

CHANGES COMING TO CAPS

NEWS ON P.4

OPINION ON P.5

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



PAGE 3 Midland trail deducated to Reed Parlier

NEWS

PAGE 4 CAPS limits individual therapy sessions due to increased demand



OPINION

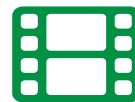
Page 5 Is UNC Charlotte prepared for the looming mental health crisis?



SPORTS

PAGE 6 Coronavirus cancels game at UNC Charlotte

PAGE 7 Humble hall of famer



A&E

PAGE 8 Nexomon: Extinction

PAGE 9 Mulan



LIFESTYLE

PAGE 10 How to learn languages

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NINERTIMES.COM

POLICE BLOTTER

9/16: Harassing Phone Calls

Officers responded to a residential hall referencing harassing phone call messages. The individual receiving the messages blocked the caller.

9/17: Larceny from Building

Officers responded to UREC referencing a larceny from the lockers.

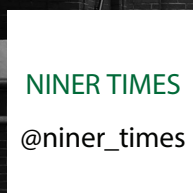
9/18: CMPD Assist: Indecent Exposure

Officers responded to Rebecca Bailey Dr. to assist Charlotte Mecklenburg police regarding a call of indecent exposure. Charlotte Mecklenburg Police will be handling the investigation.

VIEW FULL BLOTTER AT
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Photo by Niyathi Sulkunte

MIDLAND TRAIL DEDICATED TO REED PARLIER



April 30 shooting victim's hometown dedicates trail in his honor

by Kathryn Caudill
Staff Writer

On Aug. 28, the town of Midland and Cabarrus County dedicated the Lake Loop Trail at Rob Wallace Park in memory of local Reed Parlier.

Reed Parlier was one of two UNC Charlotte students killed by a gunman who opened fire in the Kennedy building on April 30, 2019. Reed was described as quiet, caring and quick witted by his family. He also had a love for computers and video games.

The mayor of Midland, John Crump, spoke at the dedication of the trail saying, "He will not be forgotten by the town of Midland."

Crump and the town of Midland have been supportive of the Parlier family since the tragic events of April 30.

Reed's father, Brian Parlier, told WSOCTV that, "the Mayor reached out within hours of Reed's death."

The newly renamed Reed Parlier Memorial walking trail is a 2.5 mile loop in Rob Wallace Park. The park is 143 acres and features a boardwalk, fishing pond, mountain and bike trails, as well as playground and picnic areas.

This park was chosen specifically because it holds significance to the Parlier family. In the days following Reed's death, his mother Julie went to Rob Wallace Park for peace.

Julie Parlier told WSOCTV, "As I was standing on the bridge a pair of butterflies flew around my face and landed on me."

Butterflies have come to be the Parlier family's symbol of Reed as his father and sister had similar experiences such as Julie's after Reed's death. The family has since bought their own butterfly farm kit in honor of Reed.

Reed's memory will continue to be honored in two scholarships. The UNC Charlotte Ellis "Reed" Parlier Memorial Scholarship was created in remembrance of Reed, and an award of \$18,000 will be given to a freshman of any major, while preference will be given to a student planning to pursue a BS in Computer Science with a concentration in Artificial Intelligence, Robotics or Gaming. The other scholarship is being created by his family and will be awarded in the future.



Niner Times File Photo of students at sigil for Ellis Parlier and Riley Howell



CAPS LIMITS INDIVIDUAL THERAPY SESSIONS DUE TO INCREASED DEMAND

by Megan Bird
News Editor

Photo by Niyathi Sulkunte

UNC Charlotte's Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is rolling back the number of individual therapy sessions allotted to students each year in an effort to serve more people. Previously, students were allowed up to 12 sessions per year; now, that number is capped at 4-6.



Photo courtesy of UNC Charlotte Counseling and Psychology Services

According to CAPS' Assistant Director for Outreach Dr. Erica Lennon, the decision was made to address the long wait times caused by increased demand. CAPS experienced a 20% increase in student

demand during the fall semester of 2019 compared to the previous year, resulting in wait times of 3.78 days on average between scheduling requests and appointments. Demand has stayed high this semester, even with CAPS operating virtually and many students living far from campus. The counseling center saw 264 students during the first two weeks of this semester compared with 270 during the first two weeks of last year's fall semester. The average wait time, however, has decreased to 2.19 days, likely due to the smaller number of sessions allotted to each student and the stronger emphasis on group therapy.

Lennon attributes the increase in student demand to reduced stigma for mental health resources, a heightened awareness of CAPS' services, recent tragedies like the campus shooting in April 2019, increased media attention to race-based violence, and the coronavirus pandemic. According to a study by the Center for Disease Control conducted in late June, 25.5% of surveyed 18-24-year-olds reported seriously considering suicide, and 75% reported at least one adverse mental or behavioral health symptom.

Despite increases in student demand, the counseling center's operating budget from

"While we recognize the changes in how we are approaching individual counseling, the expectation is that this will allow us to continue to serve all students who initially seek us out by connecting them with the service that will be best suited to attending to their needs and reducing the time they will need to wait in order to be seen."

-Dr. Erica Lennon, CAPS Assistant Director for Outreach

the State has remained at \$42,000 for the past 15 years, according to CAPS Director Dr. Paula Keeton. The remainder of the budget (salaries) is paid by student fees. Their overall budget decreased between 2019 and 2020 by about \$68,000.

Still, CAPS is finding new ways to meet

demand without increasing waiting times. They expanded the number of group workshops from 20 to 29 and removed restrictions on how many workshops students could attend. They are also devoting more time to initial consultations and crisis services.

Keeton says group therapy is the treatment of choice for one of the most prevalent concerns among students: anxiety.

"Our hope is that we have expanded the amount and types of offerings that we can provide students to address their goals related to their well-being and mental health," said Lennon. "While we recognize the changes in how we are approaching individual counseling, the expectation is that this will allow us to continue to serve all students who initially seek us out by connecting them with the service that will be best suited to attending to their needs and reducing the time they will need to wait in order to be seen."

Lennon added that CAPS' approach to individual counseling has always been goal-oriented and brief in nature. When students were able to attend up to 12 appointments, she says, most only utilized 4-6 sessions.

Is UNC Charlotte prepared for the looming mental health crisis?

How policy changes have placed us at risk of a mental breakdown

by Milo Cain
Asst. Opinion Editor

Niner Times File Photo by Leysha Caraballo

It can be said for most of us, COVID-19 represents the first global phenomenon in our lives. The world has not been wrapped up in such a period of existential anxiety since the great recession, and as we enter this school year, it's important that we as a university come together to stay healthy and safe. The problem is we are not healthy. In fact, we are far from it. Many of us enter this new school year at a low point. We are unemployed, financially unstable, exhausted by half a year of isolation, and uninformed as to what the future may hold. In spite of this, the semester has begun, and we must all deal with the new stress of a compressed year. With many professors and students struggling to adapt to online learning, we must support our community through their struggles.

In a survey done in June, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) reported that 25.5% of young adults (aged 18-24) claimed that they have seriously considered suicide since the beginning of COVID-19. In addition, 62.9% of people aged 18-24 had reported some form of anxiety or depressive disorder. These numbers portray a generation of people desperately trying to begin their adult lives but crushed by the weight of an invisible virus. And it really doesn't help when the community has to put their faith in a university, that in the past that has ignored the pleas of its students, staff and faculty, when faced with this looming threat.

In review of the University's COVID-19 policy, the Administration provides no general policy on how to deal with mental health during the pandemic. They instead choose to delegate this role to the Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). The problem is that even with CAPS taking on the responsibility of fostering mental health, they do not have jurisdiction over every part of campus such as classrooms, organizations, sports, etc. the way the University does; CAPS can only address those that come to them. If general guidelines regarding mental health in each part of the institution are put in place, the university will establish a culture that takes the burden of mental health off the shoulders of individuals and creates a support network based on the input of students, faculty and staff.

CAPS' website states that they "believe that the entire University community is responsible for the safety and emotional well-being of our students." CAPS would be expected to be the primary aim of the University's response to this crisis. According to an interview conducted by News Editor, Megan Bird, with Dr. Lennon, the Assistant Director for Outreach at CAPS, CAPS has cut the number of individual counseling sessions available to students from 12 to between four and six; and they increased the number of group ses-

sions from 19 to 29. The decision to cut the number of individual sessions and increase the number of group sessions was based on a prediction of numerous new clients seeking counseling and a focus on crisis services. It makes sense in terms of time and money but let's be honest, one-on-one counseling is what most students seek when they think of CAPS. Many people rely on these particular services, and in these unfortunate times, they are essential for the stability of the student body.

So the question remains: How do we create an environment at UNC Charlotte that fosters positive mental health and gives students struggling with their mental health the support they need? The first proposal is to return to 12 sessions a year at the counseling center. It makes sense, especially as Dr. Lennon had explained in the interview that "During the first two weeks of fall semester 2019, we saw 270 students; whereas in the first two weeks of the semester this fall, we've seen 264. Statistically, they're the same which is pretty remarkable given how we have had to shift our service delivery so radically." If CAPS is committed to limiting the number of individual sessions, then they must also commit to providing extra sessions for those students who are most vulnerable either at CAPS or by a written referral outside of the University. Returning to the original policy will allow students the solace of knowing

that if they need more sessions, they will be available. Another way the University can help ease the stressors put on students is by committing to an online-only semester. We have started off the semester this way, and to transition to in-person classes just to transition back to online eventually (based on what had happened to schools like East Carolina, UNC Chapel Hill and NC State) this will increase the mental strain on every student and faculty member. In a recent survey conducted by the Niner Times, we found that approximately 70% of respondents preferred an online-only semester.

And most importantly, I call on the faculty to implement a pro-mental health policy into their syllabi. This could be policies regarding excused absences for mental health or extensions and makeups on assignments. The ultimate goal is to mitigate the stress put on students that was handed to them beyond their control.

It is the responsibility of the University to keep us safe. It is integral that the University takes greater steps to prevent further stress on the community. If we do not implement the right policy to address this, people will get hurt. There are tough times ahead, and we must stand in solidarity with one another if we are to get through this. That begins by solving the mental health crisis at UNC Charlotte while we still can.



by Bradley Cole
Sports Editor

Photo Courtesy of UNC Football by Mario Morales

The Charlotte 49er football team announced on Thursday, Sept. 17 that their scheduled matchup with North Carolina has been canceled due to the impact contact tracing quarantine had on a key position group.

In a statement, the 49ers have announced there have been three positive cases of coronavirus on the football team during the last couple of weeks. Those individuals have been placed in isolation and are to quarantine for 14 days. This week's game was canceled ultimately due to the fact that members on the offensive line have been placed into quarantine.

Conference USA athletes are tested three times a week.

The game would have been Charlotte's second of the year and first-ever against the Tar Heels. The 49ers lost to Appalachian State last week, 35-20.

There is no evidence that any football players contracted the virus during the trip to play Appalachian State.

"There's no indication whatsoever that this is in any way related to our game at App State," said athletic director Mike Hill.

At this time, there will be no makeup for the game,

according to Charlotte athletic director Mike Hill.

"We're extremely disappointed to have to cancel our game at North Carolina. While I know our team is heartbroken, due to the number of players in quarantine, we could not safely play," said Hill. "We very much appreciate the University of North Carolina having scheduled this game with us. Unfortunately, we do not currently share any common open dates to reschedule."

Across the Charlotte athletic department, there have been 3,150 tests administered for student-athletes, coaches and staff. There have been 20 total positive cases. 200 tests were administered on Monday, Sept. 14 with one positive test.

Hill did confirm in a press conference that the player that the player tested positive on Monday did test negative on Wednesday.

The 49ers only had 11 games scheduled for the 2020 season before the cancellation of the North Carolina game. The team had already lost a CUSA opponent once Old Dominion canceled fall sports due to the coronavirus. Charlotte now only has nine more games this season.

Hill said there are looking at other options to play

another team this season. The 49ers have an open date on Nov. 14. Other teams that don't have a game on Nov. 14 at this time include Clemson, Texas, Kansas and a handful of other Power 5 conference teams.

Charlotte could face more bumps in the road moving ahead this season. The 49ers' Oct. 3 opponent, Florida Atlantic, postponed its game on Sept. 19 due to the coronavirus.

Charlotte's game against the Tar Heels would have been the second game in a row that would have been televised to a large audience and will not get any financial benefits that the game would have provided.

Charlotte was slated to earn \$500,000 for traveling to face the ACC powerhouse Tarheels and for now, the 49ers don't appear to have another opportunity on the rise to face another Power 5 conference team in place of the Tar Heels.

"This is difficult to walk away from a game like this," said Hill. "We did because we followed the protocols that were in place."

As of Sept. 17, Charlotte still plans to host Georgia State in their home opener on Sept. 26 with no fans present.



HUMBLE HALL OF FAMER

Longtime athletic director Judy Rose elected to
the Conference USA Hall of Fame



by Sam Perry
Intern

Photo Courtesy of UNC Charlotte Athletics

Former Charlotte 49ers Athletic Director Judy Rose thought she was just having a normal meeting with the PR representative for Conference USA last week. Little did she know she was being inducted into the second annual C-USA Hall of Fame class.

When asked how it felt to be inducted into the C-USA Hall of Fame, Rose said she was “very humbled” to be included in the second annual class when she looked at the names in her induction class.

Some of her major accomplishments during her 43-year service to Charlotte’s athletic department included being the third female named athletic director in Division I sports history, overseeing the construction of \$100 million worth of athletic facilities and adding seven sports programs including 49er football. She also fast-tracked the football team into a Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) conference.

Working for the Charlotte 49ers athletic department has been the only school that now Rose worked for at out of college. She received her undergraduate degree in physical education from Winthrop University and went straight on to get her master’s degree from the University of Tennessee. She was part of the first group of women to get to reap the benefits of the passing of Title IX in 1972.

The Charlotte 49ers offered her to coach women’s basketball, tennis, teach a physical education course and be in charge of the lifeguards. She was hesitant at first due to the lifeguard liability but she took the job and “never looked back”.

She also came to work for the Niners because her mother had passed away earlier and she “wanted to stay close enough to her dad and family” to be there for them as she began her career.

After her first three years with the 49ers, she was offered

the role to be in charge of all female athletics while still being a basketball coach. She was happy to take on that responsibility. She said she is “a planner” so she started to think to herself does she want to be a basketball coach forever or does she want to take a different path. She decided that since she wanted to raise a family, it would be better for her if she went to a more sports administration path rather than staying as a coach forever.

Eventually, she was promoted to the assistant athletic director and was also the women’s basketball coach. As a planner, she knew she needed to learn and grow as the assistant athletic director if she wanted to follow the administration’s path, so she insisted that she be put in charge of both men’s and women’s sports as the assistant athletic director so she could gain more knowledge for the future. She said the programs grew at such a fast rate that they needed a full-time assistant athletic director and a full-time women’s basketball coach so she had a choice to make.

When asked what she considers her major accomplishment, she said “the addition of football” and says it was the “most challenging” thing she did during her 28 years as the director of athletics. She said she tried to add football with four different chancellors. She put together a committee in 2001 to gauge the community’s ideas behind it and it got the support it needed. However, due to the 9/11 tragedy, fundraising wasn’t possible due to the economic crisis after the tragedy.

But finally, in 2013, Charlotte added its football team. This time adding the Niners football team had its own unique challenges. The original committee Rose formed met with the most secrecy. They covered up the windows for about the first 6 years to keep the secret from getting out. They faced the issues of convincing the current administration at Charlotte that the community would

support the program. One issue Rose saw with gaining the support of the community was they needed the football team to be in an FBS conference, not a Football Championship Subdivision (FCS). The FBS level of football is the top level in college football.

Rose looked to return the Niners to their current home with C-USA. She says that since they didn’t burn any bridges when they left C-USA the first time, they were welcomed back with open arms which she was thankful for. She went on to say that “you never burn bridges in this industry cause it always comes back to haunt you.” Lucky for Rose, the athletic program stayed clear of any issues.

Rose chose to be the full-time assistant athletic director because she felt she was better in that role and that it was a better fit for her plan. Rose said she “never dreamed I would stay my entire career in one place”, but it was the best fit for her and her plan especially in 1990 when Chancellor Woodward gave her the opportunity to be the third woman in history to be the athletic director of a division I sports program. She says she “counts her blessings every day because it wasn’t happening anywhere across the country at that time.”

“When I became athletic director I didn’t view myself as a trailblazer,” said Rose. She says now that she has gotten older, she can see that she was thanks to the opportunities provided to her by the Charlotte 49ers and especially Chancellor Woodward for giving her the opportunity to be an athletic director.

“It has been an honor and a privilege to work at UNC Charlotte,” said Rose.



In some of my previous articles, I've made mention of my love for seeing indie developers take heavy inspiration from existing franchises. Sure, the "Super Mario" name may be copyrighted, but the designs and game mechanics behind the franchise are open to interpretation and expansion from other developers. "Pokémon" is another example of a franchise for which the rights and licensing privileges are more heavily guarded than the gold of Fort Knox. However, that's not to say that an indie developer can't offer up their unique take on a monster-catching RPG adventure. Enter "Nexomon: Extinction," a game developed by VEWO Interactive and published by Pqube that seeks to offer players a unique, yet still familiar alternative to Nintendo and Game Freak's iconic franchise. The question is, does "Nexomon: Extinction" hold up on its own merits, or does it end up feeling more like a cheap knock-off?

Our story begins with a tale of a great war between humans and Nexomon for control of the entire planet. It seems as though this war broke out when a group of incredibly powerful Nexomon decided that they no longer desired to coexist with humans and began to reclaim the planet for themselves. However, many of the remaining Nexomon saw the error of their superiors' ways and began to fight alongside humans to put a stop to these powerful Nexomon and restore balance to the world. Interestingly, the result of this war is kept somewhat vague, but seeing as how we cut to what is implied to be hundreds of years in the future to take control of our main protagonist, (which can be named by the player) one can only assume that some sort of temporary resolution was reached. I say "temporary" because it just so happens that these mighty Nexomon have returned with a vengeance, and are now aided by a group of Master Tamers who have their own nefarious goals. As new recruits to the Nexomon Tamers Guild, it is now up to us to travel around the world, fight all of the mythical Nexomon of legend and put a stop to their attacks on the planet once and for all.

Apologies if that plot synopsis seemed a bit all over the place, but there's actually a good reason for that, as "Nexomon: Extinction" has got to have one of the most convoluted and ridiculously unfocused plots I've seen in a long time— I didn't even include anywhere

close to all the details just then. That synopsis was my best attempt at trying to piece events together based on what little context the game seems to give me, which is odd to say because there were several times where I felt like the game dishes out what I would refer to as "plot dumps." See, the game completely showers you with information at several points, (even early on in the adventure) but rarely did I as the player feel like I had the proper knowledge or context to understand exactly how everything went together. NPCs would frequently have dialogue referencing how the Nexomon of legend are ripping the world apart and pose an immediate threat to all of humanity. But when they are telling you this in the middle of a lush, green forest with tranquil and peaceful rivers flowing throughout, it leads to a bit of a disconnect forming between what the player is being told and what they actually observe in the world.

Speaking of those lush, green forests, I must admit that the graphical style here is certainly appealing. It's not a technical showcase by any means, as the environments are all based on the foundation of a simple grid, and animation for the player characters and NPCs is incredibly limited. However, it must be said that the art direction here is truly fantastic. Many of the 300+ Nexomon designs were very appealing to me, and they have that very distinct, "Pokémon-like" quality where you can almost universally identify a given monster's type and even guess what some of its abilities may be just by looking at it. The battles are also (perhaps unsurprisingly) where the graphics shine the most. Battle animations are generally quick and to the point, yet punchy and flashy enough to do their part in helping to make the encounters feel dynamic and interesting. Additionally, I feel that the choice of going with animated 2D sprites rather than 3D models for the Nexomon themselves ended up working highly in the developer's favor, as the sprites themselves are all well-animated and highly expressive, harkening back to the fan-favorite fifth generation of "Pokémon" to great effect.

What doesn't hold up as well, however, are the battles themselves, or more specifically the systems at play within the battles. "Nexomon: Extinction" lifts a lot of its battle gameplay directly from the "Pokémon" series. Players will send one of their Nexomon, of which up to

six can be held at a time, onto the battlefield and engage in turn-based combat with an opposing Nexomon. Each Nexomon can learn up to four different techniques of varying power levels and elemental attributes, and it is up to the player to select both the best Nexomon and the best move for the situation at hand. This would all be fine, but the developers at VEWO Interactive have introduced some fundamental changes to the tried-and-true formula that they are attempting to emulate here. And unfortunately, almost all of these changes ended up being to the game's detriment.

For starters, there is a type-balancing system present in "Nexomon: Extinction" that works largely off of an element-based trail of logic. Water-Type Nexomon will have an advantage against Fire-Type Nexomon, Ground-Type Nexomon will have an advantage over Electric-Type Nexomon, and so on. The unfortunate truth, though, is that the changes that have been made to this system result in a far more unbalanced and counter-intuitive product than the game's clear inspiration. For example, some of the type matchups in this title seem to have been changed for the sole purpose of differentiating the game from "Pokémon," but as a result, these changes have created a balance that feels much less defined and oddly lacking in logic when compared to that of Game Freak's series. For example, Electric is weak to Grass here, which makes far less immediate logical sense than the Ground weakness given to it in "Pokémon." (Could it be because vines can potentially grow around and ensnare electrical equipment?) This does not only have a diminishing effect on worldbuilding though as certain types have been left practically useless by the game's strange balancing. The Normal-Type is perhaps the most egregious, as in "Nexomon: Extinction" the type has two weaknesses (Ghost and Psychic), and absolutely no strengths to speak of, making it objectively one of the worst types in the game by technicality alone. Compare this to the Normal-Type in "Pokémon," which, despite having a weakness to Fighting, is also completely immune to Ghost-type attacks, allowing for situations in which it would actually be beneficial to use a Normal-type on your team.

Read the Full Story at [NinerTimes.com](https://www.ninertimes.com)

MULAN

A refreshing view of the live action Disney film sub-genre

by Gabe Lapalombella
Staff Writer

Images courtesy of Disney Enterprises

The live action Disney remakes (Jungle Book, Aladdin, Maleficent) have had a rather rocky track record. Some have been ok, but the general consensus is more in the form of a question asked by critics and fans alike... "Why is Disney remaking classics?" For me personally, I found most of these films to be rather dull and dragging out the story past the point of interest. In the case of Mulan's live action re-imagining, I am happy to say this is the best one yet. While loosely based on the classic 1998 film, this film follows the tone of the original story of Chinese folklore "The Ballad of Mulan." If you don't know the story, it follows "A young Chinese maiden named Mulan who joins the Chinese army (in secret) to prevent her elder father from going." Even though it's sounding much like the original film, this is a much more grounded take.

Most live-action Disney films focus on being comedic and forcing fans to feed on nostalgia— but this one is different. Director Niki Caro (Whale Rider, Macfarland, USA, The Zookeeper's Wife) sets out to make a film emphasizing the theme of female empowerment. Simultaneously, Caro creates an immersive world that expresses just how rich the story of Mulan is. Between keeping the innocence of the protagonist and essentially creating a war film in the process, this makes "Mulan"

a unique take on a familiar story. Once Mulan is a part of the Chinese army, we get action and general settings unlike anything we've seen. A word that can best describe this is scope, since we as an audience feel the massiveness of the locations. The imagery both inside battles and even in simple conversations is incredibly thrilling to watch.

Led by newcomer Yifei Liu as Mulan, the cast here is quite unique and incredibly effective in their roles. Especially with Liu, she commits to the role and creates a strong female figure for young girls. That's a hard feat to accomplish, but she does well balancing the action and strength of the character. Thankfully, Liu is surrounded by an array of talent including kung-fu stars and all around great actors. The supporting cast which includes Donnie Yen, Jet Li and famed Chinese actors Gong Lee and Jason Lee Scott as newly written villains, and Tzi Mai as Mulan's father get effective moments. A lot of that praise must be placed on Caro as the one behind the camera. In the film's one hour and 55 minute runtime, she effectively conveys the tone of an epic.

Though it is more effective than not, Mulan does not come without a few problems. What keeps it from being a perfect reimagining is the mere fact of the studio behind it. Being a Disney film, there are moments that

are meant for laughs and moments of endearment. Moments like this are where the film falls flat. It is in these moments where the film tries to have something out of place. Now the real qualm I have here is the fact that Disney is requiring users on their Disney+ service to pay an additional 30 dollars to unlock it. That amount is included on top of their monthly subscription and for that price, I don't see this being worth it. Since the film will be released on the service for free in December, I would highly encourage you to wait until then. Nonetheless, this is an effective and exciting reimagining that is rather entertaining from start to finish.

Rating: 4/5





HOW TO LEARN LANGUAGES

Six easy tips to learn a new language faster

by Julianna Peres
Lifestyle Editor

Although it is wonderful to speak a “useful” language, make sure that whatever you choose, you enjoy. So don’t get stuck on speaking a universal language. Instead, think about something that you wouldn’t mind putting a lot of time and effort into. There are so many fun, and fictional, languages to learn! Some universities now offer Dothraki (from Game of Thrones), Klingon (from Star Trek) and Esperanto (the attempted universal romance language that never quite took). But, if you do decide to learn a romance language (such as French, Spanish, Italian, or Portuguese), its Latin roots will help you pick up its sister languages in no time.

Now think about the purpose of learning this language. Do you want to be conversational or fluent? Do you want to excel at reading, writing, speaking, or listening? Would you like to work with this language in a professional setting someday?

The following categories are great for speech and comprehension, but they won’t be a great help with academic literacy:

1. Polite conversation

This includes please, thank you, you’re welcome, good morning, I’m sorry, excuse me, hello, and goodbye. Even if you aren’t fluent, you will at least want to come off as well-mannered.

2. Places you may (urgently) need to go

The restroom, school, library, bank, restaurant, supermarket, hotel, train station, airport, office building.

3. Numbers

There’s more to this one than meets the eye. For one, you may think that you can count whatever you may need on your fingers, but how you count on your fingers can differ depending on country and culture. In Japan, a six is displayed as five splayed fingers on one hand and one finger on the other hand pressed up against the palm of the first. Numbers will also help with context.

If someone is telling you a street address, an age, a time, a price or any other sort of measurement, you’ll want to pick up on those numbers. I would recommend learning the numbers 1-10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, 1000, 1000000. Trust me, there is a HUGE difference between one thousand and one million.

4. Family members

Mother, father, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, son, daughter, grandmother, grandfather, cousin, wife, and husband. Why know something as seemingly trivial as genealogy? Imagine that you’re speaking with a coworker or an acquaintance and they say “I can’t go to the meeting later because my father is sick.” Since many languages are gendered, you will want to take care that your reply uses the correct pronouns. The last thing you want is to accidentally respond, “oh no! I hope she feels better soon.”

5. Time of day

You may be thinking: but we already learned numbers! Unfortunately, numbers used for counting money or flower petals or age are not always the same for telling time. Also keep in mind that some nations may use military time.

6. Introductions

Learn a few key phrases to help people get to know you. A good rule of thumb is to measure your introduction against a short bio. I usually give my name or nickname, my age, what I study in college, what career path I would like to follow, my hometown, and some of my hobbies. Make this introduction as personal as possible—it is about you, after all.

The best way to improve in anything is through practice. Again, your best approach depends on what you want to utilize this language for. For verbal fluency and the most authentic accent and expression, I recommend finding a speaking partner, preferably someone fluent, to talk to on the phone or over Zoom. For building one’s

vocabulary, I recommend flash cards. For improving grammar, I recommend repetitive writing. The repetition of writing the same words over and over again is also beneficial to those learning a new alphabet. It’s the rule of kindergarten that the more you “trace” those symbols/ letters/characters, the more comfortable you’ll be with them. For developing listening skills, I recommend watching a show that is either dubbed or originally in your chosen language and attempt to interpret it without the use of subtitles. Finally, for reading I recommend looking at as much text in your language as you can get your hands on. Notice that it’s “looking” and not “reading.” Just the act of letting your eyes roam over another language gets them, as well as your brain, accustomed to interacting with the new syntax.

Remember not to get too caught up on things like accents, inflections, or handwriting. There’s a learning curve for everything. And, as my mom always said if someone made an ugly comment regarding her Brazilian accent, “all my accent means is that I speak one more language than they do.”

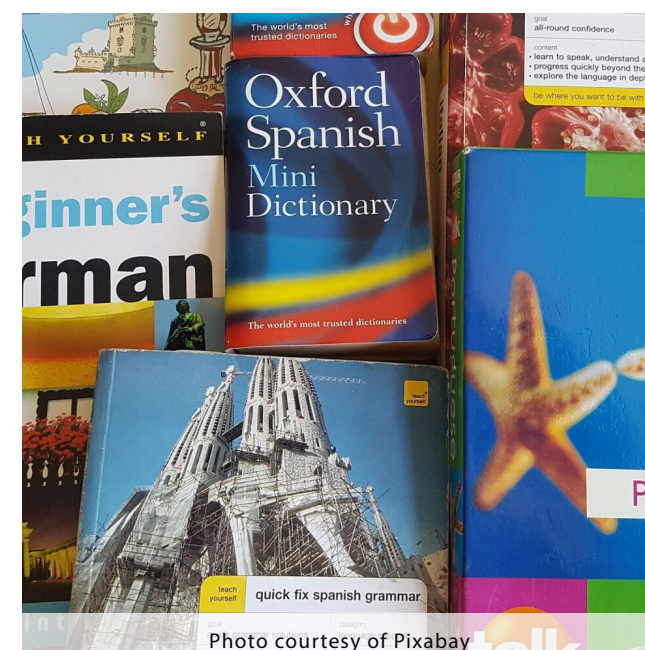


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