

HANDBOOK FOR AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Useful Tips and Ideas

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Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
LANGUAGE.....	4
HOW TO LEARN	5
1. Time.....	5
2. Everyday something new.....	5
3. Do you know what type of learner you are?.....	6
4. Possibilities to learn:.....	6
a) Vocabulary	7
b) Radio and TV	7
c) Internet	7
d) Good links to consider when learning Finnish:	7
e) Speaking	8
5. Find Finnish courses:.....	9
MOTIVATION TO LEARN.....	10
WORK.....	11
1. Internet resources for the job surfing:.....	12
2. Useful internet resources to consider when looking for a job.....	13
3. Useful vocabulary for the job search:.....	14
MONEY.....	16
TIME MANAGEMENT.....	17
FROM THE AUTHOR.....	19

INTRODUCTION

My name is Elena Petrasova and I have lived in Finland for 13 years. This handbook is about the most fundamental experience in my life such as living in Finland and being an international student. My first experience was in International Business Management (Metropolia) and the second - in Social Services (DIAK). Both studies were held in English language in international classes. Therefore, I know very well about the problems that international students face.

I have gathered here some useful tips and ideas for international students. I know that we all have different life situation and this handbook cannot be suitable for everyone. Anyhow I hope that almost every reader will find here something useful for him/herself.

LANGUAGE

There is a reason why «language» takes the first place in this book. If you want to continue working in Finland, you **have to** learn Finnish language. If you go to the most popular job site of Finland: mol.fi, you will see that there are not so many English-speaking jobs. Therefore, your job opportunities are narrowed to English speaking jobs (which are very little and they have high applicant competition) and to jobs where they do not need language so much: cleaning, storage, driving etc.



HOW TO LEARN

A Finnish system uses Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. There are six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, where A1 - is a basic ability to communicate, A2 - ability to deal with simple information, take part in routine dialogs, B1 - ability to participate in non-routine dialogs, self-express in a limited way, B2 - ability to talk on a range of subjects, C1 -ability to deal with unfamiliar topics and C2 - ability to work with academic material. For more information, you can google “CEF reference for language”.

According to Työvoimatoimisto (Employment office or TE office) and different language institutes you need to have A2 level to be demanded on the work market. Anyhow it often happens that even B2 level is not enough to compete there. An employer wants you to have very good skills at least in your work vocabulary. But do not panic, there are some ways that you can use to improve your skills.

1. Time

First of all, you need to have TIME. Therefore, I encourage you to start learning as early as possible. Different people have different speed of learning. One can learn in half a year, another would not be able to make it in three.

2. Everyday something new

They say that to be fluent in a language, you need to learn 10,000 words. 1000 - 3000 will bring you to everyday life speaking. Not bad! That will make about 3-9 words a day.

- Take with you a small notebook, where you can put useful words. Do not concentrate on the difficult ones at the beginning. More you learn, more complicated becomes your vocabulary;
- Try to learn active vocabulary, words that we use more often;
- Try to learn your vocabulary in a context (Newspapers, web-sites, signboards); That will help you to understand word forms and connection;
- When learning a language, you cannot avoid learning grammar. The books I used to learn grammar are “Hyvin menee! Suomea Aikuisille” by Pirkko Majakangas

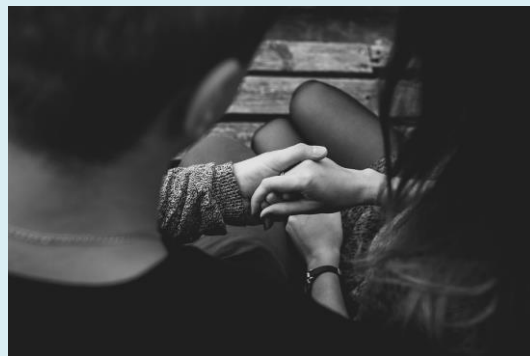
and “Suomen Mestari” by Sonja Gehring and Sanni Heinzmann. These textbooks are very popular among foreigners, but of course they are not the only ones that you can use;

- Another thing that might help you is reading children’s books. You can take them in the library.

3. Do you know what type of learner you are?



As you know, there are 3 different channels to perceive information: vak - visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic. You can Google it to learn more about it. You can find your channel and that will make your learning easier. Furthermore, you can use all the channels.



4. Possibilities to learn:

a) Vocabulary

I believe, you would agree, that the key success to learn any language is using it. When you know 3 words only it is hard to keep up with conversation. Therefore, you need to make up your vocabulary from words or phrases, which we use every day in cafeteria, shop, small chat with a friend.

b) Radio and TV

At one point, I understood that I am wasting too much time that could be useful. It is time during your way to school, work, and home. You can listen to Finnish radio or record new words and listen to them. If you like a Finnish song you can find it in the internet and translate it. That will help you to learn some phrases very fast.

If you have a possibility to watch a TV or even have it working on the background that would be great, as your brain is a most powerful computer which records the information around us without you even knowing that. Moreover, a brilliant thing in Finland is that English movies and series are not dubbed. Therefore, you can watch series and read Finnish translation. Watch cartoons for children, they are dubbed and have simple vocabulary.

c) Internet

There are countless numbers of resources, where you can practice Finnish. My favourite one is "Yle Uutiset selkosuomeksi" (news in easy Finnish). You can also ask your Finnish teacher for ones or find something suitable yourself.

d) Good links to consider when learning Finnish:

- ♣ <http://yle.fi/aihe/oppiminen/kielet> - there you can find Finnish exercises;
- ♣ <http://tasteoffinnish.fi/> - basic Finnish;
- ♣ <http://www.uuno.tamk.fi> - basic Finnish;
- ♣ <http://h105.it.helsinki.fi/FinnishForForeigners/parts-index.htm> - basic Finnish;
- ♣ <http://venla.info/> - learn Finnish online;
- ♣ <http://www11.edu.fi/yymarra/> - a portal about Finland;
- ♣ <http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/selkouutiset/> - easy news for foreigners;

- ♣ <http://papunet.net/selko/> - information in Finnish in easy words;
- ♣ <http://selkosanomat.fi/> - news in easy Finnish;
- ♣ <http://virtuoosi.pkky.fi/vilma/> - language learning portal;
- ♣ <http://www.infopankki.fi/en/frontpage>;
- ♣ <http://www04.edu.fi/suomeaolehyva/> - basic Finnish;
- ♣ <http://suomenkielisanootervetuloa.fi/>.

e) Speaking

Your Finnish friends would always want to help you as every Finn knows that Finnish language is something very difficult to learn. Anyhow I know speaking Finnish with your friends does not really work, as they would like to share something with you as well, and you will not understand them. Everything slips to English again. Therefore, I encourage you to find other resources. For me, this resource was a youth club, where I was first a volunteer, then an intern and then a worker. Volunteering somewhere in the evenings or weekends will bring you a lot of benefits for your learning. Moreover, you can then ask for a volunteer certificate, which can be used for applying some courses or placements.

1. It is always hard to start, but give yourself time, nobody is perfect and you never know what other people would do in your situation. So a first tip for speaking: DO NOT BE AFRAID TO LOOK STUPID. I felt stupid for quite a long time, as of course I did not understand much, anyhow, I got my reward, when they offered a place to work.
2. The second tip for speaking: COPY. Copy intonation, words, phrases. You will see that people are actually using a very basic vocabulary and many, many, many repetitions.
3. Tip number 3. I found that the progress is very slow when you speak Finnish with someone who knows it at the same level. There is a good saying about it, if you know you are the best in a room, this is a wrong room for you. So where to find people that can help you. Everywhere, there are no borders. Ask people on the streets where is this or that. Even if you know the location of a shop you need you can always make sure;). You are also pimping up your social skills at the same time. Moreover, there are many people who always want to offer you something.

Listen to them, ask them questions. You do not need to buy their products, but you can spend some time practicing. My friend taught me that the best people in the world to practice Finnish is to speak with the phone sellers☺.

5. Find Finnish courses:

- <http://www.finnishcourses.fi/> - bank of information about Finnish courses;
- Edupoli – Educational services for adults (www.edupoli.fi);
- Opetushallitus – Finnish national agency for education (http://www.cimo.fi/programmes/finnish_language_and_culture/support_to_students_outside_finland/summer_courses_in_finland);
- Helsingin aikuisopisto – adult school that has Finnish courses (<http://www.helao.fi/kurssit/kiellet-ja-viestinta/kiellet/suomi/>);
- Kieliavain – language centre (www.kieliavain.fi/);
- Helsingin seudun kesäyliopisto – summer university of Helsinki (www.kesayliopistohki.fi/kurssit/kategoria/kielikurssit-fi/suomi-fi-37301/?show=future);
- Kansanopisto – national educational centre (www.kansanopistot.fi/);
- Berlitz – language centre in Helsinki (www.berlitz.fi/en/helsinki/);
- Helsingin yliopiston Kielikeskus – Language centre university of Helsinki (www.helsinki.fi/kksc/english/);
- Perhetalo Sahrami – family club, where you can which offer Finnish courses (www.hel.fi/www/Helsinki/fi/paivahoito-ja-koulutus/leikki-ja-avointoiminta/perhetalot/perhetalo-sahrami/);
- Monikulttuuriyhdistys Familia Club – multinational club which offers Finnish courses (www.familiary.fi/suomen-kieli.html).

(Information was taken from informational portal <http://intofinland.ru>)

MOTIVATION TO LEARN

“Enter every activity without giving mental recognition to the possibility of defeat. Concentrate on your strengths, instead of your weaknesses... on your powers, instead of your problems.”—Paul J. Meyer



For me and for many other people, Finnish language was very hard to learn as it belongs to Uralic group. Pronunciation, the length of the words, weird symbols, different dialects and slang! Then inspiration crossed my mind and I broke through. Here it is:

1. First of all, do not pay attention to what you cannot handle right now, pay attention on what you CAN learn.
2. Second, even a small step forward brings you to your future aim. It does not matter if you cannot remember a word for the 10th time already; you will remember it in your own tempo.
3. Do as much or nearly as much that you can and use all possible resources and you will reach your goal.
4. Remember, that you will be rewarded for your pain. One day you will realize that you understand what is going on;) Usually this day comes straight after a feeling when you are already fed up with learning and you feel that you have learned so much, but nothing happens.

YES YOU CAN

WORK

Work is not hard to find, if you are really aiming for it. The one who seeks, finds:

- 1) Make people know that you want to work. Tell your classmates (maybe they have something for you), make a note on the information board, and post your information on the Facebook.
- 2) Surf Internet. You can find the useful links further in the text.
- 3) Stay ambitious, but real. If you do not know Finnish there is a very high possibility, that the work, which you can do, should not demand speaking. Usually it is housekeeping in hotels, cleaners in offices or schools, dish washers, storage workers etc. You can always start from small and look for a bigger position.
- 4) Even though the employers need to post their position into the official sites, some of them do not do it straight away. Many times, I looked for hotels, cleaning companies, storages myself and phoned them. You do not lose anything.
- 5) Do not be afraid to make a call. If you dial a wrong number people will forget about it next second, they drop your call. What is more important, they might direct you to a right person. *"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."-Wayne Gretzky.*
- 6) Always ask for information or advice. People you work with during your placement are informed very well about social services in their area. If they do not have an opportunity to employ you, maybe they know someone who can. Make connections. This also works for finding next placement.
- 7) Build up your CV and cover letter. There is a good booklet "[Guidebook to Employment](#)", written by Asmara Rias and Kanchan Gurung, Diak students.
- 8) Do not get upset if you do not receive an answer. It happens all the time and to everyone. *"Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm."-Winston Churchill*

1. Internet resources for the job surfing:

- 1) www.mol.fi - it is a main portal for surfing jobs. There is also an English version of the site;
- 2) www.seure.fi - it is a recruiting company of Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa;
- 3) www.jobstep.net - it is a recruiting portal for students;
- 4) www.helsinkirekry.fi - it is webpage of open positions in Helsinki as an employer;
- 5) www.oikotie.fi - It is a web page of job vacations and property buying and renting;
- 6) www.oppisopimus.net - Oppisopimus is another way of employment in Finland, where you study and work at the same time. A very nice way to learn profession, language and earn money;
- 7) www.uranus.fi - it is another job portal with training courses;
- 8) www.addecco.fi - it is a job portal;
- 9) www.barona.fi - it is a job portal;
- 10) www.monster.fi - it is big job portal with a lot of academic job opportunities;
- 11) www.nordic.fi - it is a job portal with vacations in Nordic countries;
- 12) www.opteam.fi - it is a job portal;
- 13) www.vara-apu.fi – it is a great portal where you can find part time job and match it under your timetable;
- 14) www.staffpoint.fi - it is another great portal with similar features;
- 15) www.uratie.fi job - it is a portal where you can also find.

2. Useful internet resources to consider when looking for a job

- 1) <https://funzi.mobi/learn/getthatjob> - useful tips to build up skills which are useful when looking for a job;
- 2) <http://tem.fi/en/frontpage> - Official page of Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment ;
- 3) http://www.studyinfinland.fi/practical_matters - informational portal.
- 4) http://www.suomi.fi/suomifi/english/state_and_municipalities/finland_essentials/index.html - information about Finland.



3. Useful vocabulary for the job search:

FINNISH	ENGLISH
aika, ajankohta, ajanjakso	time, date, period
ansioluettelo	CV, curriculum vitae, resum�
avoimet tyupaikat	vacancies, open vacancies
esimies	superior, boss
hakuaika, viimeinen hakupdvd	last application date
henkiluarviointi, soveltuvuustestaus/-testi	personal estimation, aptitude test
henkilustavuokraus	temp service, hiring out personnel
henkilustupalveluyritys	private employment agency
kesto	duration, length
kesdtyc	summer job
koulutus, kurssi	education, training
lisdtietoja, lisdtiedot	further, additional information
lopputyupaikka	diploma work placement
mdrdgaikainen	fixed-term
mdrdgaikainen tycsopimus	fixed-term contract
nettisivut	www pages
nimike, titteli	title
opinndytetyc, lopputy, diplomityc, gradu	thesis job, diploma work
osoite, postiosoite, ldhiosoite	address
osa-aikainen	part-time job
palkka	remuneration, salary
palkkatoive	salary request
pdtevyys, kyky	qualifications, competence, capability, talent
rekrytointi	recruiting, recruitment
sopimus	contract
sosiaalinen media, some	social media

sähköposti	e-mail
taito, osaaminen	skill, know how
tavoite	goal, target, ambition
tehtäväkuva, työkuva	job description
toimiala	field, industry
työ, työpaikka, duuni	job, work, employment
työhaastattelu	job interview
työhakemus, hakemus	marketing letter, cover letter, application letter
varaamuotoinen hakemus	free-form application
työnantaja	employer
työnhakija	job seeker, job applicant
työntekijä	employee
työsopimus	job contract
työtehtävä	duty, task
ura	career
urasuunnittelu	career planning
ura- ja rekrytointipalvelut	career Services
vaatimukset, edellytykset, kriteerit	requirements, expectations, criteria
vakituinen, toistaiseksi voimassaoleva	permanent, open ended
verkostot	networks
viimeistään, mennessä	at latest, no later than (send your CV and application at latest 15 th of May)
yhdistys, järjestö	association, organization, society
yhteyshenkilö	contact person
yrittäjä	entrepreneur
yritys	company

(<http://study.unipolitampere.fi/working/usefulvocabulary.html>)

MONEY

Being a student is very hard sometime. There were times when I did not have money for a lunch. Here are some tips for you that might be useful.

1. Plan you budget. It is really important to know how much money you can spend. Do not forget about coffee with friends and something great for yourself.
2. Make a little saving. It does not matter if it is 1 euro or 50. It can happen that you would need at once one sum of money.
3. Use the privilege of being a student. As you know, your student food card gives you an opportunity to eat in many places half price. Moreover, there are places where lunch is cheaper then 2,30.
4. In Finland, you will never be hungry. There are some places in Finland, where you can get some food for free. The most famous, I suppose, is in Myllypuro.
5. There are also great internet services such as tori.fi, where you can sell and buy things that were in use or even new. Some things people give away for free. Put into a “Hae” field what are you looking for in Finnish, for example “туццутд”, mark in a field “Koko Suomi” as “Uusimaa” and you will see all the ads which are relevant for your demand.
6. Check out a map with flea markets [here](#).
7. You can also use an application for your phone to handle your expenses. For example “Spending “ app.

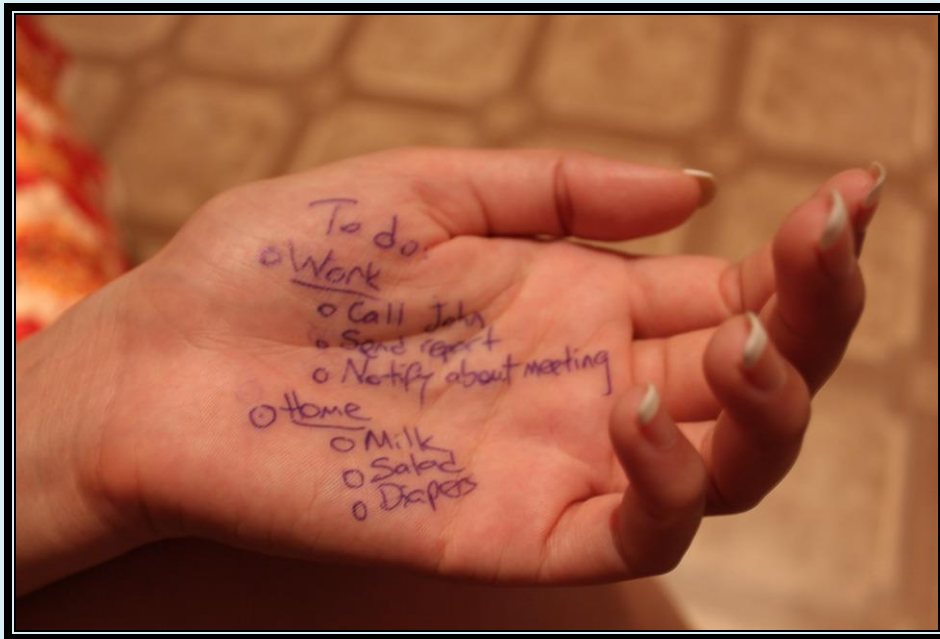


TIME MANAGEMENT

There are so many things to keep in mind. You have to think about study, money and, of course, you need to spend time with your family and friends. How to manage all? There are some of my tips that helped me. If you have your own, it would be great if you share them with others and me as well.

1. A good plan is easy to follow. It saves your time and makes your mind clear. Being without a plan and having many things in mind is like walking in forest with no path. Clear road will take you to your goal faster.
2. A diary calendar and phone reminders helped me a lot. When I didn't have money to buy a calendar, I did one myself. If you put it in front of your eyes, you always will keep in mind what you need to do and when you have free time.
3. When you have free time, remember to invest it into something good: family, friends, yourself and rest. Spending time with the ones you love or on doing what you love is fundamental. In my opinion, we should not sacrifice these moments as they are the most important in our life.
4. Many international students do not buy a monthly bus ticket, due to the fact that they try to save money. Moreover, they use ticket of another person. Of course, it is their personal decision, but I would strongly recommend buying a ticket. They are very strict with that in Finland and if you get caught, you would get a fine which can be worth 3 times more than your ticket. And yes, they see the name of the ticket owner in their machine. Buy your own, and it will give you an opportunity to freely travel on the public transports which will take you from place to place marked in your calendar. Moreover, you will not be always in a hurry to give it back.
5. Tasks from your courses are the other things that should be submitted on time. You have a very nice reminder in Fronter, which tells you what and when should be submitted.

6. It is hard to study when you come home. First you want to eat, then you want to drink, then you want to sleep, and then your mom phones. I recommend you to study at school and do all the necessary tasks there. You can go to a library or computer class. The atmosphere there will keep you concentrated.
7. Take food with you, if you have not enough time to go home and to eat before going to work.
8. Think where you can save some of your time. For me it was cooking and supermarket. I always knew where to look for a product and what I need in the supermarket as I usually have a shopping list. I also usually cooked for couple of days and used a freezer.
9. Share work, tasks and responsibilities. No need to do everything alone.



FROM THE AUTHOR

I believe that life, no matter how hard it could be, is beautiful and wonderful phenomena. Every day there is an opportunity sometimes for something small and sometimes for something big. I always believe into incredible power of a human brain, magical power of motivation and strength of human will. I would like to wish you to stay like a kid, ambitious and curios, who tries for many times before the actual success and who does not know a failure.

I would be glad if this handbook was helpful for you. If not, I would be very thankful if you think of a person who might need this information and pass it on.

Thank you for your time and interest!

Elena Petrasova