

7TH LABOR GAKUEN NEWSLETTER

Summer Event, Teacher News, Interviews, Brain training, Internet



Summer Beer Party



How was the weather on Sunday, July 19th?

Yes, that's right! It was raining cats and dogs!

Even so, Labor Gakuen teachers and staff, along with 119 students (!!!) attended the first ever Labor Gakuen Beer (Garden) Party, not UP on the rooftop, but DOWN in the big party-function room of Gion Hotel.

It was all-you-can-eat and all-you-can drink, and although we didn't have a view, everybody really seemed to enjoy chatting with their classmates, as well as getting to know teachers they hadn't met before; like our two part-timers Graham (from England) and Jodie (from Canada, pictured below).

We'd like to say sorry to all those students who wanted to come to the party, but couldn't. We had no idea that a beer garden party would be so popular, so now that we know, we'll definitely think about having another one next summer!



STUDENT INTERVIEW (PART 2)

We asked students to talk about their English studies at Labor Gakuen and to offer advice to other students. Here are some of their answers:

Q1. What's the hardest or most challenging thing about your current level?

Expressing what I want to say is the hardest.
(Upper-Intermediate student)



The hardest thing is remembering new words, so I review often.
(Pre-Int. student)

I realized that talking in English is more difficult than writing.
(Intermediate student)

The lesson about "Difficult situations". It was hard for me to use expressions of Insisting, Making suggestions and Introducing the problem.
(Upper-Int. student)

"Phrasal verbs" は知らないものが多く、意味を取りちがえているものもあったので、有意義な授業だった。
(Pre-Int student)

Q2. How did you improve your weakest English abilities?

I listened to the CD many times and I usually posted many sentences that were difficult for me on the wall.
(Elementary student)

単語力がないのでクラスで習ったことを単語帳にして持ち歩いていました。
(Pre-Int student)

I repeatedly read sentences aloud like a conversation.
(Elementary student)

I tried to ask questions during class. I also listen to an English conversation radio program. I try to remember the key phrases or sentences. I think it's important to continue listening to the program.
(Upper-Int. student)

I listened to the CD. When I didn't understand a word, I looked up the word in a dictionary.
(Elementary student)



STUDENT INTERVIEW

Q3. How has studying at Labor Gakuen helped you communicate in English outside this class?

For example; when I met foreigners I ran away from them before, but now I can explain how to go to Nishiki Ichiba.

(Elementary student)



When I made hotel bookings by phone in Britain, it was helpful.

(Intermediate student)

海外旅行で今までツアーでしか参加しなかったが、スイスやパリへ個人旅行ができた。

(Novice student)

When I went to a foreign country, I could get around the city by myself.

(Pre-Intermediate student)

I have friends in the U.S, Taiwan, Europe and China, so studying in Labor is very useful.

(Upper-Int student)

Message from Chris

Dear students of Labor Gakuen,

As most of you know, I have moved back to Canada after living in Kyoto for more than 12 years. I truly enjoyed my time in your beautiful city and it was with mixed feelings that I left. The best part about traveling to any country is always the people you meet, and that has been especially true about Japan.

Though I spent my time in Kyoto as a teacher, I was also learning every day from you - the students of Labor Gakuen. Please accept my sincere and enduring appreciation for all that you have taught me about Japan and its people. I deeply respect your efforts to learn a language that many of you rarely need, especially those of you who are... 'more experienced' in life!

I am excited to be starting the next chapter of my life in the small town of Fort Erie (near Niagara Falls). I hope to achieve my new goal of becoming a full-time professional photographer, together with my beautiful wife Iori. If you wish to keep up with my professional development, you can do so on my website at <iamagoo.com>

Thank you again, and remember what I said so many times - review! review! review!

Love, Chris



Brain Training

*Do you ever forget a word in English?
Do you find that you forget something
five minutes after the teacher has just
taught you? Do you wish that you could
improve your memory?*

Here is a small list of things that you can do to help exercise your brain and hopefully help improve your English.

1. Study a new language or learn a musical instrument.

Learning either of these skills will help develop new synapses (brain cell links) and are the best exercise for the brain.

2. Start working out.

Physical exercise, running, swimming, aerobics etc, increase blood flow to the brain which means your brain will work better.

3. Do puzzles.

Crosswords, brain training, sudoku Nintendo DS. All these help to exercise the brain and keep it in shape.

4. Get enough sleep.

Although nobody knows exactly why we sleep, sleep is essential in helping our body repair itself and is believed to help the brain organize memories. Too little sleep and your brain isn't going to work so well. It is recommended that you should get 7-8 hours a night. Meaning students who sleep six hours or less will not do as well as if they had 7 or 8 hours sleep. And students who are tired in class will not learn or remember as well as students who are refreshed.

5. Eat well.

Most Japanese eat very well and have what we call in English 'a balanced diet' and this is very important for the brain's health. But here are a few extra tips.

Drink lots of water, studies show over 65% of people don't drink enough and your brain needs a lot of water. As soon as you feel thirsty you have already lost up to 10% of your body's supply of water.

So, you shouldn't study on an empty stomach! It is best to have a good meal and lots to drink before class.

To keep healthy connections you need fat and the best type are Omega 3 oils. The best source for this is either from fish oil or flaxseed oil. You can buy fish oil gel caps from your local pharmacy. Flaxseed oil is not easily available in Japan but can be bought online.

6. Practice, practice, practice.

Practicing something new many times helps build new brain connections and helps keep old connections going.

Try saying a new word or phrase 50-100 times. Then try writing it down many times. Now it's hard to forget eh!

I hope that this guide has been interesting for you and will help both your brain and your English in the future. On the next page for your enjoyment are some brain training games in English of course!



The Autumn Leaves

How many words can you make out of
The Autumn Leaves?

Example: nut, sale, that etc

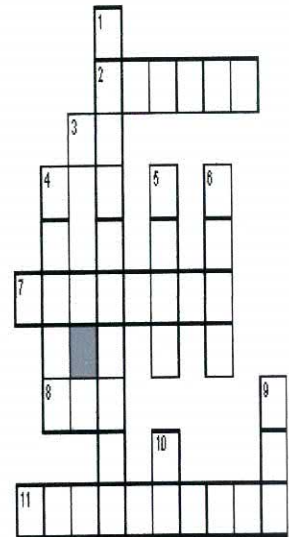
_____	_____	_____
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Can you find:

Something you drink, a number, something you cook, another word for borrowed. The opposite of freeze. Another word for man. The opposite of spend. Do a crime. A sea animal. What you do at lunch.

Summer Crossword

Summer Words



bogglesworld.com

Across

2. The month at the end of summer.
3. The book is __ the table.
7. The time when you don't go to school.
8. How's the weather in summer?
11. A big fruit you eat in summer.

Down

1. What do you make at the beach?
4. You go to the _____ in summer.
5. What do you do at the beach?
6. The month at the beginning of summer.
9. A machine that makes you cool?
10. I __ swimming.



www.bogglesworld.com

Using English on the Internet

Bringing English into your everyday life is very important. You not only get regular practice, but you can become familiar with the ways English is used outside the class room.

Reading and watching movies in English is one common way to do this. Another way is to use the internet.

In the last two terms we ran a short course on how to use English on the internet. There are literally thousands of sites for ESL students on the internet. In the course, we found the best of these sites and showed students how to use them. This term we have decided to introduce this material to every student at Labor Gakuen.



Below you will find a step-by-step guide on how to use selected web-sites. For your convenience we have chosen the best sites for each of the different skills and aspects of English.

Grammar and Vocabulary Practice

"Activities for ESL" website: <http://a4esl.org/> is a very good website full of grammar-focussed quizzes. It is easy to use. You scroll down the page to find a level and a grammar target that you want, then click and off you go!

It also has a **Bilingual Quizzes** section. Click Japanese - English and explore!

"Interesting Things for ESL Students" site: <http://www.manythings.org/> has lots of grammar quizzes too, but also many vocabulary quizzes too. It also has a good Slang and Idioms section. If you choose "Common American Slang" then "10 Common Slang Expressions", you can try to guess the meaning of the sentence, then check the answer.

It also has a good Pronunciation exercise. You can practice listening to **minimal pairs** - words with similar sounds that are often confused eg. 'walk' and 'work'.

You have to listen to a sentence and choose the word you hear.

Free Rice <http://www.freerice.com/> is an easy site where you can practice English vocabulary and donate to a good cause at the same time! Every time you get a right answer, 10 grains of rice are donated to the United Nations Food Program.

The screen will show a word and four **synonyms**. If you choose the correct synonym, the quiz gets harder; if you are wrong, it gets easier. You can also click a speaker icon to **hear** the word.

How many grains of rice did you donate?



Listening Practice

One of the great things about the internet is that you can get as much listening practice as you like - its almost like visiting another country!

The best site we have found is **English Listening Lesson Library Online**

<http://www.ello.org/english/home>. Here you will find fairly easy interviews with people from all over the world, on many topics. Many of the people are ESL students.

You can **read the text** and listen, or **hide the text** and listen. On the right of the page is a **quiz** which you can complete as you listen. In the text there are **highlighted phrases** - if you click them, there is a **mini-lesson** on their meaning and use.

Each interview then has **video responses** posted by other site users, which talk about the same topic. This site is absolutely brilliant, by far one of the best English learning sites on the web.

You can find similar listening quizzes on the **ESL Listening Laboratory** site <http://esl-lab.com/>, but the interviews are a little harder and faster, so it is better for more advanced students.



Using English on the Internet (cont.)

Listening (cont.)

English Club www.englishclub.com has a great **dictation** section where you can listen to short sentences and write them. It has levels from elementary to upper intermediate. Click **listening** on the left hand side of the home page, then choose **dictation** and follow the directions. This site also has many other activities. Explore!



Listening to Songs on YouTube.

Do you have a favourite English song, or band? A fun thing to do is to **watch a video** of it on the internet, and **learn the words**.

1. Choose a song (eg. Love Me Do by the Beatles) and find the lyrics online. Go to google.com and type "love me do lyrics" and search. Most popular song lyrics are fairly easy to find.
2. Now open another **browser window** by clicking **file** then **new window**, at the top left of your browser.
3. Use this new window to open <http://jp.youtube.com>, then type "beatles love me do" in the search box, to find the video. When the video starts, you can listen while reading the lyrics, then watch while listening to (and hopefully understanding!) the lyrics.



A good way to enjoy music and English at the same time!

Exam Practice

Some students often ask us how to prepare for TOEIC or other English exams at home. Well, apart from taking our TOEIC course here at Labor Gakuen, or buying a heavy, dense practice book, the best place to prepare is the internet.

Go to www.englishclub.com. This is a very useful site! Click 'Learn English'. Look down the topics on the left hand side of the page and click **TOEIC Practice**, or **TOEFL Practice**. You will find short sample questions of all sections of the test, including **listening**. A great way to brush up your skills if you are doing the TOEIC test soon.



Another useful exam practice site is <http://www.examenglish.com/> which has practice sections for all the major international exams. It only has practice for part 6 and 7 of TOEIC, but has better practice sections for TOEFL, IELTS and the Cambridge exams. All of these sections are relevant to improving TOEIC skills, while the IELTS exam is the new standard exam for going to university overseas, for those students who are thinking of that.



We will introduce more sites in the next newsletter. Our aim is to show you what is available on the internet, so that you can choose activities you like and **keep using the internet at home**. Have Fun!



Kris' trip to southern France



This summer I spent a couple of weeks R & R (rest and recuperation) on my mother's farm in the south of France. As expected meal times were to be the highlight of my trip.



There was one big difference between breakfast in rural France and what I usually have here in Japan. With bread and coffee the locals drank red wine! This might sound a bit surprising, but after the first sip, it was actually quite a good way to start the day. Breakfast was also a very sociable occasion, with many friends and neighbours dropping in for a chat, though understanding what people were saying was pretty tough. I tried my hardest to reply using lots of gestures. But if I look back on it, I probably spoke more Japanese than French!



On my mother's farm there was a vegetable patch which produced far more vegetables than could ever be eaten. There were also a couple of fields with crops in them, some chickens and about 100 sheep. Sometimes when friends were coming for lunch, a lamb would be taken up to the house in the morning. And by about noon it would be sizzling away on the barbeque. You can't get fresher than that!



Coming from "super convenient" Japan the pace of life in rural France came as a bit of a shock. Shops seemed to open and close whenever they liked. Shops were also closed for the lunchtime siesta which started before 12.00 and ended around 15.00. So to avoid disappointment you had to make sure to get the shopping in early. During siesta time the local village would become a virtual "ghost town", with only the odd stray dog or English tourist wandering about.



After 2 weeks in France I hadn't really gone anywhere special; but one thing I had done, was really enjoy myself. My stay gave me the opportunity to recharge my batteries and appreciate the art of "taking it easy".

