


MARCH



03

THIS MONTH

EXCEED YOUR EXPECTATIONS
& IMPROVE YOUR SPEAKING
THROUGH PREPARATION



**With lack of progress,
it's easy to lose
confidence and lower
your expectations.**

Welcome back to the Inner Circle, listeners.

Last time, you learned all about failure, and how and why language learners fail before they even get started. You learned about the one mistake they make when they're trying to bounce back. And about how you can effectively bounce back despite failing.

With lack of progress, it's easy to lose confidence and lower your expectations, right? I know I had low expectations of learning Spanish at this point. January's progress was non-existent. I had failed my February goal.

I wasn't expecting much for this month either. However, I did secure a Spanish Skype tutor to help me reach my 1-minute goal of Spanish conversation. The results?

I blew my expectations out of the water and hit 3 minutes. This is not a miracle success story. It's a small win. **And it was all done with preparation.** That's right, preparation allowed me to speak more Spanish and exceed my original goal.

So, in this inner circle, you're going to learn...

1

Why you should prepare for conversations ahead of time

2

How preparation got me speaking more Spanish

3

How you can prepare for conversations in your target language

EYE OF THE TIGER, BABY!



To be honest, even March was looking bleak at first.

The Spanish Skype tutor I wanted to reserve – she was the highest rated one – was booked for the first two weeks. I'd need to wait. That's two weeks of lost progress.

And I didn't want to waste time. If I can't learn Spanish one way, I'll learn it another way in the mean time. Any progress is good progress.

So I turned to SpanishPod101 lessons to prepare for the upcoming Skype lessons. More specifically, the Top 25 Questions You Need to Know series. **Why this series exactly?** Put simply, because you learn the top questions and answers used in most conversations.

Top 25 Spanish Questions You Need to Know



**ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU MEET SOMEBODY NEW.
QUESTIONS LIKE:**



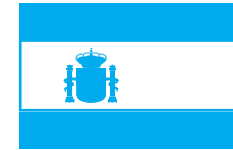
What's your name?



Where are you from?



How old are you?



Can you speak (target language)?

And so on. I knew these would be perfect preparation for starting my Skype lessons. Just as with any new person, we'd run through these questions. I spent the first two weeks, about 30 minutes a day on 2 lessons, and mastered these questions.

I listened to the lessons. I repeated out loud. I reviewed the line-by-line. I wrote down my own answers. And for review, (there's no mastery without repetition and review) I re-listened to the lessons again and again while I was commuting.

Sounds good, right? But how did this help me speak better Spanish if I haven't had the chance yet to speak yet?

Let's get into the first point and into my actual Skype lessons.



Why you should prepare for conversations ahead of time.

HONESTLY, I EVEN HAD LOW EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SKYPE LESSON.
It took me two weeks to get a hold of her. The lesson itself started at 11PM.

The only Spanish I had spoken was by repeating SpanishPod101 lesson dialogues.

However, my Skype tutor was prepared.

We dove right into the basics. Spanish numbers, days of the week, months, basic grammar. And believe it or not, it was too easy.

Since I studied Italian last year, a lot of the grammar and words were incredibly similar. She actually didn't believe that this was my first lesson and kicked the lesson up a notch. We went into pure Spanish conversation.

And this is where preparation paid off.

You'd think that you can't prepare for conversations, right? They're spontaneous, improvised and highly fluid. And you're not wrong.

But, imagine meeting someone for the first time. Both of you will go through some common questions. The very same questions that I reviewed in the Top 25 Questions series.

After we ran through her lesson material, I just switched over and asked my Skype tutor where she was from. Since she's from Spain, I looked her hometown up

on Expedia, in a window next to Skype, and asked basic questions about restaurants and landmarks in that area. Again, all easily learned from those very same Top 25 lessons.

So what happened here? I had more to talk about. I knew what to talk about. And the conversation kept going whereas it'd sputter and die for most beginners.

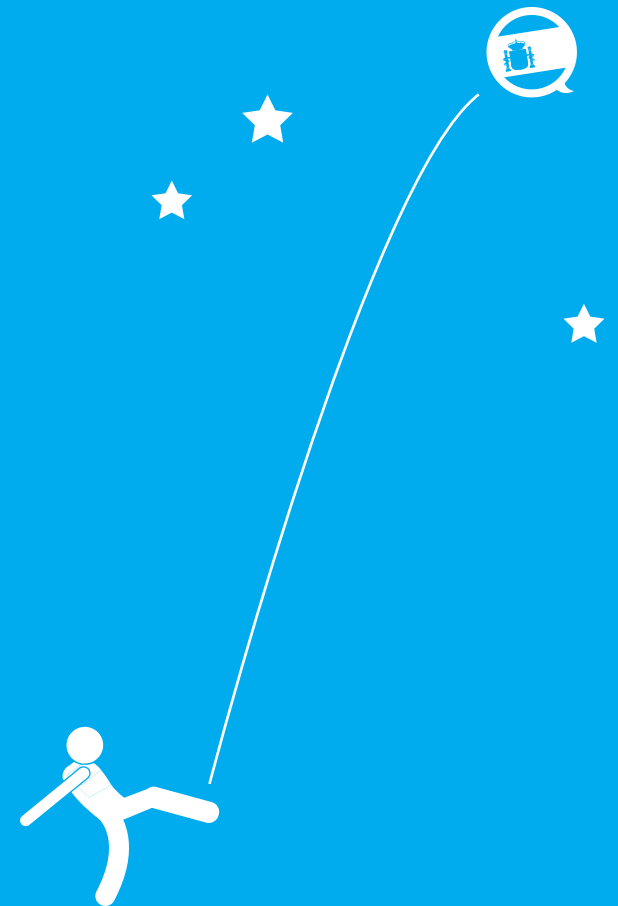
So, by actually preparing for a conversation, you:

- > Have a list of talking points
- > After one topic is done, you know what you can talk about next
- > You don't run out of material as most beginners do
- > You extend your speaking time, and overall, improve your Spanish

How did I reach 3 minutes of conversation exactly?

Let's get into the second point.

She actually didn't believe that this was my first lesson and kicked the lesson up a notch. We went into pure Spanish conversation.



2

How my preparation got me speaking more Spanish

ONCE WE SWITCHED OVER TO SPANISH CONVERSATION, I'LL ADMIT I CHEATED A LITTLE.

I had the entire curriculum for SpanishPod101's Top 25 Questions Series on the side of my screen. If you didn't already know, every lesson series on our 101 sites comes with a feature called "Explore Curriculum."

This shows all the dialogues, lines, grammar points and vocab from the entire series on one page. You can find it for any lesson series by clicking on "Explore Curriculum" on the series' page.

Why's it so great and why did I use it?

It's an instant snapshot review of the entire series. I had all of the 25 questions, answers and more available for easy reference. So, as I mentioned earlier, I chose the question *"Where are you from?"*

We talked about my tutor's hometown. She asked me the same question as well, and having already prepared the answer, I told her I live in Tokyo. All in Spanish.

She wasn't just talking "at" me, as most teachers do with students.

We were actually going back and forth – kind of like a real conversation.

Once a question was used up, I'd check the curriculum and go with another question. Since we talked about her hometown and the restaurants there, I asked her if she liked Spanish food. That's another question from the Top 25 Question series.

Before I knew it, it was midnight. Our conversation was up to 3 minutes! All because I had prepared with the Top 25 Question Series.

OUR CONVERSATION WAS UP TO 3 MINUTES!

All because I had prepared with the Top 25 Question Series.



[Explore Curriculum](#)

IN SHORT, BY PREPARING:



**I built up a solid supply of things
and topics to talk about**



**I had questions and answers
I could instantly use**



**I extended the conversation
and my speaking time by moving
onto other topics**

This made speaking Spanish a lot easier. I knew what I had to say. I was able to answer her questions. And I was blown away because I had low expectations for my Spanish abilities before the lesson. For the first two months, I hadn't made any progress.

So, what about you?



How you can prepare for conversations in your target language

THE MOST IMPORTANT TAKEAWAY IS: **PREPARE FOR CONVERSATIONS.**

Most learners think that conversations are unplanned and spontaneous, and while that may be true to an extent, if you're not prepared, **you'll run out of things to say.**

This is a very common mistake beginner learners make.

They run out of words and the native speaker quickly realizes that they're dealing with a beginner. And that's it. Conversation over.

Also, realize that there are questions and phrases that you use on a daily basis. It's good to know them ahead of time. When you meet someone new, you'll always ask things like...

- > **What's your name?**
- > **How old are you?**
- > **How long have you been studying for?**

Now that you know how important preparing is...

A. CHECK OUT THE TOP 25 QUESTIONS YOU MUST KNOW LESSON SERIES.

You'll learn the most common questions and answers used in conversations.

Just listen to the lessons. Repeat out loud. Then, put what you learn to use. These will serve as talking points so you can keep your conversations going.

B. PRINT OUT THE CURRICULUM SO YOU CAN REVIEW ALL THE LESSONS AT ONCE

You can find it for any lesson series by clicking on "Explore Curriculum" on the series' page. This will give you a quick snapshot of what questions, answers and talking points you'd want to use. That way, you can easily keep going.

C. SEARCH FOR YOUR TOPICS OF INTEREST IN OUR LESSONS.

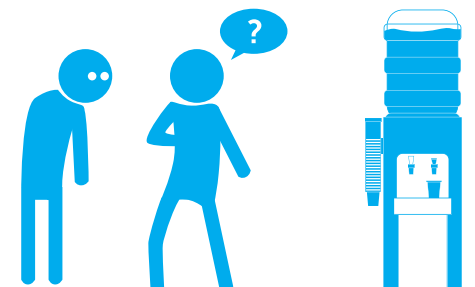
If you'd like to prepare your own talking points – sports, holidays, food or anything you're interested in – search for them on our site and listen to the relevant lessons. Chances are there's a lesson, and you'll learn about that topic while learning your target language.

D. PREPARE A LIST OF YOUR OWN TOPICS AND QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS YOU'D WANT TO ASK.

What do you like talking about? What would you want to ask someone? Prepare a list of topics, questions and answers to each question. Then, translate them into your target language, manually or with Google Translate. Don't worry about perfection. You can correct them later.

E. IF YOU'RE A PREMIUM PLUS USER, TALK TO YOUR PREMIUM PLUS TEACHER

Have a list of questions and answers that you'd like translated? Or better yet, want to start practicing with a teacher? With Premium PLUS, you get started right away. Put your language to use and your teacher will correct you along the way. They will help you prepare guaranteed lines that will work in any conversation.



In fact, I'll be practicing with my Premium PLUS teacher at SpanishPod101 next month.

And what's my monthly goal for April?

I'll be aiming for 5 minutes of Spanish conversation. Although the first two months of 2015 were rough, reaching 3 minutes definitely rekindled my motivation. In fact, my biggest motivation now is to impress my Skype tutor with more progress!

How about you?

What's your monthly goal? Be sure to set it and stick to it. Also, let me know – do you prepare for conversations ahead of time? Do you note down talking points that you'd want to talk about in your target language? And has it helped you improve your speaking skills?

Shoot me an email at inner.circle@innovativelanguage.com.

To your fluency,
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Do you prepare for conversations ahead of time?

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