

introverted *mom abroad*

The *Not Fluent Yet* Kit

1 real interaction a week. That's the whole plan.

For the mom who rehearses the coffee order 14 times before saying it out loud.

12 weeks of small brave conversations, word-for-word scripts, panic phrases, and permission to be bad at this while you get better.

Why 1 interaction *a week*?

Because every conversation you avoid keeps your world small. I know, because I'm the one pointing at the pastry, using Google Translate, and letting my 10-year-old talk to the pharmacist. The move was the easy part. Belonging is the work.

Fluency is not the goal of this kit. **Participation is.** You can live a whole life abroad at fluency level "still loading." You cannot live one at participation level zero.

1 1 per week. Small counts.

A 2-line exchange at the bakery is a rep. You are not training for debate club. You are training your nervous system to survive being a beginner in public.

2 Rehearsing is allowed. 2 times, max.

We're introverts, not martyrs. Run the script 2 times in your head, then go. The 15th rehearsal was never about preparation anyway. It was about postponing.

3 Your kids can watch. They cannot talk for you.

They translate everything else, and bless them for it. This one is yours. Let them see you be brave and bad at something at the same time.

4 A failed interaction still counts.

You said words. A human answered. The rep is complete. See the recovery rules near the end for what to do with the cringe.

5 Not in Spain? Same ladder, your language.

The 12 weeks work anywhere. Swap my Spanish scripts for the local version and go.

Weeks 1 to 6: *warm up.*

1
WEEK

LEVEL: YOU'VE GOT THIS

Greet 1 person you already see every day

The school gate parent. The café owner. The neighbor. "Buenos días" with eye contact. That's the whole assignment. You're teaching your face to be seen.

2
WEEK

LEVEL: DEEP BREATH

Order your coffee without pointing

Full sentence, out loud, no finger aimed at the menu. Script on page 5. If you rehearse it 14 times, I will know.

3
WEEK

LEVEL: DEEP BREATH

Ask a shop worker where something is

Even if you already know where it is. Especially if you already know. This week is about asking a stranger a question on purpose.

4
WEEK

LEVEL: MILD SWEAT

Buy something at the market and ask for it by name

A kilo of tomatoes, spoken like a person who buys tomatoes here. Bonus: let them pick the good ones for you. Locals love being the expert.

5
WEEK

LEVEL: MILD SWEAT

The pharmacy run

Ask for something for a cold, for you or the kids, without showing them your phone screen. Script on page 6. Pharmacists abroad are secretly the kindest language teachers alive.

6
WEEK

LEVEL: BRAVE

Ask for a recommendation

"¿Qué me recomienda?" at the café, the market, anywhere. You're not just transacting anymore. You're inviting an opinion, which means inviting a conversation.

Weeks 7 to 12: *the real ones.*

7
WEEK

LEVEL: BRAVE

1 question to another parent at the school gate

Introduce yourself first. Script on page 7. Yes, this one is scarier than the pharmacy. The pharmacist is paid to be nice. This is a volunteer.

8
WEEK

LEVEL: BRAVE

The phone-free errand

1 full errand with Google Translate staying in your pocket. Gestures allowed. Panic phrases allowed. The crutch stays holstered.

9
WEEK

LEVEL: SWEATY BUT PROUD

Talk to a neighbor about something real

The trash schedule, the package, the noise, anything true. Neighbors are the beginning of belonging. One of them will become your person. It starts here.

10
WEEK

LEVEL: BOSS LEVEL

Make a phone call

Book an appointment by phone. No faces, no gestures, no subtitles. This is the introvert final exam and you are allowed to write the script on your hand first.

11
WEEK

LEVEL: BOSS LEVEL

The appointment, solo

Doctor, dentist, town hall, whatever week 10 booked. Kids may come, kids stay quiet. You've been training for this for 10 weeks. You will understand more than you expect.

12
WEEK

LEVEL: WHO EVEN ARE YOU

A conversation for its own sake

2 minutes of talk with no transaction attached. The weather, the kids, the neighborhood. This is the week you stop surviving interactions and start having them.

The scripts: *daily life.*

1 · The coffee order

Week 2. Walk in. Breathe. You know this one.

YOU

Hola, un café con leche, por favor.

Hi, a coffee with milk, please.

THEM

¿Algo más?

Anything else?

YOU

No, nada más. Gracias.

No, nothing else. Thanks.

If it goes sideways: "¿Para tomar aquí o para llevar?" means "for here or to go." Say "para llevar" (to go) or "para aquí" (for here). You survived.

2 · Where is the...?

Week 3. Any shop or supermarket.

YOU

Perdona, ¿dónde está la leche?

Excuse me, where is the milk?

THEM

Al fondo, a la derecha.

At the back, on the right.

YOU

Vale, gracias.

Okay, thanks.

If it goes sideways: they point. Pointing is a universal language and it means you won. Follow the finger, say "gracias."

The market and *the pharmacy*.

3 · The market

Weeks 4 and 6. Fruit stall, fish counter, wherever.

YOU

Hola, ¿me pone un kilo de tomates?

Hi, can I get a kilo of tomatoes?

THEM

¿Algo más?

Anything else?

YOU

Sí, dos aguacates. ¿Cuáles me recomienda?

Yes, 2 avocados. Which ones do you recommend?

Why the question matters: asking for their pick turns a transaction into a tiny relationship. Market vendors remember the mom who asked.

4 · The pharmacy

Week 5. The kindest counter in town.

YOU

Hola, ¿tiene algo para el resfriado?

Hi, do you have something for a cold?

THEM

¿Es para usted o para un niño?

Is it for you or for a child?

YOU

Para mi hija. Tiene nueve años.

For my daughter. She's 9.

If it goes sideways: "¿Tiene fiebre?" means "does she have a fever." "Sí, un poco" or "No, no tiene." 2 words either way and you're through.

The school gate and *the phone call*.

5 · The school gate

Week 7. *The volunteer, not the professional.*

YOU

Hola, soy Erica, la madre de Elyse. ¿Tu hija está en la misma clase?

Hi, I'm Erica, Elyse's mom. Is your daughter in the same class?

THEM

¡Sí! Con la señorita Carmen.

Yes! With Miss Carmen.

YOU

Ah, qué bien. Mi hija habla mucho de ella.

Oh, nice. My daughter talks about her a lot.

Introvert escape hatch: "Bueno, ¡hasta mañana!" (well, see you tomorrow!) ends any school gate conversation politely, at any moment, forever.

6 · The phone call

Week 10. *Boss level. Script on your hand is legal.*

YOU

Hola, quería pedir cita para mi hija, por favor.

Hi, I'd like to book an appointment for my daughter, please.

THEM

¿Qué día le viene bien?

What day works for you?

YOU

El martes por la mañana, si es posible.

Tuesday morning, if possible.

If they speak fast: deploy the panic phrases on page 10. On the phone, "más despacio, por favor" is not rude. It's efficient.

Neighbors, doctors, *and small talk.*

7 · The neighbor

Week 9. Belonging starts in the stairwell.

YOU

Hola, soy tu vecina. ¿Sabes qué día pasa el camión de la basura?

Hi, I'm your neighbor. Do you know what day the garbage truck comes?

The move: any true small question works. Neighbors answer, then they ask where you're from, and that conversation carries itself.

8 · The doctor

Week 11. You booked it yourself. Walk in tall.

YOU

Le duele la garganta desde hace tres días.

Her throat has hurt for 3 days.

THEM

¿Tiene fiebre?

Does she have a fever?

YOU

Sí, ayer tenía treinta y ocho.

Yes, yesterday it was 38.

Prep trick: write the symptoms and dates on paper before you go. Handing over notes is not cheating. Doctors love notes.

Small talk and *the magic sentence*.

9 · Small talk, the starter kit

Week 12. No transaction. Just talk.

YOU

¡Qué calor hace hoy!

It's so hot today!

YOU

¿Tú también tienes niños en el cole?

Do you have kids at the school too?

Truth: weather complaints are the most fluent thing a person can do in Spain. Master this and you're basically local.

10 · The magic sentence (works everywhere, forever)

YOU

Perdona, estoy aprendiendo español.

Sorry, I'm learning Spanish.

What happens next: faces soften. Speech slows. Someone compliments you. Nobody has ever said this sentence and regretted it.

Panic phrases, for when they *answer too fast*.

Print these in your brain. They are not admissions of failure. They are the sound of a person still in the conversation.

Más espacio, por favor.

Slower, please. · The workhorse. Use it without shame.

¿Puede repetirlo?

Can you repeat that? · Buys you a full 2nd listen.

¿Cómo se dice...?

How do you say...? · Point at the thing. Locals finish the sentence for you, delighted.

¿Me lo puede escribir?

Can you write it down for me? · Numbers, names, addresses. Paper doesn't mumble.

Un momento, por favor.

A moment, please. · Freezes time while your brain buffers. Legal in all countries.

Mi español está cargando todavía.

My Spanish is still loading. · The nuclear option. Say it with a smile. Watch them become your ally.

Recovery rules, because sometimes *it goes badly*.

You will blank mid-sentence. You will say something weird. Someone will switch to English out of mercy and it will sting. Here's what to do with that.

- **A failed interaction is a completed rep.**

The goal was never a perfect sentence. The goal was you, out loud, in public, being a beginner. That happened. The rep counts.

- **The cashier has already forgotten you.**

You will replay the moment for 3 days. She lost it in 90 seconds. Nobody is grading your grammar. Nobody is thinking about you. This is the good news.

- **Collect 1 word.**

Even from the worst exchange, keep 1 word you understood or learned. Write it in the tracker. That's not a consolation prize. That's literally how a language gets built.

- **Skip a week. Don't quit the ladder.**

You're a mom abroad running a whole household in hard mode. Tired weeks happen. Pause the challenge. Just come back to the same rung, not the bottom.

- **Tell your kids about the fail at dinner.**

They're learning out loud all day at school. Show them you do it too. "Mommy messed up her Spanish today and survived" might be the most useful sentence they hear all year.

- **If they switch to English, finish in Spanish anyway.**

They're being kind, not judging you. Answer their English with your Spanish, smile, and both of you get to practice being generous.

YOUR RECEIPTS

The tracker *(your kids can't fill this out for you)*

WK	WHAT I DID	SCARED (1 TO 5)	1 WORD I KEPT	DID IT
1				<input type="checkbox"/>
2				<input type="checkbox"/>
3				<input type="checkbox"/>
4				<input type="checkbox"/>
5				<input type="checkbox"/>
6				<input type="checkbox"/>
7				<input type="checkbox"/>
8				<input type="checkbox"/>
9				<input type="checkbox"/>
10				<input type="checkbox"/>
11				<input type="checkbox"/>
12				<input type="checkbox"/>

We're figuring *this out*.

I'm doing this challenge too, 1 terrifying rung at a time, and posting how it actually goes. Come watch, laugh, and tell me which week wrecked you.

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