



# Chapter 1

## What is Esperanto?

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## Part 1 - Basic information about Esperanto

Esperanto is a language, like other human languages. You can express feelings and thoughts in Esperanto the same way as in other languages. You can write sophisticated literature and speak with children at home, and express everything that can be expressed in other languages of the world.

Here are some examples of Esperanto sentences:

Esperanto estas lingvo.	(Esperanto is a language.)
Ni havas revon.	(We have a dream.)
La suno brilas.	(The sun is shining)
Ĉu vi vidas min?	(Do you see me?)
Jes, mi vidas vin.	(Yes, I see you.)
Mi amas vin!	(I love you!)

National and ethnic languages belong to specific groups of people; Japanese is spoken in Japan, for example.

It's different with Esperanto. Esperanto doesn't belong to any particular nation or people – it belongs to everyone who has learned it, regardless of where they came from or where they live. Esperanto is not a national language, but an international language with speakers in every part of the

Esperanto's main aim is to simplify contact and communication between people who don't share a native or national language. In our experience, the Esperanto language is particularly suitable for use in global communication by "ordinary people" who have an interest in other countries and culture.

Esperanto's basic structure was designed by one man, L. L. Zamenhof. He created it with great care and imagination, drawing his inspiration from national languages. It took him about ten years. Only when he felt that the language had acquired its own 'spirit' did he deem it ready to be presented to the general public. That moment finally came in 1887, with the publication of a booklet called *Lingvo Internacia* (International Language).

In his booklet, Zamenhof used the pseudonym *Doktoro Esperanto* (Doctor Hopeful), but the word Esperanto later became the name of the language itself. In subsequent years, the booklet circulated among language enthusiasts and idealists in many countries, who learned the language and began using it for global communication. That's how Esperanto evolved, little by little, from one man's project into a living international language. Today, Esperanto is used and admired by hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people worldwide.

It seems incredible that a one-man project could have developed into a living international

language that so many people enjoy using, doesn't it? This chapter will briefly explain how that happened.

## **Where is Esperanto used?**

People use Esperanto every day in various ways: when travelling, at international conferences, on the Internet, for work, or in family life.

Normally Esperanto is used between people who don't have the same mother tongue. When used in this way, Esperanto acts as a "bridge language" between people from different language backgrounds. That's Esperanto's strength – it works well as a bridge across national borders.

One way to use Esperanto is to go to an international Esperanto event, where people from various countries get together. Many Esperanto speakers enjoy attending such gatherings where they can chat, swap ideas, sing, dance, and go on excursions with people from other countries.

Another way to use Esperanto is to travel to a foreign country and stay for free in the home of an Esperanto speaker. When staying with ordinary people in a foreign country, you tend to get a better picture of that country's lifestyle and customs than you would if you stayed in a hotel. *Pasporta Servo* (Passport Service) is a network of Esperanto speakers who are happy to provide such accommodation. It contains roughly 1200 addresses in more than 90 countries.

A third way to use Esperanto is to correspond with speakers by post or on the internet – a quick and easy way to make contact with people in other countries.

Some Esperanto speakers use the language to actively promote a better, more peaceful world. There are those who use it to read news about events in various countries, written by the very people who live in those countries. And others enjoy books that were originally written in a minority language, which have been translated into Esperanto but not into the reader's mother tongue.

## **How did Esperanto become a living language?**

It may sound incredible that a one-man project could evolve into a living international language. Nonetheless, that's what has happened with Esperanto. It now develops in much the same way as other languages.

These are the main factors that helped Esperanto become a living language:

### **Zamenhof had a great talent for designing the heart of a language**

Zamenhof started pondering the possibility of an international language when he was just a child. When he became a young man, he decided to bring his ideas to fruition. At the age of 17, he showed the initial result to his school friends. Over the next ten years, he adjusted and

refined the structure, and in 1887, he published it under the name *Lingvo Internacia*.

### **People were soon using Esperanto in several countries**

'Within just a few years of its launch, Esperanto had a community of speakers who used it, enjoyed it, and nurtured its growth. Many of them exchanged letters and met up with Esperanto speakers from other countries. As a result, people were using Esperanto for international communication from the very beginning of Esperanto's existence.

### **Zamenhof left the development of Esperanto up to its users**

In 1905, at the first major convention of Esperanto speakers, Zamenhof declared that he would no longer control the language's direction. Instead, anyone who used Esperanto could influence its evolution. That decision proved to be a wise one; it made many people feel they had a role to play in the process of developing the language, so they became more engaged with the Esperanto community.

### **Esperanto has a stable core that forbids arbitrary changes**

To avoid squabbles about alterations to Esperanto, Zamenhof suggested that the language should have a permanent, unchanging core, as described in the document *Fundamento de Esperanto* (Foundation of Esperanto). This proposal was accepted in 1905, and the *Fundamento* continues to have a stabilizing effect on the language as it evolves today.

### **Esperanto is both a natural and a constructed language**

Because Esperanto uses word roots and grammatical concepts from national and ethnic languages, it feels like a natural language when you speak it. At the same time, Esperanto is relatively easy to learn – its grammar has no exceptions, and it derives new words in a sensible way. These are features of its carefully constructed framework.

### **The inner idea – a commonly held (but optional) philosophy**

Associated with Esperanto is a philosophy of peace and friendship between all the peoples of the world. This is often known as *la interna ideo* (the inner idea). It's a great inspiration to those who dream of a better, more peaceful future. It's because of the inner idea that many people are happy to devote their energy and spare time to the Esperanto movement.

### **Esperanto is not just a European language**

Esperanto uses European languages as the basis for its vocabulary, but its grammar and word-building system resemble Chinese, Turkish, and other non-Indo-European languages in several ways. Syntax and style in Esperanto are largely Slavic. It takes most people a few months or a few years to learn Esperanto, regardless of their mother tongue, and they end up feeling fully at home in it.

The established community of Esperanto speakers all around the world today is proof that Esperanto has indeed become a living international language. Most speakers learn it when they're teens or adults, but there are also those people who grew up in an Esperanto family and

speak it as one of their native languages.

## **Suitable for international communication**

When you hear people speaking about an "international language", usually they are talking about English, not Esperanto. Many people believe that English is the international language, and that almost everyone speaks it. It's true that English is the language most commonly used in international situations. Around 7% of the world's population speaks English as their mother tongue, and by various estimates, another 7% or so learn English to a high standard as teens or adults. But people who acquire great proficiency in English are generally those whose native languages resemble English, such as Germans, Dutch, and Swedes. For many others, whose native language is drastically different from English, it's often very difficult and time consuming to achieve proficiency in English.

Many other languages are also used as bridges for communication on a regional basis. There are many possible approaches to international communication. Esperanto speakers generally believe that multilingualism deserves strong support, and the work of the Esperanto movement also supports the use of smaller or minority languages in various contexts. But bear in mind that not everyone is good at learning foreign languages, and that not everyone wants to spend their spare time learning several different ones. In particular, there are people who would like to learn to speak a foreign language, but were unable to achieve this goal at school: for them, Esperanto can be an interesting alternative.

Esperanto is well suited for international communication. Here are some of the reasons why:

### **1) Easier**

To anyone who has learned both Esperanto and a national or ethnic language as a foreign language, it's clear that Esperanto was the easier one to learn. Esperanto is a relatively easy language because there are only a few rules, and they don't have any exceptions. Furthermore, there's less vocabulary to memorize; you can easily build new words by combining roots, prefixes, and suffixes. We can't tell you exactly how much easier Esperanto is to learn than other languages. It varies, depending on which language you compare it with, and on the desired level of proficiency. But people generally learn Esperanto in a fifth to a third of the time they would need if they wanted to reach the same standard in other languages.

### **2) Less biased**

Esperanto doesn't belong to any particular nation or people. This makes it less biased than national or ethnic languages when it comes to global communication. Esperanto is not tied to any specific nation or ethnic culture, and that's a great advantage for a language that serves as a bridge between the various peoples of the world. This doesn't mean that Esperanto is a language with no culture; in fact, it has an international culture all of its own.

### **3) Fairer**

There's a good chance that anyone who learns Esperanto will reach a high level of proficiency in it, and then be able to communicate on an equal linguistic footing with others, regardless of their language background. This is the case for everyone, not just Westerners. Speakers who learned Esperanto as a mother tongue generally don't speak the language any better than anyone else; anyone who studies Esperanto seriously can reach the same high standard as a native speaker. That's why, for global communication, Esperanto is fairer than the national languages – while a few people seem to master these effortlessly, most of us have to struggle for years to speak them well.

Esperanto can be of great interest to anyone who feels it's important that an international language be easy, neutral, and fair.

English is currently the most widely used language for global communication. However, at some point in the future, more and more people may discover how well suited Esperanto is to the job of international communication, and then both English and Esperanto may serve in parallel as major international languages. That would mean a great deal to the millions of people who find it very difficult to become proficient in English. In any case, although at the moment Esperanto isn't the language most used for international communication, it's still worth learning it, to participate in its welcoming community and colourful culture.

### **Esperanto culture**

It isn't possible to list every aspect of Esperanto's lively culture. But to give you a brief taste, there are films, literature, theatre, and all kinds of music produced in Esperanto.

There were poems even in the very first Esperanto booklet. Right from the start, people noticed that Esperanto had a richness and beauty that lent itself well to creative writing. After all, it's a language that feels liberating, partly because of its relatively free word order and its ability to create new words through its flexible system of word-building.

Every year sees the publication of many new books in Esperanto. New Esperanto songs and CDs by artists in various genres are also published each year. You can find Esperanto radio programmes and podcasts online. There are regular cultural festivals where people can enjoy various aspects of Esperanto culture.

If you would like to listen to some sample of Esperanto music, go to [www.vinilkosmo.com/](http://www.vinilkosmo.com/).

Esperanto also serves as a bridge between national or ethnic cultures. There are thousands of books that have been translated into Esperanto from national or ethnic languages. They include the great classics, as well as more obscure “pearls of literature” written in minority languages.

There are also several films and plays originally written in Esperanto, and there are Esperanto

translations of important works by great writers from other world languages, including Shakespeare.

### **Some concluding thoughts**

The Esperanto community strongly supports the concepts of language diversity and language rights. All languages are valuable, and it's important that the majority languages do not push local and minority languages out of use.

Learning Esperanto is good preparation for learning other languages quickly and easily, whether you're a child or an adult. What's more, people who learn Esperanto often develop an interest in learning additional languages.

Esperanto is not perfect. It's not perfectly neutral, nor is it perfectly fair. But in our experience, it's a fairer and less biased way of communicating internationally than using a national language.

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## ***Part 2 - Frequently asked questions about Esperanto***

In this section you'll find answers to some common questions about Esperanto.

### **How did Esperanto get its name?**

At first, the language was simply called *Lingvo Internacia* (International Language). When Zamenhof published the language, he used the pseudonym *Doktoro Esperanto* (which means "Doctor Hopeful"). As a result, people sometimes talked about "Dr. Esperanto's language." Later on, they just said "Esperanto" and that word was adopted as the name of the language.

### **How many people speak Esperanto?**

There's no clear way to count the number of Esperanto speakers, because not all of them are members of organizations. Besides, it depends how you define "speaking Esperanto": do you only count those people who regularly speak it to a high standard, or do you count anyone who has a basic knowledge of Esperanto, even if they hardly ever use it? Estimates of the number of Esperanto speakers in the world are therefore rather variable, from tens of thousands to several million. Whatever the true figure, there are enough Esperanto speakers in the world to form a lively international community

### **Which languages does Esperanto most resemble?**

Most of the word roots come from Europe, especially the Romance languages. But Esperanto's grammar has many features that are not typical of European languages, and these make it quite similar to such languages as Turkish, Swahili, or even Chinese.

## **Is Esperanto easy to learn?**

Yes, compared with national languages. But, as always, a lot depends on the individual student and on how many other languages they've already learned. In our experience, learning a new language is always a challenge – it's never "very easy". This is also true for Esperanto, although it's much less awkward to master than a typical national or ethnic language. Even people who've never really managed to learn a foreign language can learn Esperanto! But of course you have to study and practise a lot if you want to speak the language fluently and correctly.

## **Why learn Esperanto?**

People choose to learn Esperanto for various reasons. Language lovers are often curious about Esperanto's grammar and that's why they start studying the language. Other people become interested in Esperanto because, after failing to learn a particular foreign language, they want to try an easier one. Some have heard about the "inner idea", and so they learn Esperanto to help support a more peaceful and interconnected world. Young people are often interested in travelling to other countries to make new friends there, and Esperanto is a great option for doing this.

## **How do I learn Esperanto?**

If you have a good Internet connection, we recommend starting at [www.lernu.net](http://www.lernu.net), where you can find several interactive courses for beginners, in many languages. If you prefer a course in the form of a book, you can order one from an online bookshop. If you'd prefer to learn Esperanto in person, you can contact your local or regional Esperanto association to find out when and where courses will be taking place. Once you've learned a bit of Esperanto, it's fun to use the language with other people, either online or at an Esperanto event. Contact your local club!

## **Does Esperanto have a logo or symbol?**

Yes, there are several. The green star is the oldest and most widely used: it appears on the Esperanto flag, among other places. The colour green stands for hope, and the five-pointed star represents the five continents. A more recent symbol is the so-called "jubilee logo", which was the winner of a contest held at the time of Esperanto's hundredth anniversary.

## **Why do some linguists say negative things about Esperanto?**

Linguists are the people best placed to understand the complexities of language. And this may be exactly why so many of them – who are otherwise extremely competent – fail to believe that Esperanto can work as a fully fledged living language, and that it's worthy of any attention or research. Languages are such complex and delicate things that it seems amazingly unlikely that a genuinely rich, living language could have emerged from one young man's project. (Zamenhof was 27 when he published Esperanto, having spent more than ten years working on it.) So it's natural to be sceptical. But if you look into the reality of it, you'll see that Esperanto works incredibly well for global communication. It would be great if more linguists and researchers



decided to study Esperanto and research its community in the future.

### **Can I learn Esperanto at school or university?**

In some countries, yes. Many Esperantists argue that learning Esperanto in primary school makes it easier for people to learn other foreign languages later. Studying a relatively easy language gives students confidence in learning languages, and the fact that Esperanto's grammar is so regular adds to their understanding of grammatical structures and concepts. Several independent studies have reached this conclusion, and it would be interesting to see the results of further research into Esperanto's ability to help people learn languages.

### **Can you tell what country an Esperanto speaker comes from?**

You can often guess this from a person's accent when they speak Esperanto, but not always. Some people have a "neutral" accent.

### **How many native Esperanto speakers are there?**

There are something like a thousand people who have Esperanto as one of their mother tongues. Often this is because their parents come from different countries and met at an Esperanto event. The parents use Esperanto together at home, and when they then have a child, they want to go on speaking Esperanto together. Perhaps the most common situation is where one parent always speaks Esperanto to the child, while the other parent (the immigrant) uses their native language with them. In society, the child uses the local or national language. The child becomes natively trilingual.

### **Wouldn't it be better to create a new, even fairer language for global communication?**

It's not easy to assemble a good basis for a language. Linguists – the people who know the most about languages – don't necessarily have the talent for creating a language themselves: their speciality is in *analysing* languages. Creation and analysis are two very different things. Several people have constructed new languages – even a group of linguists has had a go – but so far the results have been less successful than Esperanto. Think about Mozart and his music – people with genius like that don't come along very often! Zamenhof was rather similar. He had an extraordinary gift for creating languages, and he managed to prepare the basis of a language that's turned out to work much better than all other attempts. Besides, if the seed of a newly published language is to germinate, it needs a long period of widespread use in every conceivable situation. Languages that lack a basic ideology (like the one Zamenhof gave to Esperanto) have less chance of acquiring the community of speakers they need if they're to come alive. This process has already occurred in Esperanto, and the language is now ready. It's not *perfect*, but it's still an extremely suitable and fair way for people to communicate internationally.

## Isn't English good enough for international communication?

English is very useful for communicating globally in many situations. But the fact remains that not everyone succeeds in becoming fluent in English, even after many years of study. It's a particularly difficult challenge for people whose native languages are very unlike English. (If you've ever been to Korea or Turkey, for example, you know what we're talking about.) Esperanto is easier to learn than ethnic languages, whether you're young or old. Furthermore, Esperanto is not tied to any specific national culture. This is an important advantage for a language that serves as a bridge between ethnic groups: they can use it to communicate on an equal footing.

## But hasn't Esperanto already had its chance?

It's true that in the early 1920s, the League of Nations (a predecessor of the UN) almost adopted Esperanto as one of its working languages. It's also true that several politicians became interested in Esperanto in the thirties and forties. But today, very few politicians have any interest in it. Maybe Esperanto will never again have the chance to become a working language in a large international organization. But maybe the situation will change in the future: maybe Esperanto will become ever more popular among people interested in creating a new world community with closer, friendlier relationships between ethnic groups. We can't predict the future with any certainty. But we can hope... We Esperantists are good at that! (The word "Esperanto" means a person who hopes.)

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## Part 3 - Zamenhof, Esperanto's founder

As a child, Zamenhof dreamed of ways to bring mankind together in peace. Establishing an international language was one of them, and he never gave up on that dream. In this section, you'll see how he got his idea for a new international language, and how he turned it into reality.

### A boy with a great dream

In 1859, a Jewish boy named Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof was born. He grew up in the small city of Białystok with its mixed population of Poles, Russians, Jews, Germans, and a number of Lithuanians, each group speaking its own language. Zamenhof was quick to note that these ethnic groups did not always get on well with each other, and that their misunderstandings and quarrels often arose from the lack of a common language. These experiences had a big influence on young Ludoviko (to use the Esperanto form of his name), and when he was still a child, he had a great vision of a *common language* (alongside the ethnic languages) that all the groups could share. With such a language, places like Białystok would be more peaceful, and people could talk

directly to each other to at least try and solve any conflicts before they escalated into serious arguments.

*"If I hadn't been a Jew from the ghetto, the idea of unifying mankind would either never have entered my head, or at least not dogged me so persistently throughout my entire life."*

*L.L. Zamenhof, private correspondence, 1905*

## **How about one of the classical languages?**

Zamenhof was convinced it would never work if the language of one of the ethnic groups was chosen as the common one, because that could provoke jealousy among the other groups, and give a considerable advantage to the group who used that language natively. At high school, Zamenhof started learning Latin and Greek – the classical languages – and he wondered whether one of those could be used as an international common language. But after studying them for a while, he decided they were too hard to learn, even for him with his knowledge of several other languages: Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Yiddish, German, and French. So how hard would they be for people who didn't have any great interest or experience of learning languages? No, the common international language would have to be easier than the classical languages, but just as politically neutral as them. But did such a language exist?

## **An "artificial" language**

A language that's neutral but also easy to learn. Is that even possible? Learning a language is never an easy task, and is there anything in the world that can be said to be completely neutral? Probably not, but that doesn't rule out the possibility of a language that's *less* difficult and biased than the ethnic languages. Zamenhof thought a lot about this, and came to the conclusion that an artificial language was the best solution. By "artificial", he meant that the structure of the language should be designed by one or more people. While he was still in high school, Zamenhof started experimenting with ways of creating a new language, but he often doubted whether he could make a good job of it. Despite all his doubts, he stayed true to his dream of a common international language, and he continued experimenting with his "artificial" language, gradually making some progress.

## **Simple grammar, but what about the vocabulary?**

When he learned English at the end of high school, Zamenhof was inspired by how easy its grammar was in comparison to Latin and Greek, and he realized it was possible to have a language with a grammar that was clear and straightforward. He started to simplify the grammar of the language he was building, and after some careful work, he was reasonably happy with it – but the vocabulary just kept on growing! How could he solve this new problem? A language has to have words for just about everything. He came up with the answer when he saw two Russian signs. The words on the signs were "Shveytsarskaya" (porter's lodge) and

"Konditerskaya" (sweet shop, candy store). Both words ended in "-skaya", and Zamenhof suddenly grasped how important suffixes could be. "I've solved the problem!" he decided, as he stood looking at the two Russian signs. Later, he started to make detailed comparisons of words, looking for connections between them, to decide which prefixes and suffixes would be useful in his language. This work proved crucial: Zamenhof managed to dramatically reduce the number of word roots that people would need to memorize.

### The first draft

At first, Zamenhof tried building words from short groups of letters: *a, ab, ac, ad, ... ba, ca, da, ... e, eb, ec, ... be, ce, ... aba, aca, ...* But he quickly rejected this idea, because it turned out to be impossible to remember the made-up words. Then he became convinced that the vocabulary should use roots from the Romance and Germanic languages as its basis. That way, his new language would have a natural similarity to European languages. At the end of high school, Zamenhof was able to show his school friends the essentials of a language that he called "Lingwe Uniwersala". Several of his friends were inspired to learn it. In December 1878, they gathered together to celebrate the completion of the first draft of his language. They even sang a hymn in it.

### Testing and improvement

Zamenhof didn't want to present his language to the public straight away, partly because he was too young to do so, but mainly because he wanted time to test the language carefully and make various improvements. Some of the high school students who had learned "Lingwe Uniwersala" tried to discuss it with adults, but they soon gave up when they found that most people simply laughed at them. Zamenhof decided to continue working on his language project in secret, to avoid such mockery and worse – because Jews at that time were being persecuted for anything and everything. As he tried the language out, making translations of lengthy texts, he noticed certain aspects of the language that needed adjusting (even though they'd seemed fine in theory), and he made constant improvements to the language. He gradually realized he'd be better off avoiding literal translations, and he started thinking directly in the new language instead. At this point, Zamenhof decided that his language had acquired a *spirit* of its own: it had begun to come *alive*. That's how the core of modern-day Esperanto was born.

### Lingvo Internacia

While he was practising medicine in Warsaw, Zamenhof started looking for a publisher to print a booklet about his new language. He prepared a manuscript entitled "Lingvo Internacia" (International Language), but instead of putting his real name on the book, he used the pseudonym "Dr Esperanto". The word "Esperanto" means someone who hopes, and so this was an apt description for the eye specialist from Białystok – a doctor with hopes for a better world and for unity and peace between its peoples. But he couldn't publish the booklet at first. He had trouble finding a printer who would produce it – and he needed funding, too.

Zamenhof was lucky in more ways than one because he'd just got engaged to Klara Silbernik, who supported his idea of a neutral language. In the summer of 1887, they received financial help from Klara's father, and they used a large part of the money to publish the so-called "Unua Libro" (First Book). This booklet, which was initially printed in Russian and later translated into other languages, included a preface with some poems in Esperanto, a description of the grammar, and a small dictionary. The booklet gradually circulated among idealists and language enthusiasts, initially in Europe, and then in other parts of the world as well.

The next few years were hectic for the newlywed Zamenhofs, involving small children, work, and Esperanto correspondence by night. They weren't rich, but they managed to live in reasonable comfort, and in 1905 they had enough money to travel to France and take part in the first Esperanto convention, in the city of Boulogne-sur-Mer. There was a wonderful atmosphere among the participants, about 700 in all, from 20 countries. In his opening address, Zamenhof gave an emotional speech about his work and his belief in the unity of mankind.

*"We should be fully mindful of the great importance of this day, for today we have come together, within the welcoming walls of Boulogne-sur-Mer, not as French with English, nor as Russians with Poles, but as people with people."*

*L.L. Zamenhof, speech at Boulogne-sur-Mer, 1905*

### **A naive dreamer?**

Some of Zamenhof's dreams and ideas were naive. For instance, he tried to construct a neutral religious framework that would bring together all believers and freethinkers and make peace between them – but that project never got off the ground, even among Esperanto speakers. While it may be true that Esperanto hasn't taken the world by storm either, it does nonetheless have hundreds of thousands of speakers – perhaps even millions – who admire the language and use it in a wide range of situations. No other language project has blossomed into a language that's actually alive and spoken by people all around the world, in everyday use for global communication and in "international families" (with parents from different countries and language backgrounds). From that viewpoint, Zamenhof met with great success, and Esperanto speakers of today feel great respect for him and for his creative work. Thanks to him, Esperantists are able to enjoy friendly relationships with people from different countries.

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## ***Part 4 - Local information about Esperanto***

This section contains contact information for Esperanto organizations in several English-speaking countries. Many large cities, and some small towns, have Esperanto clubs that hold regular meetings. The best way to find these clubs is to contact your country's national Esperanto association: many of them even list their local clubs online. Local clubs are a great way to learn Esperanto, practise the language, and meet Esperanto speakers in your area. Many national Esperanto organizations also offer bookshops that make it easy to buy books in or about Esperanto.

### **Organizations and clubs**

Most countries have a national Esperanto organization that can help you find clubs in your region.

- Australia: [aea.esperanto.org.au](http://aea.esperanto.org.au)
- Canada: [www.esperanto.ca](http://www.esperanto.ca)
- Ireland: [www.esperanto.ie](http://www.esperanto.ie)
- New Zealand: [www.esperanto.org.nz](http://www.esperanto.org.nz)
- South Africa: [www.esperanto.za.org](http://www.esperanto.za.org)
- UK: [www.esperanto-gb.org](http://www.esperanto-gb.org)
- USA: [www.esperanto.org](http://www.esperanto.org)
- Other countries: [www.uea.org/landoj](http://www.uea.org/landoj)

### **Courses and events**

Esperanto clubs in many cities offer regular courses. There are also some residential courses that last several weeks. Here are some links that may help you:

- Australia: [aesk.esperanto.org.au](http://aesk.esperanto.org.au)
- Canada: [www.esperanto.ca/en/servoj](http://www.esperanto.ca/en/servoj)
- New Zealand: [www.esperanto.org.nz/about\\_nzea.html](http://www.esperanto.org.nz/about_nzea.html)
- UK: [www.esperantoeducation.com](http://www.esperantoeducation.com)
- USA: [www.esperanto.org/nask](http://www.esperanto.org/nask), [www.esperanto-usa.org/en/node/6](http://www.esperanto-usa.org/en/node/6)

Many national Esperanto associations hold annual conventions that last two or three days or even a week. These events are a chance to meet friends, visit new places, and attend talks on interesting topics, all in Esperanto. They also give leaders the chance to meet with members and plan the next year. Organizations often hold a special gathering around the time of Zamenhof's birthday, 15 December. On a smaller scale, many cities have informal clubs that meet up once a month or so. Contact your local association for details of upcoming meetings.

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## Learn Esperanto online: [www.lernu.net](http://www.lernu.net)

*lernu!* is a multilingual website that helps Internet users find out about Esperanto and learn it – easily, and for free.

The site offers various levels of courses, dictionaries in many languages, guides to the grammar, audio recordings of stories with pictures, instant messaging for direct communication, forums, and many other resources. The site has an active community of learners and experienced speakers, which makes it easier to learn. At *lernu!*, you can also exchange experiences with other users, ask questions about the language, and find new friends from all over the world, who are also learning Esperanto.

## Watch short videos about Esperanto online: [www.esperantoestas.net](http://www.esperantoestas.net)

Find out about the international language Esperanto with these six brief and fun videos:

Esperanto is ...

...a language that's useful for everything (Part 1 – 01:43 min)

... a language with many features (Part 2 – 08:01 min)

... a language used in many ways (Part 3 - 06:23 min)

... worth learning for everyone (Part 4 – 13:22)

... a language with a colourful movement (Part 5 – 04:12 min)

... a language of the future (Part 6 – 09:31 min)



In the next chapter, you will find an introduction to Esperanto's grammar and its system of word building.