

Which Language should I learn?

If you're not sure which language to study, here are some factors to consider:

If you want to learn a language with a large number of speakers and which is spoken in many countries, the ones to choose in order of 'usefulness' are: English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), German, Japanese, Portuguese and Hindi/Urdu.

This list is based on the number of speakers, the number and population of countries where the languages are spoken, the number of major fields using the languages internationally, the economic power of countries using the languages, and their socio-literary prestige.

The languages with the most speakers are:

1. Mandarin Chinese (720 million)
2. English (480 million)
3. Spanish (320 million)
4. Russian (285 million)
5. French (265 million)
6. Hindi/Urdu (250 million)
7. Indonesian/Malay (230 million)
8. Arabic (221 million)
9. Portuguese (188 million)
10. Bengali (185 million)
11. Japanese (133 million)
12. German (109 million)



For English speakers the least difficult languages are probably: Italian, Spanish, French, Dutch, Afrikaans, German, Portuguese, Romanian, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish.

Arabic, Korean, Japanese and Chinese are often considered among the most challenging languages for English speakers, and speakers of other Western languages, to learn. Learning to read and write Chinese and Japanese is particularly challenging, though the spoken languages are less difficult.

If you want to learn a language in order to improve your employment/promotion prospects then choose one that is in demand by employers. The list below gives you an idea of which languages are in demand and is based on job ads posted on recruitment sites.

Note: languages are shown more or less in order of popularity with employers.

Africa: English, French, Swahili, Arabic, Portuguese

Americas: English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Japanese

Asia-Pacific: English, Japanese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Malay/Indonesian, Spanish, Portuguese

Western Europe: English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Flemish, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Portuguese, Finnish, Greek, Welsh, Russian, Japanese, Mandarin, Arabic

Source: omniglot.com