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he more often you use your Irish, the more often you will use your Irish. Does that seem obvious?

If you take even small "actions" in Irish more frequently, if you "touch" the language more often, it becomes easier for you to do it again and again. The more often you do something in the language, no matter how small, the less likely you are to suddenly "wake up" and realize that, in spite of your excellent intentions to study regularly, it has been quite a while since you gave some explicit attention to learning or using Irish, at least outside the classroom.

The more often you use the language, the less inertia there is to hold you back from using it again. The more you do in Irish, the less self-conscious you are about making mistakes. By contrast, the longer the "dry spells" between your Irish language efforts, the harder it is to get started again. And the more ground you have to make up to be back to where you were before your study hiatus.

Ask "how often" rather than "how much." Using Irish several times a day, one word or one sentence at a time, will do more to motivate you, to keep your skills up and your knowledge fresh, to build confidence, and to lead you to that next use of Irish, than big blocks of study with several days, or a couple of weeks, in between.

So, what can you do to maintain contact with your Irish?

1. Greet yourself in the mirror, in Irish, every morning.
2. Read off the numbers of license plates in Irish.
3. Write vocabulary words on index cards or sticky notes and randomly place them through your books and magazines.
4. Choose one news headline each day to translate into Irish.
5. Call your own voice mail and leave a sentence in Irish as a message. When you get home, listen to it and see if you would change anything about it.
6. Keep some text in Irish next to your remote control, and read it out loud during TV commercials. Do not *translate*, do not even *think* about the meaning, just practice making the sounds of the language.
7. While watching a sport or a TV program, describe someone you see: tall or short, hair color, man or woman, etc.
8. Choose random words, in English, from your newspaper or that memo you're reading and see if you can lenite the initial consonant. (Practicing on English words keeps you from thinking about translation rather than grammar.)
9. When you're really good at lenition, perform the same exercise with eclipsis.
10. Listen to recorded material as you drive to work, or as you exercise on your treadmill, etc., repeating words you hear. Do *not* worry about what

## 50 WAYS TO USE YOUR IRISH

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it means, do not try to understand it, just repeat a word here and there.

11. Whenever you see or hear a commercial for a product, say whether or not you like it (e.g., *Ní maith liom é*.)
12. Sign up for a workshop. Combine your Irish language experience with a vacation or a business trip.
13. Bookmark some sources of Irish text so you can quickly pull up something to look at/work with when you happen to be browsing. For short passages of text, you might start with [www.gaelport.com](http://www.gaelport.com) or [www.nuacht1.com](http://www.nuacht1.com).
14. Set an alarm or chime on your watch, your computer, or your smartphone and when it beeps, describe what you are doing.
15. The first time you look at your calendar for the day, write in the name of the day, or the entire date, in Irish.
16. When you look up or dial a phone number, say the numerals in Irish to yourself.
17. Pull up a paragraph of Irish text during that next TV commercial and just circle all the verbs in the passage. Do not worry about what they mean.
18. In the following commercial, see if you can determine what tense each verb is in.
19. Or see if you can change all the verbs into, say, the future tense, or whatever you choose.
20. Visit an on-line Irish book source – try [www.cic.ie](http://www.cic.ie) or [www.litriocht.com](http://www.litriocht.com) – and spend a few minutes browsing books, just to remind yourself of the kinds of things you'd like to read as your skills improve.
21. Stick the first line from a poem, or from a song, someplace where you'll see it every day – your mirror, your microwave door, your keyboard – and say it every day until you have it memorized.
22. When you have learned the first line, learn the second the same way.
23. When you listen to the weather forecast, say one simple thing about it in Irish.
24. Whenever someone enters your room or office, mentally say to yourself, "It's a man"

- (*Is fear é*) or "It's a woman" (*Is bean í*). Simple as this is, performing this activity hundreds of times will help make you more comfortable with the copula.
25. Whenever you look up a word in your Irish dictionary, take a moment to read the next entry on the page.
  26. If you have pets, talk to them in Irish as often as you can. Don't give them commands ("Sit!"), *talk* to them. They listen well, and they never correct you.
  27. If you do not have pets, do you have plants? They'd love to have a chat with you in Irish. Never water them without saying something, anything, in Irish.
  28. Do you have a daily coffee (or tea, or cocoa) ritual? When you pay for that latte, say the price to yourself in Irish.
  29. Better yet, hold yourself back from taking that first sip of java until you have mentally run through one series of prepositional pronouns, such as *agam, agat, aige* ...
  30. Write down a simple sentence you hear in conversation during the morning. Put the sentence in Irish word order in the afternoon (with that next cup of coffee): "Closed he the door red", or "Asked she on me the door to close".
  31. Before typing up that memo or letter or e-mail, just type the first five words you can think of in Irish, and then delete them before going back to what you were doing.
  32. Every time you put shampoo in your hair, mentally inventory your body parts in Irish.
  33. Write a postcard to yourself with the first sentence or two of a conversation, and mail it. When it arrives, write out the next couple of sentences that might follow.
  34. Write out a list of expressions for saying that you are angry, sad, etc.. Then put that list on top of your checkbook, or your stack of bills, and say them out loud as you pay those bills.
  35. Say things like "I am turning off the light" or "I cannot see anything" (*as Gaeilge*, of course) when you reach for a light switch.
  36. Each time you go to the water cooler or coffee maker or bus stop or other gathering spot you see most days, say how many people there are, using the special numbers reserved for people (e.g., *cúigear*).
  37. Check out software available in Irish – including Facebook and Firefox – and switch your interface to Irish one day a week.
  38. On the fly, repeat a sentence you hear on the radio or TV with mutations on all of the (English) consonants, as far as possible (as bhfar as bpossible, that is).
  39. When you are in a meeting and your mind begins to wander, go around the room (mentally) and make simple comparisons: "John is taller than Mary, Mary is thinner than Ralph ..."
  40. When you walk out of the movie theatre, or eject the DVD, try to summarize the film in one Irish sentence (*Titanic: Chuaigh an long go tóin!*).
  41. As you get dressed in the morning, or as you grab your jacket or your umbrella, describe the weather you are preparing for. Will it be wet? Warm? Cold?
  42. Gradually acquire several copies of pocket Irish dictionaries. (You might be surprised at how often they turn up, cheap, in used or discount book stores, or you can find used copies on line.) Then distribute them in places where you spend time during the day – in the car, on your desk, in the kitchen, next to that TV remote – so you're always ready to look up a word. Routinely pick a random word out of what you hear or read and look up the Irish for it.
  43. As you do the dishes, or load the dishwasher, name each item, each plate or utensil. You could also describe it, a little, or describe the meal that lead to the dishwashing.
  44. Similarly, as you do the laundry, or fold clothes from the dryer, or iron them, name the items.
  45. Play bingo. On the weekend, make a short list of common things, in Irish. During the week, cross them off as you encounter them in your daily routine -- making sure you say each one as you cross it off, of course.
  46. Putting gas in your car is a great "trigger" event. Commit to using Irish every time you refuel. While you're standing there watching the numbers spin, you can describe the weather, or recite something you've been working on, or just say hello to yourself. Or, you can pull out that pocket dictionary you stashed in the car and browse through it while you wait for your tank to be full.
  47. If you use Twitter, Facebook, a blog, etc. to post your thoughts and observations, put a few words of Irish into every *n*th post. Your followers won't mind, and since you're already there and writing, it will only take a minute.
  48. Build the habit of answering yes/no questions, *in English*, without using "yes" or "no." If you can get comfortable thinking that way in English, it will make it a lot easier to answer yes/no questions in Irish.
  49. Each day write one English word you use often on an index card or something similar. At the end of the day, just toss the card somewhere in the pages of your English-Irish dictionary. And then at your next longer study session, when you are using your dictionary anyway, look up those words and write their Irish equivalents on the cards ... taking very little effort to create a small set of flash cards to use when waiting for the bus, pumping gas, standing in line, or at the coffee shop.
  50. Memorize some phrases of praise and congratulations – *Maith thú!, Comhghairdeas leat!, Fair Play duit!* – and say them to yourself each and every night as you pull down the covers to get into bed.

*Of course, this list is just a start ...*