



Public Service Human Resources
Management Agency of Canada

Agence de gestion des ressources humaines
de la fonction publique du Canada

Tips for Maintaining your New Language Skills

*Official Languages...
it's a matter of respect*

www.hrma-agrh.gc.ca/ollo

Canada

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English and French are the official languages of Canada. Canada is not the only country in the world with two official languages. What distinguishes us from other countries is the path followed in adopting bilingualism. This typically Canadian approach, set out in the Official Languages Act, testifies to our attachment to the fundamental values that have marked and continue to mark Canada's development and history, and our desire to truly reflect them in our public life.

Congratulations!

You've done it! You've worked hard and you can now communicate in both of Canada's official languages.

But now what? You've invested a lot of time and effort to learn a new language. Make a commitment to maintain and grow that investment by practising regularly. As the saying goes, "Use it or lose it."

We know it's not easy—especially if you're in a unilingual environment and have to make special efforts to use your new language on the job. And it might feel awkward and time-consuming at first. But the longer you put off practising, the tougher it is to start.

Here are some tips to get you started.



At Work

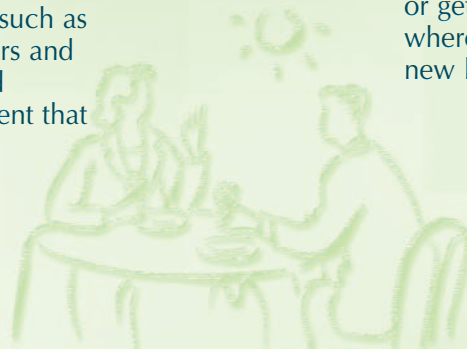
- ▶ Use your new language with people who speak that language, starting with simple conversations if you're uncomfortable. You may find that native speakers of your new language respond in your first language. Explain that you need to practise and would appreciate their help.
- ▶ Read departmental messages and consult Web sites in your new language.
- ▶ Write a memo or other documents in your new language. Web resources to help with grammar and vocabulary include www.wordwizards.gc.ca and <http://termiuplus.translationbureau.gc.ca>.
- ▶ Compose and send bilingual e-mails. Ask for feedback on grammar from recipients who speak the new language.



- ▶ Develop and deliver your next presentation in a bilingual format. Do a trial run with a colleague who is fluently bilingual.
- ▶ Change the voice mail message on your telephone and use a detailed bilingual message.
- ▶ Find a language buddy—someone who speaks your new language or a fellow learner in your department or elsewhere. Together, agree to communicate only in this new language and to do so regularly—in person, on the telephone, and by e-mail.

If your department does not have resources for language retention such as e-buddy systems to match learners and mentors, Web sites, tool kits, and references, propose to management that these resources be put in place.

- ▶ When you enroll in your next professional development course, consider selecting a session given in your new language.
- ▶ Organize a weekly lunchtime discussion group or ongoing conversation class in your new language. Enlist a colleague speaking your new language as a facilitator or see if your manager will pay for an instructor.
- ▶ If you're really adventurous and your personal situation allows it, seek out a short-term assignment in a region where the new language predominates or get involved in a project in your unit where the work is mostly done in your new language.



Getting to Work

- ▶ The daily commute offers many possibilities. You could listen to the radio or a book on tape or CD in your new language while driving. If you're a passenger, read a book, newspaper, or magazine in that language or try some word games.

At home

- ▶ Watch the news in your new language.
- ▶ Subscribe to a news magazine or read news on-line in that language.
- ▶ Watch a movie in your new language. Movies in DVD format often offer viewing choices in different languages. You can also watch a translated version of a movie you really liked.

- ▶ Look for local cultural events in your new language. Many communities have a vibrant cultural scene in that language.
- ▶ Surf Web pages in your new language.
- ▶ Pursue your hobbies in your new language by looking at books, magazines, and Web sites on subjects that are of interest to you.
- ▶ Set up a social group, with monthly activities like reading and discussing a book, going to or renting a movie, or attending a cultural event in your new language. If possible, include in the group some native speakers of the new language.





- ▶ Plan a vacation to an area where your new language is predominantly spoken. Choose a guide that speaks this language.
- ▶ If your kids are in language immersion, here are some suggestions: help them with their homework; pick one day a week to speak the new language in the house; take the family to the library or bookstore and let everyone pick out a book or magazine in that language; or find a television channel in the new language and watch it one night a week.
- ▶ Check out your local university, college, or school for specialized courses in your new language.

You will find examples of good practices on language retention at the following address:
http://www.hrma-agrh.gc.ca/ollo/bp/index_e.asp.

