

Plateaus Main Text

Hello, this is AJ, welcome to the next lesson. This one is called “Plateaus.”

Now this is a subject we’ve talked about a little bit, but I want to talk more about it, this idea of plateaus. A plateau is a flat area that usually is kind of up on top of a mountain. So, for example, you go up a big hill and you’re going up, up, up and then suddenly it’s flat and it’s a big long flat area that’s kind of high up.

Now a plateau in learning is something that all of you have experienced. Because it’s normal when we learn that we learn a lot suddenly and then we have a plateau, a flat spot. It feels like we’re not learning, right? We’re studying, we’re studying, we’re studying, but we feel like we’re not improving.

And that happens for a while and then suddenly, boom, we go up again. We start learning fast, fast, fast and then another plateau, right? We’re trying to learn and we’re studying and we’re studying, but nothing seems to be happening, another flat part. And then, boom, we go up again and we start learning very fast.

And that’s the normal process of learning. We have these times where we seem to be improving very quickly and then we have plateaus where everything feels flat. It feels like nothing’s happening. Even though we may be working very hard, we may be studying very hard, but it feels like nothing’s happening.

This happens in sports a lot. So if you’re a runner and you’re training to run a race, well when you first start to run, of course you improve very quickly. We always feel like we’re improving fastest in the beginning when we’re just starting. Because we know nothing so, of course, any improvement feels very big.

But then, later, we start getting to an intermediate level and we hit a plateau, a flat area. It feels like nothing’s happening, so we keep trying. We’re trying and we’re trying, but it feels like nothing is happening.

But if we’re patient, if we keep practicing and we keep studying then, boom, we will have another fast period of growing and improving. And, again, this happens in sports, it happens in language in language learning, it happens in all kinds of learning.

And a man named George Leonard wrote about this experience in his book *Mastery*, so the book is *Mastery* and the writer, George Leonard. And I've mentioned him before, but I'm going to read a section again. And I want to talk about this again because plateaus can be very frustrating. It's one of the difficult things that most English students -- and, really, most students for any subject -- encounter because it can be frustrating, it can make you feel like you're, you know, not improving. It can hurt your motivation.

So you need to be ready for plateaus. You need to know how to solve this problem: How should you feel when you have a plateau in your English learning. Because a lot of people get frustrated and then they quit and so they never become masters, they never have English mastery, they never speak excellent English.

So it's a very important topic and I want to talk about it some more, so let me read a little more from *Mastery* by George Leonard and then I will talk more about this topic. Here we go.

"In preparing an Esquire Magazine special on the topic of 'Mastery' I decided to see if I could find a series of pictures that would illustrate the idea of mastery. So I went through hundreds of pictures from major photo agencies and there, scattered among the usual thrill of victory, agony of defeat shots, was just what I was looking for, pictures of athletes that showed the idea of mastery.

"For example, Stephen Scott making the last turn in a mile race. His face serene, his body relaxed. Or, Greg Louganis at the edge of the diving board, his face in calm concentration. Or, Peter Vidmar doing floor exercises, his body in an impossibly strenuous position, his face composed. Or, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar launching his sky-hook basketball shot over the head of an opposing player, his face a picture of inner delight. Now, Abdul-Jabbar is not a man of small ego and I'm sure he loved the money, the fame and the privileges his career brought him, but he loved the sky-hook more.

"Goals, as I have said, are important, but they exist in the future and in the past, beyond the senses. Practice, the path of mastery, exists only in the present. You can see it, hear it, smell it, feel it. To love the plateaus is to love the eternal now, to enjoy the inevitable spurts of progress and the fruits of accomplishment then serenely accept the next plateau that waits just beyond them. To love the plateau is to love what is most essential and enduring in your life."

Okay, very interesting. So that's plateaus by George Leonard from his book *Mastery*. And what he's saying is that it's fun to have a big spurt of learning, right, to learn something very quickly, but we must also learn to enjoy the plateaus. It's good to have goals, but we have to learn to enjoy the plateaus. We have to learn to enjoy the times when we're just studying, just practicing and we feel like we're not improving...we're not improving quickly.

Now some people get frustrated during those times. If you get frustrated eventually you will quit. You just won't learn fast. Because actually, during plateaus research has shown -- during these plateaus -- you are actually learning very quickly. Your brain is learning so much...so much new information, but your brain is not ready to show it yet.

Inside your brain many new connections are happening. You're actually learning very, very quickly, but it's happening subconsciously. During the plateaus you are learning subconsciously. So you can't really talk about what you've learned and maybe you can't use it yet.

So, for example, with English, during a plateau you feel like you're not learning, but if you're listening and listening and listening, actually you are learning. Subconsciously your brain is understanding the grammar more and more, your brain is understanding more and more vocabulary, your brain is learning better and better pronunciation, but there's a gap. There's a delay between understanding and using.

So, for example, your listening will be improving very fast, but your speaking... nothing's happening. You feel like nothing's happening. "I still can't speak well" and you get frustrated. This happens with a lot of students, but the problem is they give up or they go back and they start to use old methods and they try to force themselves to speak and that only makes you learn more slowly.

You have to trust the plateaus. If you use the correct methods, if you follow the Effortless English System and you listen and you listen and you listen and you read, read, read, subconsciously you will be learning very quickly. You'll be understanding more and more and more, but there will be a gap. There will be a delay between your subconscious learning and then your speaking improvement.

That's why we have a six-month guarantee, not a one-month guarantee. Because it takes about six months for all of this subconscious learning to suddenly, boom, create better speech. It will happen automatically, it will happen effortlessly. The speaking part happens automatically, you don't need to worry about it. So it's very important to enjoy the process.

That's what George Leonard is talking about. You must enjoy the process of learning, not just the final goal. We've talked about having very strong, powerful goals, that's very important. It's equally important to enjoy the process of learning. Because if you have a great goal, but you hate the process, if you just hate studying, you hate listening, you're not going to succeed, you'll quit.

Every day you have to just love listening to English. You have to enjoy the process every day, every minute. That's why you change your physiology. That's why I give you interesting topics. Not just boring dialogues, not just boring textbook stuff, I'm trying to give you ideas and information that will be useful and interesting to you.

Why? So you will enjoy the process of learning English. So you will focus on the content, so you will focus on the information, not on learning the language because learning the language happens automatically. If you listen, if you follow our system, you will learn English automatically, you will speak better automatically.

So my job, as the teacher, is to make the process as interesting and fun and enjoyable as possible for you. That's why I yell and scream. That's why I have these crazy stories. That's why I pick topics that are meaningful that will help your life, not just your English. Because I know the more you find the content interesting, the more interesting and useful the topics are funnier, more crazy or loud or entertaining the stories are, the more you will enjoy the process of learning. You'll want to listen just because it's fun, just because it's interesting.

So that's what you must do, you must find English that's fun and interesting or useful to you. You've got to enjoy it every day. You must be smiling as you listen to English, as you read English. That's what George Leonard is talking about, enjoying the plateaus, enjoying the process of your life. Not just learning English, everything you do you've got to learn to enjoy the process because right now this is your life. Not in the future, not in the past, right now, this is your life.

So you should be smiling now, you should be standing tall now. You should be breathing deeply now, you should be enjoying yourself now. You should be interested now, you should be excited now. You should be moving your body now, now is when the learning happens.

Okay. Well I hope you are enjoying this process step by step with effortless English. And I hope when you go and you find reading material that you're finding interesting reading materials, fun, easy novels not boring textbooks. Please, this is so important, make sure...be sure...to enjoy the process of learning every minute, every day.

All right, I will see you next time.