

How to obtain the best result with the CommArt modules? About (guided) self-study and (semi-) autonomous learning

CommArt International plc sells hi-tech learning modules that are usually based on profound scientific research performed by the Centre Applied Linguistics (CTL), R&D institute of Hasselt University. These e-modules use the latest technological features and are multimedia, flexible and polyvalent. CommArt itself also develops e-modules in close collaboration with experienced authors, who are supported by CTL.

The user can benefit from the modules in various ways. We now give a summary and some tips to obtain the best result with the CommArt modules.

1 Flexible and polyvalent

Possibility 1: linear progression

You go through the modules in a linear way, i.e. you follow the linear progression worked out by the authors. Starting from the beginning, you progress gradually, chapter after chapter, exercise after exercise towards the end. You have permanent access to the corresponding grammar.

Possibility 2: the lateral introduction

In case of specific and current needs, you can also address a specific communicative situation or start with or repeat a certain grammatical theme.

Moreover, inductive and deductive learning styles have been taken into account during the development of the modules. You prefer to start with the exercises? If you make too many mistakes, you can get access to the linked grammar with a simple click of the mouse.

But you can also start with the grammar and test yourself afterwards by making the exercises.

2 (Semi-)autonomous learning: how?

In this kind of situations, it is advised keeping a journal or a log. This document (in electronic or paper form) is a detailed plan describing, for each period of time (week, every two weeks), which units (which exercises) have to be made independently.

The mentor has the right to check if the work that was planned has been performed. This is absolutely necessary in order to start with the productive trainings (role play, presentation, composition...)

2.1 Use in autonomous or independent learning

Because of their extended feedback, the CommArt modules fulfil the wishes of the most demanding autodidact. Thanks to the enormous progress in information technology, the e-modules can:

- allow an unlimited number of individual repeats
- give a different form to the same exercise content each time
- integrate the communicative culture harmoniously thanks to multimedia elements
- offer an extended audio-training
- pronounce each written piece of text with the Text-to-Speech technology
- give feedback on mistakes for each exercise, or even for each item
- make oral and written e-communication possible

But compositions, oral exercises or conversation exercises still cannot be corrected by IT. In this case, a human 'coach-(linguistic) expert is irreplaceable.

Some useful advice for the autodidact:

- try to come in contact with the target language (speakers) as much as possible in its/their natural environment (while travelling, as a tourist, on television, on the radio, with literature...)
- try to contact fellow students to practice your oral language skills on a regular basis (in a conversation group or for example through Skype)
- impose strict deadlines for yourself, possibly with a 'reward' for each period. Draw up a schedule and stick to it.

2.2 Semi-autonomous or guided self-study in a setting of combined learning or 'blended learning'

2.2.1 With automatic follow-up (for example with Lingu@Tor™ Mentor Online, see www.commart.be)

In this kind of setting, a 'coach' or 'mentor' will elaborate a schedule, preferably in accordance with the students.

They will make the exercises independently, with the possibility to get some help through the module's automatic feedback or through reference screens. Thanks to the automatic follow-up, the coach can constantly follow the progress of his students in real time. He can consult their results, the speed and accuracy with which they make the assigned exercises. He has the possibility to offer additional feedback with a written or oral e-message, he can draw attention to certain aspects or difficulties, he can refer to module units that have already been dealt with but that aren't thoroughly mastered. Furthermore, the coach can organise "return sessions". During such a session, he will check if the planned subject matter is thoroughly mastered. Moreover, the students are put in all sorts of creative learning situations (role play, presentation, debate, conversation, composition...) during which the coach can give specific and virtually individual feedback.

Some advice for the assisted student:

- make sure a realistic schedule is drawn up and stick to it
- let your mentor guide you
- ask your fellow students for advice
- do not miss the return sessions and do your utmost during these sessions
- try to come in contact with the authentic target language as much as you can, if possible in its natural environment
- provide periodic rewards for yourself when achieving your goals

2.2.2 Without automatic follow-up with return sessions

You go through the e-module (grammar and exercises) on your own in accordance with the schedule drawn up in accordance with your coach or according to your own schedule. In this way, you will learn the most. In this kind of setting, the coach cannot see what you do (or don't do).

After a relatively short period of independent work, a return session will take place, as described in 2.2.1. However, in this setting, the control moment is really important to help you maintain the essential self-discipline.

2.2.3 In a traditional school setting

In this case, there are two phases.

First phase

(Almost) all of the exercises are made in a computer room or a class room in which (almost) every student has access to a personal computer or a portable. The coach is present and acts as a counsellor-linguistic expert if necessary or desirable.

Of course, the coach can also agree to make a series of exercises independently, for example at home.

Second phase

This phase is similar to the above-mentioned return session.

P.S

The CommArt modules that are in conformity with the CEFR can be used (as a basic method) according to the above-mentioned descriptions.

Obviously, they can also be used next to another method (on paper?) for example to offer additional exercises to students who need it (as a revision) or to give additional exercises to advanced students.

In the end, and on the condition that they have a journal or a log, the students can always continue their work when the mentor/teacher is ill.