving from card to card. Mixed practice is the same week, later: greeting, then a kana word, then a particle job, then the talk box with the book closed. Retrieval is thirty seconds at the start of tomorrow: “Point at は. Say yesterday’s sentence.”

Activity 4 —Kanji Handful

Time. 10 minutes, from the equivalent of *Genki* Lesson 3 onward —when this family’s book has started kanji. Not in week one of hiragana.

Materials. A few characters from this week’s words. Checked model: the textbook page. Japan’s 1958 *Hitsujun* guide was the textbook-authorization standard through 1977; after that, editors are told to follow widely accepted “commonsensical” orders.¹²² The named textbook is the check. This book does not invent a 2026 ministry stroke statute.

¹²²Japan, 筆順指導の手びき (*Hitsujun*, 1958) was the textbook-authorization stroke-order standard from 1958 until 1977. After the 1977 textbook-authorization revision, MEXT tells editors that stroke orders should follow commonsensical orders widely accepted in society (as listed on the Wikimedia Commons Stroke Order Project / Sources page opened for this book). The named textbook page is the kitchen check. This book does not treat a 2026 MEXT 2,136-character stroke statute as opened.

The fun of it. The character on paper, attached to a word they say.

The skill it builds. Kanji as needed. Not 2,000 in grade 3.

How to run it. Say the word. Show the kanji in the book. Copy. Read it in the sentence. If a tool drew it, you check the page before anyone copies. Label a generated scene as a scene.

Activity 5 —Table Talk

Time. 10–15 minutes.

Materials. Three real objects.

The fun of it. Pointing at what is actually there.

The skill it builds. A real polite phrase. Not a vocabulary list with no mouth.

How to run it. Objects out. Opening question. They answer looking at the book, not at a list. You wait. You recast a missing は once. You do not grab the sentence.

For the student

Japanese is a language you can start saying this week. Hiragana is how you read the words you already say. Katakana comes next for many borrowed words. Kanji are meaning-characters you add a handful at a time, attached to those words. You do not have to be silent until a chart is done. You do have to learn hiragana before you can read a Japanese page.

Particles are jobs. は marks what you are talking about. を marks the thing the verb acts on. If you leave a particle out, a job is empty —like a name tag left on the table.

です is the polite form. This hour uses it. Plain form is how a lot of family talk sounds. It is a map you will learn. It is not a prize for being “done.” If a show uses plain speech, you can hear it. You can still answer the talk box in です.

The verb often comes last. If you eat an apple, the apple can be tagged with を, and 食べます sits at the end. If your English mouth wants to start with *eat*, wait. Let the name tags go down first.

A line a computer wrote in Japanese is a scene to look at. It is not your talking. A kanji a computer drew is not your handwriting until a person checks it against the book.

Tiny worked example. On the table: a book.

Heard: 「これは何ですか。」

Answer, book in hand: 「これは本です。」 *Kore wa hon desu.*

Because: は *is on* これ—we are talking about this. です *is the polite ending. If I said* これ本です, *the topic tag would be missing.*

The because-sentence is not “because は *is a particle.*” That restates a label. The because-sentence is the job: what we are talking about.

Try 1. Say 「これは本です」 while the book is in your hand. Point at は.

Try 2. Answer 「これは何ですか。」 about a second object. Hide the romaji.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone what は does, and why a year of kana charts with nothing on the table is not the year.

Challenge. Answer the opening question about two objects, unaided, in polite form. Then write one of the words in hiragana. If you cannot point at the object, you are still in list country.

You are allowed to struggle. Searching for a word is ordinary. A missing particle is information, not a verdict. Hear it. Say it. Then the page. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn’ t clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 —the chart is the year, or romaji is the page. The student can recite あいうえお and cannot say what is on the table. Or they can type romaji and cannot read hiragana.

Next move. One word they can say. Write it in hiragana. Hide romaji. Ask 「これは何ですか。」 A calendar-grade 6 or 9 student who still needs the chart beside

the word is not “behind in Japanese.” They are still in a first-kana stage. The inventory waits.

Diagnostic 2 —particles are decoration, or plain form is a badge. Every sentence is missing は. Or every sentence has dropped です because a show did.

Next move. Two cards. One object. Tag the job. Name who is listening. Put polite back on the hour. Plain can be heard; it does not take over the talk box yet.

Diagnostic 3 —a fluent page the house cannot reopen. The dialogue arrived. The kanji was generated and never checked. A JLPT badge appeared on a worksheet a model wrote.

Next move. Objects in the hands. Finger on the textbook kana or kanji. If it cannot be opened, it comes off. Unaided miniature, tool closed. A model-supplied line is untrusted until it matches the child’s mouth or a named page. Detectors are not a verdict; the reopenable trail is.¹²³

When to get a human tutor. You cannot hear a missing は even after the five-minute warm-up, and you have no named recording in the house. Or the student has weeks of object sittings, and the unaided ticket is still a blank. A tutor, a co-op, or a later dual-enrollment Japanese class is a normal plan. Stay the supervisor who can still ask “what is the は doing?” Dual-enrollment Japanese is a *college* transcript object. AP Japanese is an overlay, not a requirement.

When to go ahead. This week’s word is readable in hiragana. は is on the topic. The polite sentence comes out unaided about a real object. Then lengthen: katakana, a handful of kanji, a second particle, a short unrehearsed exchange. Diagnose. Then move.

A co-op or a conversation partner is a real path for Japanese. The homeschool catalog is thinner here than for Spanish. A weekly hour with a speaker, plus the textbook path at the table, is a fit—not a franchise. The transcript still says Japanese. The partner is not the course name. Notes of what was actually said travel better than a brand.

If the family is choosing between Japanese and Chinese, Chapter 8 is the decision sitting. This chapter’s only job is to make Japanese teachable this week: kana on

¹²³Weixin Liang et al., *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023): detectors flag human TOEFL writing at high false-positive rates in that study. Detectors are not a kitchen verdict. William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045 —GPT-3.5 55 percent of citations fabricated; GPT-4 18 percent. A generated “native” speaker is a fabricated biography.

a word, a particle on a job, a polite sentence about a real object.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student listens and talks. You hold the recording and the kana page.

AI box —Japanese

Use a tool to explain *this week's particle* or *this week's kana word* to you from a named textbook page, to generate extra object-naming items with answers hidden from the student, to write a hint script that withholds the sentence, or to diagnose a line already said or written.

Stroke order: point the lookup at a named *Genki* page (or the Japanese textbook actually on the table). The 1958 *Hitsujun* guide is historical context; the named textbook is the check. The model does not invent the stroke. A generated kanji or kana line is a scene to look at together for two minutes, labelled generated, only after you check it. Then it comes off. The checked page stays.

The student talks. No “translate my paragraph,” no unsupervised chatbot as the only speaker (especially in grades 1–5), no “you are a native teacher from Osaka,” no “percent native” grade from a detector you have not opened, no certificate of fluency, no JLPT score invented by a tool.

Text-to-speech is a second listen *after* a named recording. It is not the first ears and not a grade.

A named textbook and a named recording are language tools. A chatbot list of “how a native would say it” is not. In a high-school mathematics study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam.¹²⁴ That study is math, not a Japanese trial. The same crutch is available here, and harder to hear, because a missing particle can hide inside a confident sentence. The unaided sentence the next morning is the test.

¹²⁴Hamsa Bastani et al., *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. GPT Base: +48 percent on practice, –17 percent on an unaided exam. Math, not a Japanese RCT. The crutch still governs the language hour: the student attempts first; the unaided ticket is the test.

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 9 Japanese” book is a publisher’s scope, not a legal grade and not a national sequence. Done enough is skill, plus words actually said, plus kana actually attached to those words.

Checklist before moving on.

- Reads this week’s spoken word in hiragana; treats romaji as a bridge, not as the page.
- Tags は as the topic on a real sentence; hears a missing particle as a vacant job.
- Uses polite *desu* / *masu* as the hour’s default; treats plain form as a social map, not as a fluency badge.
- Answers 「これは何ですか。」 about a real object, unaided, in a short polite sentence.
- When kanji has started, copies a handful from this week’s words using a checked textbook model.
- Treats a generated character as a scene, not as handwriting practice, until it matches a named page.
- The model did not open the spoken line the transcript will claim.

What can still be thin: katakana fluency; a large kanji inventory; every particle; AP tasks; the later plain-form lessons in a first-year book. Those can travel. A year of isolated kana charts with no talking cannot count as done. A romaji-only year on a Japanese path cannot either. Copying the *shape* of a first-year book—hiragana, then katakana, then kanji attached to words, talk from week one—is enough of a sequence. Copying its lesson count as a law is not.

If two years of Japanese I–II are honest, they cover the common college ask of “the same language, through a second year.” They do not mint an Intermediate rating by themselves. ACTFL’s common two-year secondary model still often sits in the Novice range. That sentence is a map, not a scold. Keep talking.

Transcript. Write **Japanese**, plus I–IV when it is a high-school year. If the family used *Genki* or another named path *inside* the year, the description can say so. The title is still Japanese. Never the brand. Never JLPT N5 as the course name. If the student sits AP Japanese Language and Culture, put the exam on a separate line.

NCAA lists world language as additional core, not as a required year-count. Records will handle the worksheet. The year on the table is still Japanese.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know what は is doing. I know what a missing particle usually means. I know what to say tomorrow—a recording, an object, 何ですか。 , and a wait. The student still does the talking. We can do this.

Chapter 7

Korean



Figure 16: A kitchen-table still-life: hangul letter cards stacked into one syllable block, a slip with 안녕하세요, a slip that reads 이게 뭐예요?, a pencil. No people, no logos, no university-press spines as ads.

Why this matters

Korean is a language whose writing system was built to be learned. Hangul is an alphabet: letters for consonants and vowels, stacked into syllable squares. It is not kanji. It is not a year of unreadable pictures. The National Institute of Korean Language describes it as a phonemic writing system, uniquely combined into syllabic units —twenty-four basic letters, gathered into initials, vowels, and finals.¹²⁵ In 1446 the people who introduced it boasted that a wise person could acquaint themselves with the letters before morning was over, and that another person could learn them in ten days.¹²⁶ That is a design claim from the fifteenth century, not a 2026 study of six-year-olds, and not a promise that a child will read a newspaper on day ten. It is enough of a reason to teach hangul early, attached to greetings and names, instead of treating the script as a wall.

That is worth the struggle because a month of isolated letter worksheets with no 안녕하세요, or a year of romanization with no blocks, or a year of speech-level theory with no object on the table, will not give you a path a stranger can read. Speech levels are a social map: 요 (yo) polite is this book’ s default for the hour, the way Japanese polite form was the default in the last chapter. SOV is a tune: the verb likes the end. Subject, object, verb. English ears wait for the verb early. Korean ears wait a beat.

There is no AP Korean on the College Board list this book opened, nor on the 2026–27 revisions list, nor on the UC AP validation list.¹²⁷ Name that once. Then

¹²⁵National Institute of Korean Language (국립국어원), “About Hangeul” / principle page, https://www.korean.go.kr/eng_hangeul/principle/001.html (opened 1 September 2026). “Han-geul is a phonemic writing system, and it consists of letters for consonants and vowels.” Unlike the Roman alphabet it is “uniquely designed to combine consonant letters and vowel letters into syllabic units.” Twenty-four basic letters; 19 possible initials, 21 medials, finals. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026.

¹²⁶University of Illinois IAS Library, “Learning Korean is as easy as A, B, C’ s!” (5 January 2017), citing Gari K. Ledyard, *The Korean Language Reform of 1446*, p. 258, translating Jeong In-ji’ s *Hunminjeongeum Haerye* postface: “a wise man can acquaint himself with them before the morning is over; a stupid man can learn them in the space of ten days.” Ledyard’ s 1966 dissertation PDF was not opened for this book; the quotation is used as Ledyard via this named page. The 1446 line is a design boast, not a 2026 homeschool timing study, and not a promise that a child will read a newspaper on day ten.

¹²⁷College Board, AP Courses and Exams page, opened 1 September 2026: AP Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish Language, Spanish Literature, Latin. No AP Korean on that list, on the opened 2026–27 revisions list, on the opened UC AP validation list, or on the opened California statutory AP list. Name once; teach. SAT Subject Tests were discontinued in June 2021

teach. Korean still has a four-year high-school shape: Korean I–IV. A Seal of Biliteracy, where a state names Korean, may run through IB or an ACTFL oral and writing test rather than through an AP exam. AAPPL names Korean among the languages it assesses.¹²⁸ None of those objects is the course title. The registrar word is **Korean**. Never a textbook brand. Never Conversation 101.

California places Korean in the same slower-script category as Mandarin and Japanese.¹²⁹ Hangul is faster to *start* than those character inventories, which is the gift of an alphabet. Reading adult prose still takes calendar. Speaking can start this week.

This week you can learn that hangul is an alphabet in blocks, and why treating it like an unreadable character inventory is the wrong picture. Today the student can stack one syllable block for a word they can already say, then answer 「이게 뭐예요?」 looking at the object. A parent who never studied Korean can still hear a romanization-only page and a verb that jumped the line. You are not behind a national clock. You are starting this week's sentence.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a speaker of Korean. You do need to understand today's idea well enough to hear romanization treated as the page, a verb that wandered to the front, and a **요** dropped too early as a social-map mistake, not as fluency.

Everyday picture. Think of refrigerator magnets that snap into a square. Each

and are not a live option.

¹²⁸ACTFL, AAPPL page, opened 1 September 2026: languages named include Korean (among Spanish, French, Italian, German, Chinese/Mandarin, Japanese, and others). Assessment object, not a course credit. California Department of Education Seal of Biliteracy materials name Korean on IB and ACTFL OPI/WPT lists. A Seal is a state (or district) award with state rules, not a national diploma. Virginia's opened Seal pathway is **No** for homeschool without a Board diploma. Parent reads their own state's current rule.

¹²⁹California Department of Education, *World Languages Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (2019). Category IV includes Korean. The document reprints Foreign Service Institute adult-intensive hour figures with a warning about FSI students' age, class size, and weekly hours. Those adult-intensive hours are not a homeschool promise and are not used as a kitchen forecast in this book. Category is a calendar caution, not a talent myth. 19 Tex. Admin. Code §114.39(a)(2) names Chinese and Japanese as logographic examples needing more time, especially in reading and writing; Korean is not named in that sentence. Hangul's alphabet-in-blocks design is the reason this chapter teaches the script early even so.

magnet is a letter —a consonant or a vowel. The square is a syllable. 한 is ㅇ + ㅏ + ㄴ, stacked: *h + a + n*. English writes letters in a line. Korean writes letters in a block that still reads as one beat. If you treat the block as a mysterious character, you will teach it like Chinese. If you treat the letters as an alphabet, the child can build a name this week.

Precise picture. Hangul letters stand for sounds. They combine into syllable units: an initial consonant (or a silent placeholder), a vowel, and often a final consonant. Nineteen possible initials, twenty-one vowels (including combinations), and finals, built from those twenty-four basic letters.¹³⁰ You do not need to recite those counts to a third-grader. You need one block on the table that matches a word in the mouth.

Romanization (Korean in roman letters) is a temporary bridge for the parent. It is not a substitute for hangul once the child needs to read a word. Different romanization systems exist. Do not invent a house spelling and then fight the textbook. Use the book's spelling for the crib, and move the child's eyes onto the block.

Speech levels are how Korean marks the relationship in the room. 요 at the end of a sentence is the polite default this hour can actually use: 「이게 뭐예요?」 「책이에요.」 A plainer form belongs later, when the book has it, for family or for a named character in a dialogue. You will not teach a hierarchy lecture. You will ask “who is listening?” the way the Japanese chapter asked it with です.

The last letter in a block can be a closing consonant —the sound that finishes the square. You will hear it in 안 *an* and 념 *nyeong*. You do not need the name *batchim* this week unless the book uses it. You need to hear that the square has a bottom. If the child writes only the top of 안, the block is unfinished, the way unmarked pinyin was unfinished in the Chinese chapter.

The verb likes the end. 「사과를 먹어요」 is apple + eat, not eat + apple. SOV is a tune you can hear in a three-card line. It is not a wall of syntax names.

이에요 and 예요 are how many naming sentences end after 요 became comfortable: *it is a book* — 「책이에요.」 You can treat that as one chunk this week, the way です was a chunk. Split it later when the book splits it.

¹³⁰National Institute of Korean Language (국립국어원), “About Hangeul” / principle page, https://www.korean.go.kr/eng_hangeul/principle/001.html (opened 1 September 2026). “Han-geul is a phonemic writing system, and it consists of letters for consonants and vowels.” Unlike the Roman alphabet it is “uniquely designed to combine consonant letters and vowel letters into syllabic units.” Twenty-four basic letters; 19 possible initials, 21 medials, finals. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026.

A common first-year textbook path is *Integrated Korean: Beginning 1* (KLEAR / University of Hawai‘i Press): dialogues, narration, vocabulary, culture, grammar, in a five-level series with audio.¹³¹ That is one fit. It is not a homeschool year-count. Five levels are not four Carnegie units unless the work you actually did is four years. The transcript still says Korean.

One cultures sentence, then teach. Korean is spoken in Korea and in communities far from Korea; this week’s greeting is this week’s greeting. You do not owe the hour a history of the peninsula. You owe the hour a phrase said while it is true. A greeting at the door is the cultures lesson this week.

Particles exist in Korean too, and you will meet them when the book puts them in a sentence —을/를 on the thing that got the action, 은/는 on the topic. This chapter will not dump a particle encyclopedia. If this week’s sentence has 을 on the apple, the apple is the thing being eaten. That is enough. The Japanese chapter’s name-tag picture still helps: a small mark, a job.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. Hangul treated as kanji. “We’ll speak after we know the characters.” Isolated jamo (letter) worksheets for a month, no greeting.

What it usually means. The wrong picture of the script. Coverage of an inventory felt like progress.

What to say. “These are letters. They stack into a beat. Let’s build 안 from 안녕하세요—a word you can already say.”

2. Romanization as the writing system. The child can type *ige mwoyeyo* forever and cannot read 이계.

What it usually means. Training wheels were treated as the bicycle.

What to say. “Show me the block for the word in your mouth. Roman letters can help me. They are not your Korean page.”

¹³¹Young-mee Cho, Hyo Sang Lee, Carol Schulz, Ho-min Sohn, and Sung-Ock Sohn, *Integrated Korean: Beginning 1*, 3rd edition (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2019), KLEAR Textbooks in Korean Language. Publisher page opened: performance-based principles named; dialogues, narration, vocabulary, culture, grammar; five-level series; audio at kleartextbook.com; hangul in the introduction (TOC / audio page). Preface page images were not opened for this book. Five levels are not a homeschool year-count. Transcript: Korean, not KLEAR.

3. A verb at the front, treated as close enough. *Eat apple* in Korean word order, English tune.

What it usually means. English ears imported the verb early.

What to say. “The eating sits last. Line the cards: I / apple / eat. Listen for the last beat.”

4. A 요 dropped too early, or a speech-level lecture on day one. The child copies a drama’s intimate form in the talk box. Or the hour becomes a chart of levels with no apple.

What it usually means. Register was treated as a level badge, or theory replaced talk.

What to say. “Who is listening? This hour uses 요. Plain is a map we will learn. It is not a prize, and it is not week one’s worksheet.”

5. Skipping hangul because there is no AP. “We’ll wait for a language that has an exam.” Or a fluent chatbot line whose blocks no one can reopen.

What it usually means. An exam catalog was treated as a curriculum. The work was outsourced.

What to say. “Korean I is a real year. Hangul is the page. You say it first. A tool does not take this talking test.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the lesson, on paper, no student in the room:

1. Build one block with letter cards —한, or the first syllable of 안녕. Say, once, along with a named recording: 「이게 뭐예요?」 *Ige mwoyeyo?* —What is this?
2. Write 요 on a card. That is this hour’s polite ending. Decide who is in the room.
3. Line three cards for a tune you can hear even before the vocabulary is rich: I / apple / eat. Put the verb last.

If those three are fluent enough for you to notice a romanization-only page, a verb that jumped the line, and a 요 dropped too early, you can hear a wrong turn. That is the job. The student still does the talking.

How to teach it this week

The language hour at the front of this book already taught the shape. This chapter fills it with Korean.

A Tuesday sitting, as a picture. Letter cards on the table. One object that is actually there. You play 「이게 뭐예요?」 You wait. They point at the book. They say 「책이에요。」 You show the hangul for 책. You hide the romanization. You stop talking. That is the sitting. The rest of this section is how to make that sitting hold for a six-year-old and for a ninth-grader without writing twelve mini-books.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes, ears). Yesterday’s word in hangul, said while it is true. One listen of 「이게 뭐예요?」 from the named recording. No tool. No isolated jamo drill.

Short model (5–8 minutes). Three real objects. You play the opening question. You point. You say 「책이에요」 after the recording, book in hand. You stack the block for 책 if that is this week’s page. You leave 요 audible at the end.

Fade as soon as you can. Second sitting: they repeat after the recording. Third: they say it looking at the book, hangul visible. Fourth: romanization facedown, unaided 요 sentence.

Exact wording you can steal.

On hangul: “These are letters. They stack into a syllable. This square is the word you just said.”

On a romanization-only page: “Show me the block. The English letters can stay on my card.”

On SOV: “The verb likes the end. Where did the eating go? Last.”

On speech level: “요 is how we say it to a person we owe care. This hour uses that ending.”

On the chatbot: “You talk first. A generated hangul line is a scene until I check the textbook page.”

First problem for the student, after the model. Book in hand. Recording of the question. They answer with a short 요 sentence. You wait.

One good question. After the attempt: “If I hide the romanization, can you still say it —and can you point at the block?”

Student attempt, then mixed practice. Two or three objects, unaided, after the fade. Then mix: yesterday' s greeting, last week' s block, one verb-at-the-end line, one polite sentence.

Exit ticket (5 minutes, unaided). Name one object in a short 요 sentence, unaided. Hangul for that word on paper if this week' s work includes the script. Tool closed. Recording paused for the attempt.

How to fade help. Recording plus your point → they point and repeat → they say it with the object → they stack the block → they read the block without romanization. When they can say 「책이에요」 without the English letters, put romanization away. Bring hangul support back when a new word arrives.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. You hold the key: is the block an alphabet square, is the verb at the end, is 요 on the sentence for this room?

Grade bands

Grades 1–2. Hangul attached to 안녕하세요 and to names. Play, ears, mouth. SOV as a tune you can hear in a two- or three-word line if a verb has arrived; if not, naming is enough. Speech levels later. Isolated jamo worksheets are not the month. Novice phrases: greetings, this-is, I-am. Small and real. A six-year-old will not read a newspaper on day ten. They can stack 안. That is the gift.

Grades 3–5. Hangul functional enough to read this week' s words —the block is a beat, not a drawing. Short polite sentences with 요. Still Novice. The verb-at-the-end tune with three cards. A ten-year-old who can greet, name, and read this week' s hangul is doing the work. Do not rush a speech-level chart.

Grades 6–8. A Level I shape. Speech levels as a social map when the hour needs it —요 as default, a plainer form when the book prints it. SOV as the default tune. Hangul is the page, not an elective. Do not print a middle-school year as Korean I on a high-school transcript unless the family intends that credit under their state' s rule.

Grades 9–12. Korean I–IV. Years 1–2 cover the common college ask if the work is real —unrehearsed sentences on familiar topics, not a promise of a rating. Years 3–4 aim at Intermediate *performance* if time-on-task holds. There is no AP overlay. Name that once. Then teach the year. A Seal, where your state names a path, an ACTFL OPI/WPT, or AAPPL are optional artifacts a stranger can read. They are

not the course title. A ninth-grader may still be stacking first blocks for a month. That is placement by skill. Heritage speakers accelerate by what they can already do—a child who already understands a parent still needs to produce 요 sentences on purpose, and still needs hangul on the page if the page is part of the year. Chapter 8 takes that decision.

A fourteen-year-old starting Korean I is not too late. Grade 1 versus grade 9 is time on the language and years remaining, not a biological on/off switch this book invented. Starting later means you still play and listen, then you put Year 1 on a transcript as Korean I.

Activity 1 —Hangul Block

Time. 15 minutes.

Materials. Letter cards that stack into one syllable (for example $\text{ㅎ}, \text{ㅏ}, \text{ㄴ} \rightarrow \text{한}$). The word they belong to, already in the mouth. Pencil and paper.

The fun of it. The square appearing. Letters that click into a beat.

The skill it builds. Alphabet in blocks, taught early. Not a month of isolated jamo. Not kanji.

How to run it. Say the word. Show each letter. Stack. Read the square. Pull it apart. Stack again. Then write the block from the stacked model. Romanization, if you needed it, goes facedown.

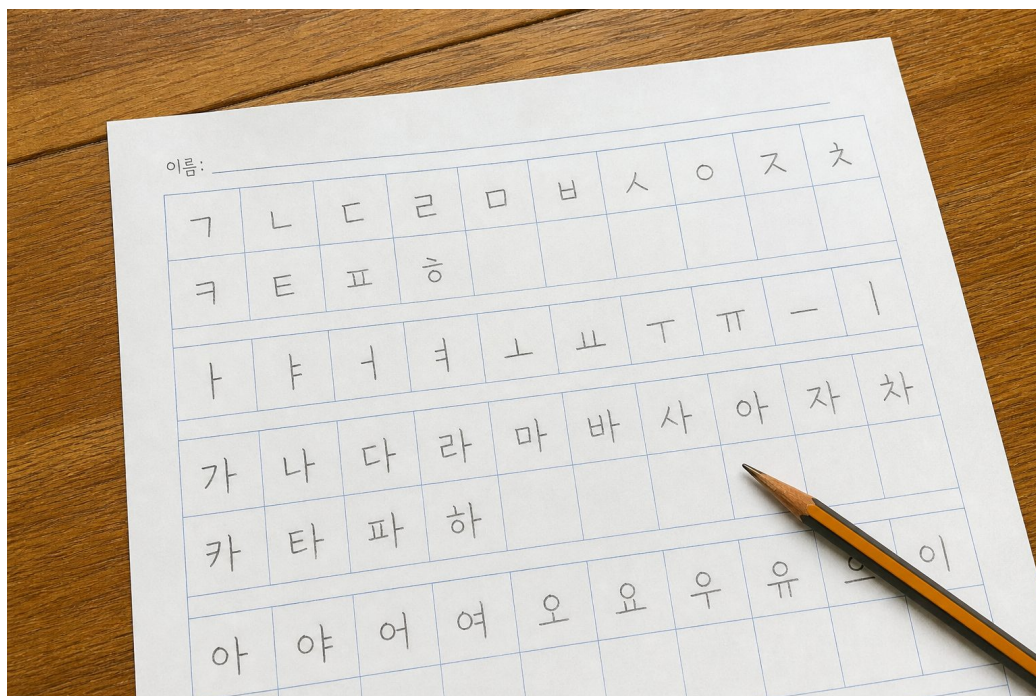


Figure 17: Hangul letter cards stacked into a syllable block on a table, a slip with 한, a pencil. No people, no logos.

Activity 2 —Name in Hangul

Time. 10 minutes.

Materials. The child's name attempted in hangul, checked against a named page or a known romanization map the parent can verify in the textbook or a named dictionary. Not a chatbot's first guess left unchecked.

The fun of it. Their name as a block.

The skill it builds. Script attached to a word they already say.

How to run it. Say the name. Build the blocks. Check the model. Copy. A generated spelling is a scene until it matches a source you can name. Some names do not map cleanly; that is information, not a failure. Use the version the book or a known speaker uses, and stay with it.

Activity 3 —Verb at the End (SOV tune)

Time. 10 minutes. Grades 3–12; grades 1–2 can line two cards if a verb is already in the house.

Materials. Three cards: I / apple / eat —in Korean when the words are this week's (저 / 사과 / 먹어요), in English-plus-요 if you are only teaching the tune today. Better: the Korean, after the recording.

The fun of it. The verb sitting last. Moving the eat-card to the end feels like catching a song.

The skill it builds. SOV as a tune. Not a syntax wall.

How to run it. Line the cards in English order on purpose as the incorrect example. Then move 먹어요 to the end. Say the sentence after the recording. Ask where the eating went.

Talk box —이게 뭐예요?

Talk box

Illustration, labelled as such: three real objects (a book, an apple, a cup), a slip with 이게 뭐예요?, hangul for 책 facedown. Composite table, not a reported family.

Opening. 「이게 뭐예요?」 *Ige mwoyeyo?* [What is this?]

Not: “Recite the letter list.”

Follow-ups (pick three to five).

「책이에요, 아니면 사과예요?」 *Chaeg-ieyo, animyeon sagwa-yeyo?* [Is it a book, or an apple?]

「무슨 색깔이에요?」 *Museun saekkkal-ieyo?* [What color is it?]

「좋아요?」 *Joayo?* [Do you like it?]

「두 개 있어요?」 *Du gae isseoyo?* [Are there two?]

「어디에 있어요?」 *Eodie isseoyo?* [Where is it?]

How to wait. Ask in Korean. Then wait longer than feels comfortable—a slow three seconds after you ask, and again after they answer.

First-year high-school language classrooms have been measured at about two seconds after a question and less than a second after an answer; longer is the move.¹³² Three to five seconds is a finding from elementary science class, used here as a pause, not as a Korean-score promise.

Stuck silence usually means. They are searching for the word (ordinary Novice, not refusal).¹³³ The question was not the object on the table. The verb wants to jump to the front. Romanization is doing the talking. A recast of 요 passed unnoticed.

Next move. Point. Offer two choices (book or apple). Point at the hangul block. Play the recording slower. Hide the romanization. Recast the ending once, in the flow; if this week's work is 요 or the last-place verb, prompt: hold up the empty end-slot and wait.

Done enough. The child names one object in a short 요 sentence, unaided. Hangul for that word is on paper if this week's work includes the script.

Practice that actually builds learning

Hearing, saying, and hangul grow together. A stack of letter quizzes with no object on the table is assignment, not teaching. A romanization packet with no blocks is the same problem in English letters.

Blocked, for a new move. The day a student first stacks a block, a short blocked set is honest: two more syllables, same move, from this week's words. Same for a first verb-at-the-end line, a first 요 sentence, a first unaided 「이게 뭐예요?」

¹³²Judith L. Shrum, "Wait-Time and the Use of Target or Native Languages," *Foreign Language Annals* 18 (1985). Abstract: first-year high-school Spanish and French; 1.91 seconds after questions, 0.73 seconds after answers. Mary Budd Rowe, NARST 1972 (ERIC ED061103): elementary science; wait three to five seconds. Borrowed here as a pause and labelled as science class, not as a Korean trial.

¹³³ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, Novice Mid speaking: speakers pause often as they search for vocabulary or appropriate structure. Performance (rehearsed, familiar tasks) is not proficiency (unrehearsed use). Roy Lyster and Leila Ranta, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 19, no. 1 (1997): recasts 55 percent of feedback; uptake 31 percent; repair 18 percent, as repetitions of the teacher. Recast a missing 요 or a verb-first line once in the flow; prompt if this week's ending or tune is the work.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week, mix: yesterday’ s greeting, the new block, one SOV line, one polite sentence, one “romanization facedown” reading.

Brief retrieval. Yesterday’ s object; Tuesday’ s block; the ㄹ ending. A short oral at the start of the hour. Hangul that is not retrieved becomes wallpaper —and wallpaper is not the hour.

One incorrect example to diagnose. Show a fluent romanization paragraph, or a verb-first line, or hangul traced from an unchecked generated printout. Ask which job the English letters are doing, or where the verb went. Then an isomorphic try: one object, one ㄹ sentence, unaided.

Kitchen and family can motivate. A meal, a name, a grandparent on the phone —those are doors into a phrase said for real. They do not replace the unaided sentence. A heritage speaker at the table is Chapter 8’ s longer conversation. This chapter still requires the child to talk, including the child who already understands a grandparent. Understanding is not the same as producing a ㄹ sentence on purpose.

When hangul is new, blocked practice looks like three syllables from this week, stacked, read, said. When the tune is new, blocked practice looks like three card-lines, verb last. Mixed practice is the same week, later: greeting, then a block, then the talk box with the book closed. Retrieval is thirty seconds at the start of tomorrow: “Stack yesterday’ s syllable. Say yesterday’ s sentence.”

Activity 4 —Speech-Level Card

Time. 8 minutes. Later bands, once the ㄹ sentence is solid.

Materials. Two cards: ㄹ / a plainer form when the book has it. Two people in the thought experiment: a teacher, a sibling.

The fun of it. Picking the person in the room.

The skill it builds. Social map. Not a hierarchy lecture.

How to run it. “Who is listening?” They pick a card. This hour’ s default remains ㄹ. Plain is named so they can hear it in a drama or a family sentence without thinking the polite form was a lie.

Activity 5 —Table Talk

Time. 10–15 minutes.

Materials. Three real objects.

The fun of it. Pointing at what is actually there.

The skill it builds. A real polite phrase. Not a vocabulary list with no mouth.

How to run it. Objects out. Opening question. They answer looking at the apple, not at a list. You wait. You recast a missing 요 once. You do not grab the sentence.

For the student

Korean is a language you can start saying this week. Hangul is an alphabet. Letters for sounds stack into a square. That square is one syllable —one beat. It is not a Chinese character. You can learn enough letters to write a greeting and a name much sooner than a newspaper. The old boast was “a morning” or “ten days.” You are not on a stopwatch. You are allowed to stack one block today.

요 at the end is how this hour talks to a person you owe care. Plain speech is how a lot of family talk and many shows sound. It is a map you will learn. It is not a prize.

The verb often comes last. If you eat an apple, the eating sits at the end. If your English mouth wants to start with *eat*, wait. Let the names go down first.

A line a computer wrote in Korean is a scene to look at. It is not your talking. Hangul a computer drew is not your handwriting until a person checks it against the book.

Korean I is a real year on a transcript. You do not need an exam catalog for the year to count.

Tiny worked example. On the table: a book.

Heard: 「이게 뭐예요?」

Answer, book in hand: 「책이에요.」 *Chaeg-ieyo*.

Because: 요 *is on the end* —polite. The hangul 책 *is the word I said*. If I had answered in English letters only, I would have used the map instead of the page.

The because-sentence is not “because it is a copula.” That restates a label. The because-sentence is the job: naming what is here, politely, in the script.

Try 1. Stack one syllable block for a word you can already say. Read it. Pull it apart. Stack it again.

Try 2. Answer 「이게 뭐예요?」 looking at the object. Hide the romanization. Keep 요.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why hangul is an alphabet in blocks, and why a verb that jumps to the front is a tune mistake.

Challenge. Answer the opening question about two objects, unaided, in 요 form. Then write one of the words in hangul from the checked model. If you cannot point at the object, you are still in list country.

You are allowed to struggle. Searching for a word is ordinary. A missing 요 is information, not a verdict. Hear it. Say it. Then the block. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn’ t clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 —hangul is being treated as an unreadable inventory, or romanization is the page. The student can recite isolated letters and cannot say what is on the table. Or they can type romanization and cannot read a block.

Next move. One word they can say. Stack it. Hide the English letters. Ask 「이게 뭐예요?」 A calendar-grade 6 or 9 student who still needs letter cards beside the word is not “behind in Korean.” They are still in a first-block stage. The inventory waits. They will not read a newspaper this month. They can still greet.

Diagnostic 2 —the verb jumps the line, or 요 is a badge. Every sentence starts with the English verb. Or every sentence has dropped 요 because a drama did. Or the hour has become a chart of speech levels with no apple.

Next move. Three cards. Verb last. Name who is listening. Put 요 back on the hour. Plain can be heard; it does not take over the talk box yet.

Diagnostic 3 —a fluent page the house cannot reopen, or the year was skipped because there is no AP. The dialogue arrived. The hangul was generated and never checked. The family switched languages to chase an exam catalog.

Next move. Objects in the hands. Finger on the textbook block. If it cannot be opened, it comes off. Unaided miniature, tool closed. Korean I is still a year a stranger can read. A model-supplied line is untrusted until it matches the child's mouth or a named page. Detectors are not a verdict; the reopenable trail is.¹³⁴ If the family wants an AP object later, that is a different language or a different year. It is not a reason to abandon this mouth.

When to get a human tutor. You cannot hear a missing ㄹ or a verb-first line even after the five-minute warm-up, and you have no named recording in the house. Or the student has weeks of object sittings, and the unaided ticket is still a blank. A tutor, a co-op, or a later dual-enrollment Korean class is a normal plan —and a real path, because the homeschool catalog is thinner here than for Spanish. Stay the supervisor who can still ask “where did the verb go?” Dual-enrollment Korean is a *college* transcript object. There is no AP overlay to chase.

When to go ahead. This week's word is readable in hangul. The ㄹ sentence comes out unaided about a real object. The verb sits at the end when a verb is in the sentence. Then lengthen: more blocks, a second speech level when the book has it, a short unrehearsed exchange. Diagnose. Then move.

A co-op or a conversation partner is a real path for Korean. A weekly hour with a speaker, plus the textbook path at the table, is a fit —not a franchise. The transcript still says Korean. The partner is not the course name. Notes of what was actually said travel better than a brand.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student listens and talks. You hold the recording and the hangul page.

AI box —Korean

¹³⁴Weixin Liang et al., *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023): detectors flag human TOEFL writing at high false-positive rates in that study. Detectors are not a kitchen verdict. William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045 —GPT-3.5 55 percent of citations fabricated; GPT-4 18 percent. A generated “native” speaker is a fabricated biography.

Use a tool to explain *this week's block* or *this week's ㄹ sentence to you* from a named textbook page, to generate extra object-naming items with answers hidden from the student, to write a hint script that withholds the sentence, or to diagnose a line already said or written.

Stroke order: point the lookup at the named textbook's letter pages (*Integrated Korean* or the Korean book actually on the table). A dedicated official hangul stroke-order table on the scale of the PRC's 8,105-character list is not a source this book opened. The broad reminder—top to bottom, left to right inside a block—is a reminder, not a worksheet dump. The model does not invent the stroke. A generated hangul line is a scene to look at together for two minutes, labelled generated, only after you check it. Then it comes off. The checked page stays.

The student talks. No “translate my paragraph,” no unsupervised chatbot as the only speaker (especially in grades 1–5), no “you are a native teacher from Seoul,” no “percent native” grade from a detector you have not opened, no certificate of fluency, no invented AP Korean.

Text-to-speech is a second listen *after* a named recording. It is not the first ears and not a grade.

A named textbook and a named recording are language tools. A chatbot list of “how a native would say it” is not. In a high-school mathematics study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam.¹³⁵ That study is math, not a Korean trial. The same crutch is available here, and harder to hear, because a missing ㄹ can hide inside a confident sentence. The unaided sentence the next morning is the test.

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 9 Korean” book is a publisher's scope, not a legal grade and not a national sequence. Done enough is skill, plus words actually said, plus hangul

¹³⁵Hamsa Bastani et al., *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. GPT Base: +48 percent on practice, –17 percent on an unaided exam. Math, not a Korean RCT. The crutch still governs the language hour: the student attempts first; the unaided ticket is the test.

actually attached to those words.

Checklist before moving on.

- Treats hangul as an alphabet in blocks, attached to words they say; does not treat it as a character inventory or as optional because there is no AP.
- Reads this week's spoken word in hangul; treats romanization as a bridge, not as the page.
- Uses 요 as the hour's default; treats other speech levels as a social map, not as a fluency badge.
- Hears SOV as a tune: the verb sits last when a verb is in the sentence.
- Answers 「이게 뭐예요?」 about a real object, unaided, in a short 요 sentence.
- Treats generated hangul as a scene, not as handwriting practice, until it matches a named page.
- The model did not open the spoken line the transcript will claim.

What can still be thin: every speech level; a large vocabulary; adult prose; an oral proficiency test. Those can travel. A year of isolated letters with no talking cannot count as done. A romanization-only year on a Korean path cannot either. Skipping Korean because an AP catalog does not list it cannot count as a language decision. It is an exam decision. Chapter 8 will help you keep those apart.

Transcript. Write **Korean**, plus I–IV when it is a high-school year. If the family used *Integrated Korean* or another named path *inside* the year, the description can say so. The title is still Korean. Never the brand. Never an invented AP line. If the student sits AAPPL, an ACTFL OPI/WPT, or a state Seal path that names Korean, put that artifact on a separate line.

NCAA lists world language as additional core, not as a required year-count. Records will handle the worksheet. The year on the table is still Korean.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know hangul is an alphabet in blocks. I know what a verb-first line usually means. I know what to say tomorrow —a recording, an object, 이게 뭐예요?, and a wait. The student still does the talking. We can do this.

Chapter 8

Choose and sequence



Figure 18: A kitchen-table still-life: a paper with four year-boxes labelled as dummy text Spanish I–IV, a folded talk-box slip, a pencil, no brand spines, no people, no logos.

Why this matters

A parent choosing among seven languages does not need a federal flowchart. They need a calendar. Start with ears. If the child is six, play and listen. If the child is fourteen, still play and listen, then put Year 1 on a transcript as Spanish I —or French I, Italian I, German I, Chinese I, Japanese I, Korean I. ACTFL would like elementary programs with enough minutes to matter. Most U.S. students start later. Both are on the map.¹³⁶ Stay with one language long enough that a stranger can see a sequence. Two years of the *same* language is the University of California’s required minimum and a common public-school diploma pattern; three is UC’s recommendation; four is the traditional public-school sequence that can reach an AP exam in six of these seven languages.¹³⁷ Korean has the same four-year *shape* without that exam. Name the years so a registrar can read them.

That is worth the struggle because a thin hour split across two languages, or four years of Level I as seat time for a child who already speaks, or a transcript that says a brand instead of Spanish I, will not do the work you think it is doing. Proficiency is a range, not a birthday. A heritage speaker at the table is a conversation partner who lives in the house. Accelerate by what they can already do. When to add a second language: after the first has hours that include ears and mouth, not as two shallow lists that split a morning. College two-year is a common ask, not a law. NCAA Division I lists world language as additional core, not as a required year-count. A student can meet that athletic bar with zero language years if the

¹³⁶ACTFL, *ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners* (2012): “The most common program model for language learning in this country continues to be two years of instruction at the secondary level. This model limits students to performance in the Novice range.” Continuity and sufficient time on task (the document’s example: beginning in the elementary grades with at least 90 minutes a week and continuing through the secondary years) is named as a condition under which some learners reach Advanced-range *performance*; comparisons of hours are given with a caution about age and cognitive development. ACTFL position statement “Early Language Learning” (dated 29 July 2012 on the opened page) encourages elementary starts. These are professional maps, not homeschool statutes. A homeschool hour may be shorter than 90 minutes; do not print FLES intensity you did not run. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026.

¹³⁷University of California, A-G subject E (opened Quick Reference, August 2026): two years required, three recommended, of the same language other than English, or through the second level of high-school instruction. Language levels defined by years of high-school instruction; ACTFL guidelines named. A UC / CSU map for students who want those systems, not a homeschool statute and not federal law. Common Data Set 2024–25, item C5, asks each college its own high-school credit-unit distribution, including foreign language. This book does not print a national percentage of “most colleges require two years.” SAT Subject Tests were discontinued in June 2021 and are not a live option.

four additional cores are filled elsewhere.¹³⁸ A Seal of Biliteracy is a state award with state rules, not a national diploma.

This week you can learn that two years of the same language is a common college ask, and that a grade-9 start that holds through 12 is a path—not a missed biological boat. Today the student can say last week’s unaided line without the book, then help write next year’s transcript title in ordinary English.

For the parent: understand it yourself

You do not need to be a college counselor. You do need to understand today’s idea well enough to hear “we’ll do Spanish and Japanese this year, twenty minutes each, no talking” as a split hour, and to hear “she’s bilingual, so four years of Spanish I” as seat time, not as a sequence.

Everyday picture. Think of a path through woods, not a buffet. One path walked often beats two paths walked as a glance. A child who can still say last month’s phrase, unaided, is on a path. A child who has badges in two apps and cannot answer a real question in either language has coverage. Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour.

Precise picture. ACTFL’s Proficiency Guidelines describe what a person can do in unrehearsed language. Novice: formulaic words, lists, phrases. Intermediate: creating with sentences on predictable topics. Advanced: paragraphs and time frames.¹³⁹ Performance is what a child can do on a familiar, rehearsed task—the

¹³⁸NCAA Eligibility Center, Division I Academic Standards fact sheet (September 2023, still hosted 1 September 2026): 16 core courses—English 4, math 3, science 2 (lab if offered), extra English/math/science 1, social science 2, **4 additional** from any listed area or “courses listed in additional discipline (world language, comparative religion or philosophy).” World language is named. World language is not a required year-count. *NCAA Home School Toolkit 2025–26*: sample titles include Spanish I, Spanish II, Spanish III, College Spanish; course name on the worksheet must match the transcript title; CLEP and credit-by-exam are not NCAA-approved core courses; there is no preapproved homeschool curriculum. High School Review Committee language: first-year language must include write and speak; workplace-only courses and shallow many-language introductions are named as not alone sufficient. Parent reads the current toolkit if the student is in the Eligibility Center process.

¹³⁹ACTFL, *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines 2024*, fourth edition. Proficiency is the ability to use language to accomplish communication objectives in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, described by FACT (functions and tasks, accuracy, context and content, text type). Novice: formulaic and rote utterances, lists, and phrases. Intermediate: sentence-level communication

kitchen-table dialogue you practiced. Proficiency is what they can still do when the prompt is new. A rehearsed talk box is performance. That is useful. It is not a rating you print as “ACTFL Intermediate Mid.”

The most common U.S. secondary model is two years. In ACTFL’s 2012 performance document, that model limits students to Novice-range performance.¹⁴⁰ Two years is typical. Two years is often still useful phrases, not a bilingual adulthood. Three and four years buy more calendar. They do not mint a sublevel by themselves. California notes that Superior is unlikely at high-school graduation, and that elementary students without a heritage background often stay Novice for an extended time.¹⁴¹ Those sentences are permission to stay with phrases that are real.

College, once, precisely. The University of California’s A-G subject E asks for two years of the same language other than English, or through the second level of

on predictable topics; ability to use language creatively by recombining rehearsed material. Advanced: paragraph-level communication, narration in major time frames. Performance assessment measures rehearsed, familiar tasks; proficiency requires unrehearsed, sustained ability. NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements ©2026 intro: a framework, not a curriculum; examples are not ready-made lessons. World-Readiness Standards (2015, still cited in 2026 Can-Do): five C goal areas—Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, Communities—a roadmap, not national law.

¹⁴⁰ACTFL, *ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners* (2012): “The most common program model for language learning in this country continues to be two years of instruction at the secondary level. This model limits students to performance in the Novice range.” Continuity and sufficient time on task (the document’s example: beginning in the elementary grades with at least 90 minutes a week and continuing through the secondary years) is named as a condition under which some learners reach Advanced-range *performance*; comparisons of hours are given with a caution about age and cognitive development. ACTFL position statement “Early Language Learning” (dated 29 July 2012 on the opened page) encourages elementary starts. These are professional maps, not homeschool statutes. A homeschool hour may be shorter than 90 minutes; do not print FLES intensity you did not run. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026.

¹⁴¹California Department of Education, *World Languages Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (2019). Superior unlikely at graduation in the state’s own description of typical programs; non-heritage elementary students often remain Novice for an extended period. Category I includes French, Italian, Spanish; Category II includes German; Category IV includes Mandarin, Japanese, Korean (FSI-derived, with California’s asterisk that Japanese is typically more difficult than others in the category). FSI adult-intensive hour figures are reprinted with a warning (age, class size, hours per week) and are not used in this book as a homeschool promise. Texas 19 TAC Chapter 114 (2014): Level I–IV map to Novice Mid through Intermediate High; Level I has no prerequisite and may be elementary, middle, or high school; heritage-speaker acceleration by demonstrated proficiency. Public-school maps, not homeschool law.

high-school instruction, and recommends three.¹⁴² That is a named flagship, not federal law. The Common Data Set asks each college its own number. This book did not open a national percentage of “most colleges require two years,” so it will not print one. Look up the colleges this family actually means.

Public diploma, once. Texas’ s Foundation High School Program asks two language credits in the same language (or listed computer-science substitutes) —a public-school diploma map, not a homeschool statute.¹⁴³ None of the homeschool statutes this book opened in Texas, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, or New York *requires* a world language for homeschool. New York’ s Q&A is explicit: students instructed at home are not required to take a second language.¹⁴⁴ You may choose one. The record is still yours to make.

Athletics, once. NCAA Division I: sixteen core courses. World language may fill part of the four *additional* cores, alongside comparative religion or philosophy, or the extra year may come from English, math, science, or social science already listed. There is no “two years of language” box. A student can meet Division I with zero language years. CLEP is not NCAA core.¹⁴⁵ If this student is in the

¹⁴²University of California, A-G subject E (opened Quick Reference, August 2026): two years required, three recommended, of the same language other than English, or through the second level of high-school instruction. Language levels defined by years of high-school instruction; ACTFL guidelines named. A UC / CSU map for students who want those systems, not a homeschool statute and not federal law. Common Data Set 2024–25, item C5, asks each college its own high-school credit-unit distribution, including foreign language. This book does not print a national percentage of “most colleges require two years.” SAT Subject Tests were discontinued in June 2021 and are not a live option.

¹⁴³19 Tex. Admin. Code §74.12, Foundation High School Program: two credits in the same language other than English (or listed computer-science courses) —public diploma, not a homeschool statute. Texas Education Agency does not award a homeschool diploma; the family makes the record.

¹⁴⁴New York State Education Department, “Home Instruction Questions and Answers” : “Are students instructed at home required to take a second language? No.” Pennsylvania secondary programs *may include* foreign languages at the supervisor’ s discretion; graduation is an arts-and-humanities object, not a language object, in the opened statute. North Carolina’ s homeschool test list is English grammar/reading/spelling/math; language is not named. Virginia’ s parent writes a list of subjects; language is not required. Texas *Leeper* does not name a language. Homeschooling is legal; language is a family construction in these opened states. This book is not legal advice. Parent reads their own statute.

¹⁴⁵NCAA Eligibility Center, Division I Academic Standards fact sheet (September 2023, still hosted 1 September 2026): 16 core courses —English 4, math 3, science 2 (lab if offered), extra English/math/science 1, social science 2, **4 additional** from any listed area or “courses listed in additional discipline (world language, comparative religion or philosophy).” World language is

Eligibility Center process, the current toolkit's sample titles look like Spanish I, Spanish II, Spanish III, College Spanish. Match the worksheet to the transcript.

Age, once. Studies of immigrant second-language attainment find a real age effect on how far a person finally goes, especially for implicit grammar. They do not find that grade 1 works and grade 9 fails. The advantage children show in those studies is ultimate attainment, not rate of learning, and the decline is described as gradual from about 6 or 7 toward 16 or 17.¹⁴⁶ Starting in grade 1 versus grade 9 is time on the language and years remaining. It is not a magic window. A native accent is not the promise of this book.

Category, once. California places Spanish, French, and Italian in a faster-script group, German in a middle group, Mandarin, Japanese, and Korean in a slower-script group. That is a calendar caution about reading and writing. It is not a talent myth, and it is not a veto on Chinese, Japanese, or Korean at a kitchen table.

Heritage, once. This book opened no national rate of heritage-language home-schoolers, so it will not invent one. Texas's public-school map allows acceleration by demonstrated proficiency.¹⁴⁷ The kitchen version: if the child can already do this week's talk box unrehearsed, you do not seat them in Level I for four years as a seat-time trick. You still require them to talk. You still write an ordinary title:

named. World language is not a required year-count. *NCAA Home School Toolkit 2025–26*: sample titles include Spanish I, Spanish II, Spanish III, College Spanish; course name on the worksheet must match the transcript title; CLEP and credit-by-exam are not NCAA-approved core courses; there is no preapproved homeschool curriculum. High School Review Committee language: first-year language must include write and speak; workplace-only courses and shallow many-language introductions are named as not alone sufficient. Parent reads the current toolkit if the student is in the Eligibility Center process.

¹⁴⁶Jacqueline S. Johnson and Elissa L. Newport, "Critical Period Effects in Second Language Learning," *Cognitive Psychology* 21, no. 1 (1989): abstract —46 native Korean or Chinese speakers, arrival ages 3–39; grammaticality-judgment proficiency linearly related to age of arrival up to puberty. Robert M. DeKeyser, "The Robustness of Critical Period Effects in Second Language Acquisition," *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 22, no. 4 (2000): 57 Hungarian-speaking adult immigrants; very few adult arrivals scored in the child-arrival range; those who did had high verbal analytical ability; children have the advantage in ultimate attainment, not in rate of learning; the decline "does not suddenly occur around puberty but seems to take place gradually from ages 6 or 7 to 16 or 17 and beyond." Immigrant naturalistic findings, not a homeschool RCT, and not a claim that only children get native accents.

¹⁴⁷19 Tex. Admin. Code §74.12, Foundation High School Program: two credits in the same language other than English (or listed computer-science courses) —public diploma, not a homeschool statute. Texas Education Agency does not award a homeschool diploma; the family makes the record.

Spanish, not “Heritage Speaker 3.” Understanding a grandparent is not the same as producing the year’s sentences on purpose.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. Two shallow lists that split a thin hour. “Spanish on Monday, Korean on Tuesday, both from an app, no mouth.”

What it usually means. Coverage felt like a richer education. A tool made two languages look free.

What to say. “One language, ears and mouth, until last month’s unaided line still works. Then we talk about a second.”

2. Four years of Level I for a child who already speaks. Seat time as a transcript trick.

What it usually means. Credit was treated as hours in a chair, not as skill.

What to say. “What can you do without the book? That is the placement. We will still call the year Spanish —maybe Spanish III —if the work is real.”

3. “Colleges require two years” as a universal, or “NCAA requires language.” A slogan where a lookup belongs.

What it usually means. A flagship ask was treated as federal law. An athletic additional-core option was treated as a required slot.

What to say. “UC asks two and recommends three, same language. This college prints its own number. NCAA additional core can be language. It does not have to be.”

4. An ACTFL badge from the kitchen, or a brand on the transcript. “Intermediate Mid.” “Genki 1.” “Duolingo streak = Spanish II.”

What it usually means. A map was treated as a certificate. A program was treated as a course title.

What to say. “The title is Spanish I. A rating belongs on a score report if we sat a test. An app is practice inside the year.”

5. A second language to rescue a stalled first, or an AI to start two at once. “They are bored of French, so we’ll add Japanese, and the chatbot can be both partners.”

What it usually means. Depth failed, and a tool offered coverage as a cure.

What to say. “Fix the first hour —ears, mouth, one talk box. A tool is not a reason to split the morning.”

Five-minute parent warm-up

Before the sitting, on paper, no student in the room:

1. Write one language name from the locked list: Spanish, French, Italian, German, Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Korean. Write four year-boxes: I, II, III, IV.
2. Write one college this family actually means, or write “not yet.” If there is a name, you will look up *that* college’s language ask, not a national slogan.
3. Write last month’s unaided line from the language you are already in —or write “we have not started a mouth yet.”

If those three are fluent enough for you to hear a split hour, a seat-time year, and a slogan where a lookup belongs, you can hear a wrong turn. That is the job. The student still does the talking, including the talking about next year’s title.

How to teach it this week

This chapter’s hour is a decision sitting. The language hour at the front of the book still holds if you already have a language: warm-up ears, a short model, a student attempt, one good question, a wait. Here the “phrase” is a choice you can defend, and the “unaided ticket” is a one-page calendar.

Warm-up (3–5 minutes). If a language is already in the house, last week’s unaided line, book closed. If not, name the seven languages out loud so they are real objects, not a catalog fog.

Short model (5–8 minutes). You fill four year-boxes for *one* language. You say, aloud: “Two years of the same language is a common college ask. It is not a law. NCAA additional core can hold language. It does not have to. We will look up the college that is actually on our list.”

Exact wording you can steal.

On depth: “One path walked often. Two glances is not two languages.”

On heritage: “What can you still say without the book? That is where we start. We will not sit Level I for four years as a trick.”

On a second language: “After the first has a mouth. Not this week, if last month’s line is already gone.”

On college: “UC asks two, recommends three, same language. This other college prints its own number. We will look it up.”

On NCAA: “Language can be additional core. It is not a required year-count. English, math, and science still have to be filled.”

On the transcript: “Spanish I, not a brand. Korean I, not an app.”

On the chatbot: “A tool is not a reason to start two languages at once. You talk first in the one we chose.”

First problem for the student, after the model. Help fill the four boxes. Name the language. Name next year’s title in ordinary English.

One good question. “If we stopped in June, would a second year of the *same* language be true?”

Exit ticket (10 minutes, unaided). A one-page family calendar: one language named, years I–IV blocked, AP / Seal / NCAA as optional boxes, not as the hour. Tool closed.

How to fade help. You fill the first box → they fill the second → they write the title without looking at a brand spine → they say last month’s line without the book.

When to stop talking. After one model and one question. You hold the key: is there one language, a mouth, a title a stranger can read?

Grade bands

Grades 1–2. The decision is almost always “which language will we play in,” not “how many credits.” Play and listen. Novice phrases. A FLES-style elementary *program* in ACTFL’s language means enough minutes, often described as at least about 90 minutes a week with continuity, if you want to claim that kind of

program.¹⁴⁸ A homeschool hour can be shorter. Do not fake FLES intensity on a transcript. Do not skip talking because they are little.

Grades 3–5. Still Novice, often for a long stretch. The decision is still depth. A second language here is rarely a gift unless the first already has a mouth and the hours are real. Heritage at the table is a partner, not a reason to skip the child’s own production.

Grades 6–8. A Level I shape can begin. Middle-school language is real work. It is not automatically high-school Spanish I on a transcript unless your state rule and your record say so. This is a common moment to start if you did not start in the elementary years. Still play. Still listen. Then name the year honestly.

Grades 9–12. Carnegie units a stranger can read. Years 1–2 of one language cover the common college ask if the work is real. Years 3–4 are the beyond: *Intermediate performance* if time-on-task holds, optional AP in six languages, optional Seal where the state allows it. A grade-9 start that holds through 12 is four years. That is a path. Korean I–IV is a path without AP. Placement is by skill: a heritage ninth-grader may belong in III, with evidence, not in I as seat time.

Activity 1 —One-Language Calendar

Time. 20 minutes. Parent and older student; younger student can color the boxes while you name the language.

Materials. Paper with four year-boxes (I–IV). Pencil.

The fun of it. Seeing the path. Four boxes make a sequence visible.

The skill it builds. Same language long enough. Not a college-counseling franchise.

¹⁴⁸ACTFL, *ACTFL Performance Descriptors for Language Learners* (2012): “The most common program model for language learning in this country continues to be two years of instruction at the secondary level. This model limits students to performance in the Novice range.” Continuity and sufficient time on task (the document’s example: beginning in the elementary grades with at least 90 minutes a week and continuing through the secondary years) is named as a condition under which some learners reach Advanced-range *performance*; comparisons of hours are given with a caution about age and cognitive development. ACTFL position statement “Early Language Learning” (dated 29 July 2012 on the opened page) encourages elementary starts. These are professional maps, not homeschool statutes. A homeschool hour may be shorter than 90 minutes; do not print FLES intensity you did not run. Access date for URLs in these notes: 1 September 2026.

How to run it. Name one language. Write it once at the top. Fill I–IV as the years you actually intend, not as a wish. Optional boxes off to the side: AP (if it exists for this language), Seal (if your state has a path), NCAA (if this student is in that process). Those optional boxes do not run the hour. If you cannot fill two boxes honestly, you have the real problem in view.

Activity 2 —Heritage Skip-a-Level Check

Time. One sit.

Materials. This week’s talk box from the language already in the house, used unrehearsed —book closed, recording paused.

The fun of it. “You already have this.” Skill made visible.

The skill it builds. Accelerate by what they can do. Not an unofficial ACTFL badge.

How to run it. Ask the opening question from Chapters 1–7 without rehearsal. Wait. If the child can do it, and can do last month’s line too, you are not in Level I. Write the next honest title. If they understand but cannot produce, you have a listening-rich, speaking-thin year —which is still a year that needs a mouth, not a skip and not a four-year sit.

Activity 3 —Second-Language Gate

Time. 10 minutes.

Materials. Last month’s unaided exit from language one.

The fun of it. A yes / not-yet that you can see.

The skill it builds. Depth before split hours.

How to run it. Can they still say it? If yes, and the first language still has a weekly mouth, you may talk about a second as an addition, not as a rescue. If no, the gate is closed this season. A tool that will “do both” is not a gate opener.

Discussion box —choosing

Discussion box

Illustration, labelled as such: four year-boxes on paper (dummy Spanish I–IV), a folded talk-box slip from last month, a college page print-out or a blank labelled “not yet.” Composite table, not a reported family.

Opening. “Which one language are we walking, and what would a stranger read on next year’ s transcript?”

Not: a target-language drill, and not “what does the app recommend.”

Follow-ups (pick three to five).

What can you still say without looking?

Is this a second language, or is this still year one of the first?

If we stopped in June, would a second year of the *same* language be true?

Who at this table already speaks —and what can they *produce*, not only understand?

Does this family have a named college ask to look up, or are we building a path without that yet?

How to wait. Ask. Then wait longer than feels comfortable —a slow three seconds after you ask, and again after they answer. Three to five seconds is a finding from elementary science class, used here as a pause.¹⁴⁹ The language-classroom numbers from first-year high school are the same reminder they were in Chapters 1–7: people wait too little after a question.

Stuck silence usually means. The first language never had a mouth —which is the gate, not a shame. The family has been collecting coverage. A heritage child is translating in their head and not sure they are allowed to skip. A slogan (“colleges require two years”) has replaced a lookup.

Next move. Open last month’ s line. Point at one year-box. Look up one named college, or write “not yet.” Recast the slogan once: “UC

¹⁴⁹Mary Budd Rowe, NARST 1972 (ERIC ED061103): elementary science; wait three to five seconds. Judith L. Shrum, *Foreign Language Annals* 18 (1985): first-year high-school Spanish and French; 1.91 seconds after questions, 0.73 seconds after answers. Borrowed as a pause.

asks two of the same language. We will check the one we mean.”

Done enough. A one-page family calendar with one language named, years I–IV blocked, AP / Seal / NCAA as optional boxes, not as the hour.

Practice that actually builds learning

A decision is a skill. It gets better with one honest object, not with a stack of counseling slogans.

Blocked, for a new move. The day you first fill four boxes, stay with one language for the whole sitting. Same for a first unrehearsed heritage check, a first college lookup, a first transcript-title line.

Mixed, for when to use it. Later the same week: last month’s unaided line, then the title, then “second language: yes or not-yet,” then one optional box (AP or NCAA) that you may leave empty.

Brief retrieval. Tomorrow: “What is next year’s title?” “What can you still say?” Thirty seconds.

One incorrect example to diagnose. Show a dummy line that reads a brand, or “Duolingo = Spanish II,” or “ACTFL certified Intermediate Mid” with no test, or “NCAA requires two years of language.” Ask what a stranger would think they were holding. Then write the honest line.

Kitchen and family can motivate. A grandparent, a trip, a college visit —those are doors into a choice. They do not replace the unaided line in the first language. They do not replace the title.

Activity 4 —College-Ask Lookup

Time. 15 minutes.

Materials. One named college’s Common Data Set language row, or UC’s current A–G subject E page. If there is no named college yet, print UC’s two-required / three-recommended sentence as *one* flagship example, labelled as such.

The fun of it. A real number for *this* family.

The skill it builds. Two years as a common ask, not a law.

How to run it. Find the number. Write it on the calendar as “this college,” not as “all colleges.” If the student is years from applications, write “not yet—we will keep two years of one language available.” That is a path, not a slogan.

Activity 5 —Transcript Title Drill

Time. 5 minutes.

Materials. A dummy line.

The fun of it. Spanish I, not a brand. The click when a stranger could read it.

The skill it builds. A title that travels.

How to run it. Write three wrong lines: a brand, an app streak, Conversation 101. Cross them out. Write **Spanish I** or **Korean I** or **Mandarin Chinese II**. Match whatever you will later put on an NCAA worksheet, if you are in that process. Records in Chapter 9 will finish the folder. This sitting is the name.

For the student

You are allowed to walk one language deeply. That is not a smaller education. It is how talking gets good.

Novice talk is lists and phrases you have practiced. Intermediate talk is making sentences on familiar topics when no one handed you the script. Advanced talk is paragraphs and time—last year, next year, what happened. You do not need those labels on a badge. You need to know what “done enough this year” feels like: a short unrehearsed exchange on something you actually know.

If you already speak this language at home, you still have to *do* the year’s talking on purpose. Understanding a parent is not the same as answering a question without the book. You may belong in a later year. You do not belong in four years of the first year as a chair.

If you want a second language, last month’s line in the first one still has to work. A computer that will talk in both is not you talking in either.

Colleges often ask for two years of the same language. Some recommend three. They do not all print the same number. NCAA sports eligibility can use language as extra core. It does not have to. None of that is a reason to skip talking this week.

Tiny worked example. Last month’ s line, book closed: you can still name what is on the table in the language you chose.

Calendar: **Japanese I** (this year), **Japanese II** (next), boxes III and IV open.

Because: *one language, a mouth, a title a stranger can read. If I wrote a brand, the stranger would not know the year. If I added Korean now and dropped the talking, I would have two lists and no line.*

The because-sentence is not “because ACTFL.” That restates a label. The because-sentence is the path.

Try 1. Say last week’ s unaided line without the book.

Try 2. Write next year’ s transcript title in ordinary English. Not a brand.

Explain it back. In two sentences, tell someone why two shallow languages are not two languages, and why “colleges require two years” needs a named college.

Challenge. Fill four year-boxes for one language. Leave AP, Seal, and NCAA optional and empty if they are empty. If you cannot say last month’ s line, the calendar is a wish. Stay with the line until it holds.

You are allowed to struggle. A missing second year is information, not a verdict. A heritage mouth that understands and cannot produce is information. Choose. Then talk. The tool does not take this test. You do.

If it isn’ t clicking

Three diagnostics, and the next move for each. No shame. Placement is by skill, not by birthday.

Diagnostic 1 —there is no mouth, or there are two lists. The student can name two apps and cannot answer one real question. The hour was coverage.

Next move. Stop the split. One language. Last week’ s talk box, unrehearsed. A calendar-grade 9 student with no mouth is not “behind in world language.” They

are still in a first-phrase stage. The second language waits. Small talking can continue: one question, one object, oral credit.

Diagnostic 2 —seat time, or a slogan. A heritage child in Level I for the fourth year. Or “all colleges require two years,” or “NCAA requires language,” or “we missed the window because we started in ninth.”

Next move. Unrehearsed talk box. Look up one named college, or write “not yet.” Say the NCAA sentence once: additional core, not a required year-count. Say the age sentence once: grade 9 through 12 is a path. Then go back to this week’s phrase.

Diagnostic 3 —a fluent plan the house cannot reopen. An AI calendar of two languages, six apps, and a generated “Intermediate Mid.” A brand on the dummy transcript.

Next move. Cross out the brand. Cross out the rating unless a score report exists. One page, one language, last month’s line in the student’s mouth. Detectors are not a verdict; the reopenable trail is.¹⁵⁰

When to get a human tutor. You cannot tell whether last month’s line is real, even after the five-minute warm-up, because no one in the house can hear a wrong phrase and you have no named recording. Or the student has weeks of “language” that were only a screen. A tutor, a co-op, or a later dual-enrollment term is a normal plan. Stay the supervisor who can still ask “what can you say without the book?” Dual enrollment is a *college* transcript object. AP is an overlay in six of seven languages, not a requirement, and not a reason to abandon Korean.

When to go ahead. One language is named. Last month’s line still works, or this is honestly Year 1. The title is readable. Heritage production, if it exists, has moved the year-box. A second language is a decision with a gate, not a rescue. Then lengthen: year II, an optional AP sitting if you chose that exam, an optional Seal lookup for *your* state. Diagnose. Then move.

¹⁵⁰Weixin Liang et al., *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023): detectors flag human TOEFL writing at high false-positive rates in that study. William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 14045 —fabricated citations and, in the same paper, fabricated methods and results. A generated ACTFL certificate is not a score report.

Tools, including AI

Optional helpers for you. The student talks and chooses. You hold the calendar.

AI box —choosing

Use a tool to explain *this week's college page or this week's ACTFL Novice/Intermediate distinction* to you from a named document, to generate extra dummy transcript lines with the honest titles hidden as a key, to write a hint script that withholds the choice, or to diagnose a calendar already written.

The student still says last month's line. No “plan my two-language curriculum,” no unsupervised chatbot as the only conversation partner in either language, no invented ACTFL certificate, no invented AP Korean, no “you are a counselor at UC” biography, no NCAA worksheet the model filled with a brand.

A tool is not a reason to start two languages at once. A fluent model turn in a second language is performance, not the child's knowledge of the first.

A named college page, a named ACTFL overview, and last month's unaided line are decision tools. A chatbot list of “best languages for college” is not. In a high-school mathematics study, an unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and then cut the unaided exam.¹⁵¹ That study is math, not a sequencing trial. The same crutch is available here: a beautiful plan that no mouth can run. The unaided line the next morning is the test.

What “done enough” looks like

A “grade 9 world language” book is a publisher's scope, not a legal grade and not a national sequence. Done enough is a path you can name, plus talk the student can still do.

Checklist before moving on.

¹⁵¹Hamsa Bastani et al., *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. GPT Base: +48 percent on practice, −17 percent on an unaided exam. Math, not a sequencing RCT. The crutch still governs: the student attempts first; the unaided ticket is the test.

- Names one language from the readable list and can point at years I–IV as a calendar, not as a buffet.
- Treats two years of the *same* language as a common college ask (UC: two required, three recommended) and looks up *this* family’s college when there is one—not as a universal law.
- Treats NCAA world language as additional core, not as a required year-count.
- Places a heritage speaker by what they can produce unrehearsed, not by four years of Level I as seat time.
- Adds a second language only after the first has a mouth; does not split a thin hour; does not use a tool as the reason to split.
- Writes a transcript title a stranger can read; never a brand, never Conversation 101, never an unofficial ACTFL badge.
- Treats ACTFL as a map of unrehearsed use, not as a curriculum and not as a kitchen certificate.
- The model did not write the calendar the folder will keep.

What can still be thin: a named college; an AP sitting; a Seal; athletic eligibility. Those can travel. Two shallow lists cannot count as done. A grade-9 start is not a missed boat.

Transcript. Write the language and the level: **Spanish I, French II, Mandarin Chinese III, Korean I.** If the family used a named path *inside* the year, the description can say so. The title is still the language. Chapter 9 will finish records. Chapter 10 will name programs by fit. This chapter is the choice that makes those pages mean something.

In the last federal tables that published the row, foreign language was taught that year in about a third of homeschool households, and about half of high-school homeschoolers had ever been taught one.¹⁵² A sequence is a construction. You are building it on purpose.

A parent who felt rusty should be able to say, after this chapter: I know why one

¹⁵²Jiashan Cui and Rachel Hanson, *Homeschooling in the United States: Results from the 2012 and 2016 Parent and Family Involvement Survey*, NCES 2020-001 (2019), Table 9: foreign language taught *that year*—32 percent overall, 22 percent K–2 (interpret-with-caution flag), 40 percent grades 3–5, 30 percent 6–8, 35 percent 9–12. Table 8: foreign language *ever* taught during home instruction, grades 9–12, 51 percent. The 2023 First Look (NCES 2024-113) did not republish those subject tables. NCES 2024-113: 3.4 percent / approximately 1.765 million homeschooled, 2022–23. There is no national homeschool diploma.

language deeply beats two shallowly. I know what a seat-time year usually means. I know what to say tomorrow —last month' s line, four boxes, a title a stranger can read. The student still does the talking. We can do this.

Chapter 9 —Records a stranger can read

A registrar, a college, an athletic-eligibility office, a receiving public school, and a future employer all meet your language year the same way: on paper. They were not at the kitchen table. They did not hear the child order fruit or greet a neighbor. They can map **Spanish I**. They cannot map a product name, an app streak, or a clever title you invented for the folder.

You issue that paper. In most of the United States, the state will not issue it for you. That is not a slight. It is the job this chapter is for.

Keep one folder for the language. Put the transcript line, a short course description, the grade, and the work samples in the same place. A stranger who opens that folder should be able to say, in one breath, what language it was, which year of a sequence it was, and that the child talked and wrote.

[Illustration: a dummy folder spread —four transcript slips labelled Spanish I, French II, Mandarin Chinese III, and Korean I. No family names. No product spines.]

Titles a stranger can map

Write the language in ordinary English. Use a numbered high-school level when you are claiming a high-school year.

Here is the locked list for this book:

Spanish. French. Italian. German. Chinese. Mandarin Chinese. Japanese. Korean. World Language.

Spanish I, Spanish II, Spanish III, Spanish IV are ordinary high-school English. So are French I and Korean I. If the work is Mandarin, **Mandarin Chinese** is the registrar-readable form; **Chinese** is also fine. Dual-language titles (Spanish I / Español I) are a local choice. Keep the English name readable.

Leave the product name in the folder, not on the line. The year of a named program is work done *inside* a course. It is not the course name. Conversation 101 is not a title. An app is not a title. “AI Spanish” is not a title.

If the language is not one of the seven this book teaches, write the ordinary English name a registrar already knows —Arabic, Latin, American Sign Language —or write **World Language**. The hour is the same. The paper still has to be readable.

The NCAA Eligibility Center’s 2025–26 Home School Toolkit uses the same family of titles in its sample transcript: Spanish I, Spanish II, Spanish III, and College Spanish.¹⁵³ The course name on an NCAA Core-Course Worksheet must match the transcript title. Make them one object.

Level I–IV is a map, not a birthday

A typical U.S. high-school language path looks like four levels. Texas public-school standards write that map for languages other than English: Level I toward Novice Mid to Novice High; Level II toward Novice High to Intermediate Low; Level III toward Intermediate Low to Intermediate Mid; Level IV toward Intermediate Mid to Intermediate High.¹⁵⁴ Those bands are a picture of what a year often aims at. They are not a homeschool law, and they are not a June promise.

ACTFL’s Performance Descriptors (2012) say the most common U.S. secondary model is still two years, with performance in the Novice range.¹⁵⁵ Two years of the *same* language is also the common college ask (see below). Four years is the traditional public-school offering that can reach an AP exam in six of this book’s

¹⁵³Transcript titles: Spanish, French, Italian, German, Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Korean, World Language. NCAA *Home School Toolkit 2025–26* (January 2026) sample: Spanish I, II, III, College Spanish. Worksheet course name must match the transcript.

¹⁵⁴Texas 19 TAC §§ 114.39–114.42: Level I Novice Mid–High through Level IV Intermediate Mid–High. Level I may be elementary, middle, or high school; no prerequisite. Public-school TEKS, not homeschool law.

¹⁵⁵ACTFL *Performance Descriptors* (2012): most common U.S. secondary model is two years, Novice-range performance. *Proficiency Guidelines 2024*: proficiency ≠ rehearsed performance.

s seven languages. Korean has the same four-year *shape* without an AP exam on the opened College Board list.

A six-year-old who is listening and playing is not “behind Spanish I.” New York’s home-instruction Q&A says instruction for a six-year-old need not be on the first-grade level. Placement is by skill. A “grade 4 book” is a publisher’s scope, not a legal grade. When you later put Spanish I on a high-school transcript, you are naming a Carnegie-unit year a stranger can read—not rewriting the child’s birthday.

A heritage speaker at the table still gets an ordinary title. Accelerate by what the child can already do. Four years of Level I as seat-time is not a kindness.

If you want a short performance note — “class performance toward Novice High” — write it only when you can honestly hear it in unrehearsed talk. That is a teacher’s observation, not an ACTFL rating. ACTFL ratings come from ACTFL tests (OPI, WPT, and similar). Kitchen-table self-awards are not those tests.

There is no national diploma

There is no single homeschool diploma in the United States.¹⁵⁶ A Pennsylvania supervisor diploma, a North Carolina homeschool’s own diploma, a Texas parent-issued diploma, and a New York absence of a local diploma are four different objects. Write *your* diploma, if your state uses one. There is no national paper to wait for.

None of Texas, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, or New York requires a world language for homeschool, on the pages this book opened.

Texas does not regulate homeschools. *Leeper* names reading, spelling, grammar, mathematics, and good citizenship—not a language other than English. TEA does not award a homeschool diploma. Transfer into a public school is treated like transfer from an unaccredited private school. North Carolina tests English grammar, reading, spelling, and mathematics, not a world language; the chief administrator designs the transcript. Pennsylvania *permits* foreign languages at secondary “at the

¹⁵⁶No national diploma. TEA: no homeschool diploma; *Leeper* does not name a language other than English. NC DNPE (modified 3 August 2026): test in English grammar, reading, spelling, mathematics. 24 P.S. § 13-1327.1: secondary “may include” foreign languages; graduation is arts-and-humanities. VDOE: parent-written subject list. NYSED Q&A: second language not required; “Credit is given only by schools.”

discretion of the supervisor,” and graduation in grades 9–12 is arts-and-humanities, not language. Virginia asks the parent to write a list of subjects; language is not named as required, and evidence of progress is not a language exam. New York’s Q&A: home-instructed students are not required to take a second language; they may choose to. Home instruction does not earn a local or Regents diploma. Credit is given only by schools. A New York family that wants a stranger to believe Spanish I happened still makes a family transcript.

Read your own statute. Pages move. This book’s access date is 1 September 2026.

The course description: texts, talking, writing, grade, signature

The transcript line is the title. The course description is how a stranger believes the year was a language year, not a vocabulary app.

Keep a one-page description in the folder for every high-school language course. You can draft it in June, or you can keep a running page from September. A tool may draft the template. You read it against the year you actually taught. You sign it.

If the student is in the NCAA Eligibility Center process, the Eligibility Center’s own Core-Course Worksheet is the form that office will accept.¹⁵⁷ Homemade worksheets are not a substitute. Unsigned worksheets are unofficial. The parent or guardian on file signs. There is no preapproved homeschool curriculum. The official worksheet still wants texts, how the grade was built, a short description, and a signature.

Here is a family template you can copy. Change the language. Change the books. Keep the talking and the writing.

Course title: Spanish I

¹⁵⁷NCAA toolkit: official Core-Course Worksheet only; parent/guardian signature; no preapproved curriculum. Dual enrollment: designate as college course; send the college transcript. CLEP, audit, and credit-by-exam are not NCAA core. HSRC 2025–26 Appendix A: first-year write-and-speak; workplace-only and shallow many-language tours not alone sufficient.

Year: 2026–27 (grade 9)

Credit: 1.0

Teacher of record: [parent name], homeschool administrator

Texts and materials used

Name the book, the edition, the audio, and any conversation tutor or co-op hour. If you combined two books, say so. If a practice app sat beside the book, name it as practice, not as the course.

Talking load

The student spoke in Spanish each week: greetings, name, age, simple questions, and short sentences about everyday life. Oral work was part of the grade, not an extra.

Writing load

The student wrote basic information in Spanish —lists, short sentences, then brief paragraphs as the year allowed. Writing was part of the grade.

How the grade was built

Example: spoken work 30%; written work 30%; quizzes and tests 30%; culture and interpretive listening/reading 10%. This is not a grading scale. It is the mix. Name *your* mix.

Grading scale

A = 90–100; B = 80–89; C = 70–79; D = 60–69; F = below 60. (Or your home-school’s scale. If you use numbers, print the letter equivalent.)

Grade awarded: _____ **Credit awarded:** _____

Parent signature: _____ **Date:** _____

NCAA review of a first-year world-language course looks for write-and-speak in the language: greetings, name, age, simple questions, writing basic information, plus some listening, reading, and a little culture. A course whose primary focus is workplace use of a language is not, by itself, enough. A shallow tour of many languages with little depth is not, by itself, enough. A year of mixed-app vocabulary is not Spanish I.

For a later year, say what actually grew: more questions, short paragraphs, unrehearsed sentences. Match the title to the work. Spanish II that is a review of Spanish I is a thin object.

Dual enrollment is a college course.¹⁵⁸ On the homeschool transcript, designate it as the college course (the toolkit sample uses **College Spanish**), name the college and its city and state, and send the official college transcript. It is not “Spanish III” unless the college course was Spanish III.

College as a named ask, not a law

The University of California is a named flagship, not a federal rule and not a homeschool statute. For first-year admission, area E asks for **two years of the same language other than English** (or through the second level of high school instruction).¹⁵⁹ A **third year is recommended**. American Sign Language and classical languages count on that page. Seventh- and eighth-grade work may count if the high school treats it as equivalent. That is UC policy—a common college picture, not “colleges require two years” as a universal sentence.

The Common Data Set asks each participating college to print its own required and recommended units for foreign language. Look up the colleges on this family’s list. Texas public *graduation* also asks for two credits in the same language (with a computer-science alternative on the public diploma). That is a Texas public-school diploma rule, not a homeschool law.

Two years of the same language is a strong default if college is on the table. Three is the UC recommendation. Four is the traditional sequence. Zero is lawful as homeschool in the five states this book opened. Lawful and college-ready are different stacks. Keep them separate.

AP, CLEP, and a test that is gone

Advanced Placement is a College Board program. Credit and placement are college-by-college. A student may sit an AP Exam where College Board and a testing site allow it. Report the exam name and the score if the family sat the exam.

¹⁵⁸NCES 2019-176: dual enrollment is postsecondary credit during high school, excluding AP/IB.

¹⁵⁹UC A-G area E: two years of the same language required; third recommended. UC Quick Reference Guide, August 2026. Common Data Set 2024–25 C5: each college prints its own units. Texas § 74.12(b)(5) (eff. 8/1/2025): Foundation two LOTE credits—public diploma, not homeschool law.

World-language AP courses on the opened AP Central list (1 September 2026):

- AP Chinese Language and Culture
- AP French Language and Culture
- AP German Language and Culture
- AP Italian Language and Culture
- AP Japanese Language and Culture
- AP Latin
- AP Spanish Language and Culture
- AP Spanish Literature and Culture

There is no AP Korean Language and Culture on that list.¹⁶⁰ Korean still has a four-year high-school shape. Use the title **Korean**, and, if you want an outside score, an object that exists (AAPPL, an ACTFL oral and writing test where a state names them, a college placement test). Spanish is the only language in this set with a second AP: Literature and Culture, separate from Language and Culture.

The six Language-and-Culture courses were revised for 2026–27. College Board’s own project rule for those courses: the work must be the student’s. A generated presentation is not the student’s language.

SAT Subject Tests were discontinued in June 2021. They are not a current option. If a student sat one before that date, the score can still appear on an old report unless the student chooses not to send it. New students cannot sit the test. Older state standards that still mention “SAT II” are describing a former world.

CLEP is a college-credit exam. The opened French Language page describes one exam covering Level 1 and Level 2: about 121 questions in 90 minutes, listening and reading; ACE recommends 6 semester hours at score 50 and 9 hours at score 59; the published fee is \$97. Institutions set policy. **CLEP is not an NCAA-approved core course.** A family may still use it for a college’s own credit policy. That is a college object, not a high-school course name and not an athletic core year.

AAPPL is a web-based K–12 assessment of performance toward proficiency. The opened ACTFL page names all seven languages of this book. It is a useful object

¹⁶⁰AP Central, 1 September 2026: Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Spanish Language, Spanish Literature. No AP Korean. Language-and-Culture revisions 2026–27. SAT Subject Tests discontinued June 2021. CLEP French: ~121 questions / 90 minutes; ACE 50/6 hours, 59/9 hours; \$97. AAPPL names all seven languages of this book.

if you want a stranger to believe speaking happened. It is not a course title. It is not NCAA core by itself.

If the student sat an ACTFL OPI or WPT, print the rating the score report prints. Print the date. That is an outside rating. It is not a kitchen-table badge.

NCAA: additional core, not a required year-count

Read this section if the student is in the Eligibility Center process. Skip it if they are not. Athletics paperwork is not a homeschool language law.

Division I, on the public fact sheet dated September 2023 and still live on 1 September 2026, asks for 16 core-course credits:

- 4 years English
- 3 years math (Algebra I or higher)
- 2 years science (including one year of lab, if offered)
- 1 extra year of English, math, or science
- 2 years social science
- **4 additional** from any area already listed, or from additional disciplines: **world language**, comparative religion, or philosophy

World language is named. World language is not a required year-count the way English, math, and science are.¹⁶¹ A student can fill those four additional years with Spanish I–IV. A student can fill them with extra English, extra math, extra science, extra social science, philosophy, or comparative religion, and meet Division I with **zero** language years. Division II uses the same additional-discipline clause with different year-counts in English and math.

A core course, in the toolkit, is one that meets graduation requirements in English, math (Algebra I or higher), science, social science, world language, comparative religion, or philosophy —eligibility of the course as core, not a mandate to take the language. Homeschool, for the Eligibility Center, means a parent, tutor, or umbrella creates the curriculum, instructs, assesses, and awards grades. An online school with online teachers is a different bucket. Proof of graduation: a diploma

¹⁶¹NCAA *Division I Academic Standards* (September 2023, live 1 September 2026): 16 core — English 4, math 3, science 2, extra 1, social science 2, 4 additional (may include world language). Not a required language year-count. Division II: same additional-discipline clause. Hawaii and New York graduation-proof exceptions in the toolkit.

or transcript with month, day, and year, or a state-recognized equivalency. Hawaii and New York: a homeschool-issued diploma is not accepted; the local district or state board must review the record, or an equivalency exam may be used. Read the current toolkit.

Seals are a separate artifact

A Seal of Biliteracy is an award given by a school, a district, or a state.¹⁶² It is not a diploma. It is not NCAA core. It is not a course title. If a state awards one, name the **state**, the year, and the language. There is no national Seal to print.

Virginia's opened Seal page is explicit. The Board of Education's Seal of Biliteracy is a diploma seal awarded with a Board of Education-approved diploma. Diploma seals may be ordered only by a Virginia public-school-division central office. The FAQ: the Seal is **not** available for private-school or homeschool students who do not receive a diploma from a public school. The same page points those students to the Global Seal of Biliteracy.

California's State Seal of Biliteracy is a gold seal on a diploma or transcript. Insignia requests come from a public school, district, county office, or direct-funded charter. The opened FAQ: private-school students cannot qualify. A homeschool-as-such pathway is not named on those pages.

Texas 19 TAC § 74.14 is a **performance acknowledgment for bilingualism and biliteracy** on a public-school transcript—not a state Seal of Biliteracy. TEA does not award a homeschool diploma. A homeschool pathway onto that acknowledgment was not found on the opened TEA pages.

The Global Seal of Biliteracy is a separate credential. Homeschooled students may apply and test as an individual; co-ops may apply as a private or independent school. Levels are named Functional, Working, and Professional Fluency. The credential is described as free; testing cost is not included. It is not a Board diploma seal, not NCAA core, and not a course title. The course is still Spanish or Korean. The seal, if earned, sits beside the year.

¹⁶²SealofBiliteracy.org 2024 *National Report* (SY2022–23): 158,384 awards—not a 2026 census. VDOE Seal FAQ: No for homeschool without a public-school diploma. CDE SSB: public-LEA insignia; private-school students cannot qualify. Texas § 74.14: public-school performance acknowledgment, not a state Seal. Global Seal: individual homeschool application; testing cost not included.

For the student

Your transcript is a short true sentence about your year.

It says the language you actually studied. Spanish. Korean. Mandarin Chinese. It says the level if this was a high-school year: I, II, III, or IV.

It does not say the name of the book. It does not say the name of an app. It does not say you are fluent unless an outside test said so, in writing.

If someone asks what you can do, answer with a sentence you can still say without the book. That unrehearsed sentence is the honest version of the paper.

Help your parent check the title this week. Write it once, in ordinary English, on a slip that goes in the folder.

What to keep

For each high-school language year:

1. Transcript title from the locked list, plus level.
2. Grade, credit, year, grading scale.
3. One-page course description (texts, talking load, writing load, how the grade was built, signature).
4. A few work samples: a spoken note or recording log, a page of writing, a test.
5. Dual-enrollment college transcript, if any.
6. AP score report, if sat.
7. Seal certificate, if a state or the Global Seal actually awarded one —named as a separate artifact.
8. ACTFL or AAPPL score report, if sat.

Elementary and middle-school language can live in the same folder as a skill record. Put Spanish I on the high-school transcript when you are claiming a high-school year. A path through a language is the promise. The folder is how a stranger can see that the path happened.

Chapter 10 —Programs by fit

This chapter names programs this book actually opened, by how they sit at a kitchen table: parent load, grammar-and-talk mix, religious or secular house, high-school-credit shape, and whether a parent who does not speak the language can hear this week’ s wrong turn.

It does not rank them. It does not sell them. No product is a franchise of this book. A duration a publisher names is the publisher’ s claim, not a finding of this book. The transcript still says **Spanish** or **Korean**. The book on the table is work inside the year.

[Illustration: books as objects on a table —a notebook, a kana chart as an object, a hangul syllable block, character practice paper. No logos. No product-pack shots.]

Four questions, asked once

1. **Can you hear a wrong turn?** Look for an answer key, audio, or a teaching video. You do not need to be a speaker of the language. You do need today’ s idea well enough to notice a slip and ask a good question.
2. **What is the credit shape?** Some packages are written as a high-school year. Some are elementary or middle-school introductions. A “grade 4 book” is a publisher’ s scope, not a legal grade. Spanish I is a high-school title you award when the work is a high-school year.
3. **What is the parent load?** A homeschool package with a pacing guide and a key is one load. A free college-novice textbook with authentic media is another: cheaper, more for you to shape. A classroom digital bundle that expects an instructor is a third.

4. **Is a person the real path?** Italian, German, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese are thinner in the dedicated homeschool catalog this book opened. A tutor, a co-op hour, or a college class beside a textbook is an honest fit, not a failure of the shelf.

Combine two honest pieces if that is what you have. Write one title.

Spanish

Breaking the Barrier, Homeschool Spanish. John Conner. The opened home-school page describes a package: student edition, online audio and video, interactive exercises, answer key, pocket dictionary, tests, vocabulary quizzes, and a pacing guide. Levels named on that page: middle-school introductory *¡Vamos!* Beginner “A” and *¡En camino!* Beginner “B” ; high-school Level 1 / Beginner, Level 2 / Intermediate, Level 3 / Advanced. After A and B, the house says students are ready for Level 2. The FAQ says no prior Spanish is needed for *¡Vamos!* or Level 1, and that most parents who use the program do not speak Spanish. Each level is “designed as one full academic year” and “appropriate to list on a homeschool transcript as a full high school credit.”¹⁶³ That credit sentence is the publisher’s. You still write **Spanish I** (or Spanish II, Spanish III). You still sign the grade.

Fit: high-school-shaped; audio and a key so a non-speaker parent has something to hear; more grammar-and-practice than a play-only hour. Use the middle-school A/B books as middle-school work unless you are honestly awarding high-school credit under your state’s rule.

Classical Academic Press, Spanish for Children. Upper-elementary. The house describes the pedagogy of *Latin for Children* plus immersion-style dialogues, grammar, parts of speech, and chants. Primer A is listed for grades 4–6; Primer B for grades 5–7 on the opened series navigation.¹⁶⁴ Fluency language on the page

¹⁶³Breaking the Barrier Homeschool Spanish, <https://tobreak.com/pages/homeschool-spanish>: package contents; levels *¡Vamos!* A, *¡En camino!* B, high-school 1–3; “most parents who use this curriculum don’t speak Spanish” ; each level “designed as one full academic year” and “appropriate to list on a homeschool transcript as a full high school credit.” Homeschool French, <https://tobreak.com/pages/homeschool-french>: Beginner / Intermediate / Advanced; same package shape; authors Catherine Coursaget, Micheline Myer, Rebecca Stanton.

¹⁶⁴Classical Academic Press Spanish for Children series page; French for Children series and Primer A program page: pedagogy of *Latin for Children*; Primer A grades 4–6, Primer B 5–7;

is the house’ s. A grade band is a scope.

Fit: grammar-and-chants for an upper-elementary table; a parent who wants names for forms alongside talk. Transcript, if you later claim a high-school year: **Spanish**, not the series name. Many families use this as the elementary layer and move to a high-school-shaped Level I later.

Trayectos. Free open textbook. First-year Spanish developed by Gabriela Zapata with Texas A&M students, supported by COERLL at the University of Texas at Austin.¹⁶⁵ CC-BY-SA. Two volumes: *Mi vida en la universidad* and *Más sobre mí*, plus authentic digital media. Written for novice learners in a college setting, with the diversity of the Spanish-speaking world in view.

Fit: no purchase price on the opened page; higher parent load, because you are the instructor. College-novice, not a four-year homeschool cycle. Transcript: **Spanish I**.

Destinos, the Annenberg Learner video series, was a historically common homeschool path. The opened Annenberg Learner page on 1 September 2026 states that Annenberg Learner (1981–2026) is **permanently closed**.¹⁶⁶ It is not this year’ s free course. Whether copies remain elsewhere is a question this book does not answer. Choose a live path.

OpenStax, as opened, does **not** publish an introductory Spanish language textbook. OpenStax history texts that discuss Spanish colonial society are not Spanish I. Trayectos is the free Spanish path this book actually opened.

French

Breaking the Barrier, Homeschool French. Catherine Coursaget, Micheline Myer, and Rebecca Stanton —the house describes them as native speakers and

video “40–50 minutes” corresponding to a weekly chapter (French Primer A); streaming “life of the product” for homeschoolers (French Primer A).

¹⁶⁵Trayectos, <https://trayectos.oer.org/>: Gabriela Zapata / Texas A&M; COERLL / UT-Austin, Title VI; CC-BY-SA; two volumes, novice, college-novice OER.

¹⁶⁶Annenberg Learner Destinos series page, opened 1 September 2026: “From 1981 to 2026, Annenberg Learner supported educators...**The program is permanently closed.**” Whether episodes remain elsewhere not established here. OpenStax library as searched: no introductory Spanish language textbook.

classroom teachers. Three levels: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced. Each “represents a full academic year of French” on the opened page. Same package shape as the Spanish homeschool set: online access, student edition, answer key, vocabulary guide, tests, quizzes, pacing guide. The FAQ says no prior French is needed for Level 1, and that most parents do not speak French. Transcript: **French I**, not the brand.

Classical Academic Press, French for Children. Elementary, grades 4 and up; Primer A grades 4–6; Primer B grades 5–7. Grammar, chants, dialogues; student edition, answer key, teaching video, teaching audio. The Primer A program page describes a video lesson of 40–50 minutes corresponding to a weekly chapter. Streaming access for homeschoolers is described as lasting for the life of the product. Transcript: **French**.

Memoria Press, First Start French I. “The perfect introduction to French for students at grade levels 6 through 8,” modeled after *Latina Christiana*.¹⁶⁷ Student book: vocabulary, grammar, translation, practice. Teacher manual: hints, quizzes, answer keys. Pronunciation audio and songs. This is a classical grammar-and-translation path. The opened page names grades 6–8. It does not, on that page, equate I + II with two high-school credits. Transcript: **French**. If you later award French I as a high-school year, the work has to be a high-school year.

Fit across these three: Breaking the Barrier for a high-school-shaped French year with audio; CAP for upper-elementary chants and forms; Memoria for a middle-school classical table. None of them is AP French by itself. AP French Language and Culture is a later, optional College Board exam (Chapter 9).

Italian

Italian is the thinner dedicated-homeschool catalog in this seven-language set. A homeschool-house analogue to Breaking the Barrier was not opened.

Vista Higher Learning, Sentieri, 4th edition (*Attraverso l’ Italia contemporanea*), Julia M. Cozzarelli, ©2024. Twelve units; written for level 1–3 Italian students.¹⁶⁸ Vocabulary and grammar as tools for communication; culture as part

¹⁶⁷Memoria Press First Start French I: grades 6–8; modeled after *Latina Christiana*; student book, teacher manual, pronunciation audio.

¹⁶⁸Vista Higher Learning *Sentieri*, 4th edition, Julia M. Cozzarelli, ©2024: twelve units; level 1–3 Italian; Supersite / WebSAM / Fotoromanzo. No dedicated Italian-for-homeschool house analogue

of the course. ACTFL standards and Can-Do statements are named. Classroom digital bundle: video story, grammar tutorials, Supersite with auto-grading, partner chat, workbook and lab manuals. Student edition in print or as a digital text.

Fit: a real textbook path. Parent load is higher if the digital site expects an instructor. Twelve units and “level 1–3” are the publisher’s map, not a four-year sequence you have to copy. Transcript: **Italian I**, not the title on the spine.

A co-op hour, a conversation tutor, or dual enrollment beside *Sentieri* (or a similar textbook) is an honest Italian path. The transcript still says **Italian**.

German

A dedicated German homeschool package analogue to Breaking the Barrier was not opened.

Deutsch im Blick, COERLL / University of Texas at Austin. Web-based first-year German; open access; no password and no fees on the opened page.¹⁶⁹ Full textbook PDF, 2nd edition, 2017. Companion grammar site: Grimm Grammar. Also on LibreTexts. License named: CC BY-NC-ND 3.0. Ten chapters on the site index.

Fit: free college-novice OER, like Trayectos. You are the instructor. Not a four-year cycle. Transcript: **German I**.

AP German Language and Culture exists as a later optional exam. A tutor or co-op beside this textbook is a real path, not a market you have to size.

Chinese

Write **Chinese** or **Mandarin Chinese** on the transcript. Simplified or traditional characters is a parent choice named once (family, travel, heritage), then kept consistent.

opened.

¹⁶⁹Deutsch im Blick, COERLL / UT Austin, <https://coerll.utexas.edu/dib/index.php>: first-year German OER; textbook PDF 2nd ed. 2017; Grimm Grammar; CC BY-NC-ND 3.0; ten chapters; open access, no fees. No Breaking-the-Barrier-style German homeschool package opened.

Cheng & Tsui, *Integrated Chinese*, 4th edition. The opened house homepage calls it the most popular Chinese language textbook in the United States, now in a new 4th edition.¹⁷⁰ Cheng & Tsui, founded 1979. This is a college-textbook path that many high-school programs also use.

Cheng & Tsui, *Go Far with Chinese Enhanced Edition*. The opened page describes a proficiency-based program “developed from the ground up specifically for middle and high school students,” articulating with *Integrated Chinese*. ACTFL alignment; Novice Low to Intermediate Low; three volumes plus a 1A/1B split; simplified or traditional; a digital course option. The house says selected chapters of *Integrated Chinese* Volumes 3 and 4 are widely used in AP Chinese courses.

Fit: *Go Far* is the middle/high-school-shaped object; *Integrated Chinese* is the college-shaped object that can follow or overlap. Three volumes and a proficiency band are the publisher’s map, not a lesson-count law. Tones are meaning. Pinyin is a map, not a substitute for characters. Transcript: **Chinese** or **Mandarin Chinese**, never the spine.

Reading and writing take more calendar time in Chinese than in Spanish or French. Listening and speaking still go first. That is a calendar caution, not a talent myth, and not a reason to skip the script.

Japanese

GENKI: An Integrated Course in Elementary Japanese, 3rd edition, The Japan Times Publishing. Twenty-three lessons in two volumes (Vol. 1 Lessons 1–12; Vol. 2 Lessons 13–23).¹⁷¹ Conversation and grammar run parallel to reading and writing. Hiragana in Lesson 1, katakana in Lesson 2, kanji from Lesson 3. The publisher’s class assumption is about 200 hours for all 23 lessons. Completion of Volume 1 is described as on par with JLPT N5 or CEFR A1; Volume 2 with N4 or A2. About 1,700 words; 317 kanji. Audio through the house’s app. The FAQ says solo learners should have no difficulty, and that

¹⁷⁰Cheng & Tsui homepage: *Integrated Chinese* 4th edition featured. *Go Far with Chinese Enhanced Edition*: middle and high school; articulates with *Integrated Chinese*; Novice Low to Intermediate Low; three volumes plus 1A/1B; simplified or traditional. *Chinese Made Easy* not extracted as publisher copy this stream.

¹⁷¹GENKI 3rd edition official intro, The Japan Times Publishing: 23 lessons, two volumes; hiragana L1, katakana L2, kanji from L3; ~200 class hours assumed; Vol. 1 ~JLPT N5 / CEFR A1; Vol. 2 N4 / A2; ~1,700 words; 317 kanji; self-study FAQ; high-school use acknowledged.

although GENKI was developed with university students in mind, it is used in U.S. high schools. An answer key and a teacher's guide exist.

Fit: a real textbook path a non-specialist parent can run if the key and the audio are on the table. The 23 lessons and the 200-hour assumption are the publisher's class picture, not a homeschool year-cycle. A family that uses Volume 1 as a high-school year still writes **Japanese I**. JLPT N5 is not an ACTFL rating and not a transcript title. Kana first, conversation from the first lesson —the child is not silent until the chart is done.

AP Japanese Language and Culture exists as a later optional exam.

Korean

Integrated Korean: Beginning 1, Third Edition, Young-mee Cho, Hyo Sang Lee, Carol Schulz, Ho-min Sohn, Sung-Ock Sohn. University of Hawai'i Press / KLEAR.¹⁷² Paperback on the opened page; published July 2019; 248 pages. Performance-based principles named: contextualization, learner-centeredness, authentic materials, a balance of skill-getting and skill-using. Model dialogues, narration, vocabulary, culture, grammar, usage. Workbook in print and online. Audio at the series site. Hangul is taught in Beginning 1. The series is named as five-level textbooks and workbooks.

Fit: a real beginning textbook. Five-level is the series map, not a four-year sequence you have to copy. Transcript: **Korean**, not the series name. Hangul is an alphabet in blocks; teach it early, attached to greetings and names.

There is no AP Korean on the opened College Board list. A four-year high-school shape still applies. Outside scores, if you want them, are objects that exist: AAPPL (Korean is named), ACTFL oral and writing tests where a state names them, a college placement test, a Seal path the state actually offers. Chapter 9 holds those objects.

A co-op or a tutor beside Beginning 1 is an honest path.

¹⁷²*Integrated Korean: Beginning 1*, 3rd ed., Cho, Lee, Schulz, Sohn, Sohn; UH Press / KLEAR, July 2019, ISBN 9780824876197; five-level series named; hangul in Beginning 1; audio at kleartextbook.com.

Practice apps

Duolingo describes bite-sized lessons, points, and levels, and claims to teach reading, writing, listening, and speaking.¹⁷³ That is practice. It is not a high-school credit. A stranger cannot map a streak to Spanish II. NCAA review already sets aside shallow many-language introductions as not enough by themselves. Use an app after the child has a course object—a book, a tutor hour, a co-op—not as the course object.

Other language apps sit in the same class unless you have opened a page that says otherwise. The transcript title remains the language.

Tutors and co-ops

A person who will make the child talk is a real path. It is especially useful when the catalog is thin (Italian, German, Korean, Japanese, Chinese) or when the parent is not a speaker and wants a weekly mouth the audio cannot fully supply.

In 2016, NCES reported that 23 percent of homeschooled students received any instruction from a tutor or private teacher, and 31 percent from a local homeschooling group or co-op.¹⁷⁴ Those are 2016 federal percents, not a 2026 language-tutor census, and not a dollar market. This chapter names the path, not a price.

Law already names the path in places. North Carolina allows tutors, co-ops, and other non-parent instructors inside a homeschool. New York allows a tutor for all or part of the program, and group instruction for particular subjects—not for a majority of the program, which would be a school. Pennsylvania, from 2023–24, requires districts to permit a home-education student to take academic courses up to at least a quarter of the school day, on named conditions; a district Spanish section, if a seat exists, is a local object. Read your statute.

¹⁷³Duolingo homepage: bite-sized lessons, points, levels; not a high-school credit. NCAA HSRC 2025–26 Appendix A: shallow many-language introductions not alone sufficient.

¹⁷⁴NCES 2020-001 (PFI 2016): Table 3, tutor or private teacher 23%, co-op or homeschooling group 31%; Table 9, foreign language taught that year 32% overall / 35% in 9–12; Table 8, ever taught in 9–12, 51%. 2023 First Look did not republish subject-taught tables. NC G.S. 115C-563(a) as restated on DNPE; NYSED Home Instruction Q&A (tutors; group instruction for particular subjects, not a majority); 24 P.S. § 13-1327.1(f.2)–(f.3) district course participation from 2023–24. NCAA *Home School Toolkit* 2025–26 homeschool definition includes parent, tutor, or umbrella. italki / Preply fee tables not opened; no market size invented.

NCAA already names the tutor: homeschool includes a parent, tutor, or umbrella who creates, instructs, assesses, and awards grades. A tutor-taught Spanish I can be core if the worksheets and the transcript match. An online school with online teachers is a different bucket.

Keep a short record of the hour: date, language, what was said, not a brand. The transcript title remains **Spanish** or **Korean**. The tutor is not the course name.

A heritage speaker at the table is a conversation partner who lives in the house. This book has no heritage-homeschool rate to print. The title is still ordinary. Proficiency evidence, if you want a stranger to believe production, is a separate artifact (Chapter 9).

Autonomous AI, in this book, is a parent-hosted supplement. It is not a native speaker, not a hired tutor, and not a substitute for the child's mouth. A fluent model turn is not the child's knowledge.

Combining honestly

You may use a chant-and-grammar elementary book, then a high-school-shaped Level I, then a college-novice OER, then a conversation tutor. That is one language if the hours include ears and mouth.

Write **Spanish**. Write **French**. Write **Korean**.¹⁷⁵

If you add a second language, add it after the first has a mouth, not as two shallow lists that split a thin hour. Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour.

A high-school language *sequence* is something you build. Among homeschoolers in 2016, foreign language taught *that year* was 32 percent overall and 35 percent in grades 9–12; “ever taught” in 9–12 was 51 percent. Those figures are not a scold. They are permission to treat Spanish I–II as a real construction, not as something “everyone already did.”

¹⁷⁵Transcript titles remain Spanish, French, Italian, German, Chinese, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Korean, World Language (Chapter 9). Combine honestly; the title does not become the spine.

Other languages

This book teaches seven languages. The hour does not change for an eighth.

Ears first, then the mouth, then the page. A few useful phrases, said for real. The student talks; you ask one good question and wait. The transcript uses an ordinary English name a stranger can read, or **World Language**. The same folder holds texts, talking load, writing load, grade, and signature (Chapter 9). A tutor or a college class is a path. An app is practice. There is still no national diploma, and NCAA world language is still additional core, not a required year-count.

Then teach this week's phrase.

What “enough shelf” looks like

You have named one language. You have named a live book or a live person for this year. You know whether this year is elementary play, a middle-school introduction, or a high-school credit you will write as Level I. The answer key or the audio is where you can reach it. The transcript line is already written in ordinary English.

If the catalog is thin, you have named a tutor, a co-op, or a college section without waiting for a homeschool-house package this book did not open.

That is enough shelf. The hour is still the work.

A Note on Sources

Studies named in the chapters are listed in Notes, in one series at the back. That is where the full citations live, so the teaching pages can stay a teaching voice.

Some items the research behind this book did not open stay out of the teaching voice. I did not invent a coefficient, a statute, or a product feature to fill a hole. If a study is in the chapter, it is in the notes. If we could not open it, it is not used as a finding here.

Program prices and credit claims in the resources chapter are taken from the companies' own pages. Access date 1 September 2026.