INTRODUCTION
The 3000 languages in the world today were originated by our ancient ancestors and morphed over several millennia. These languages are full of inconsistencies and irregularities. It is a tribute to the capacity of the human mind that it can handle such difficult material. In 1887, a new language, free from irregularities, was introduced. By speaking this relatively easy-to-learn bridge language, people from all backgrounds are able to overcome the language barrier. Today, Esperanto is the only planned human language in widespread use. Use an Esperanto-English dictionary and refer to this "key" while reading texts in Esperanto to help you unlock the meaning of Esperanto according to the grammatical rules.

ALPHABET

A B C Ĉ D E F G Ĝ H Ĥ I J Ġ K L M N O P R S Ŝ T U Ŭ V Z
a b c ĉ d e f ĝ h Ĥ i j Ġ k l m n o p r s ŝ t u ŭ v z

Every Esperanto word is pronounced as it is spelt, without exception. The five vowels are a as in father, e as in set, i as in machine, o as in bone, u as in tune. (These guides are for U.S. English speakers.)

The six letters unique to Esperanto, ĉ, Ĝ, Ĥ, Ŝ and Ū, were introduced so that every sound could be represented by just one letter (unlike combinations such as "ch" in "church" or "sh" as in "shoe"). In Esperanto, q, w, x and y are absent, but appear in foreign names, and are treated like ĉ, h, o, ŭ etc.

The consonants are pronounced pretty much the same as in English, but those that differ from English are as follows:

c ts as in dance
cĥ ch as in chop
g 'hard' g as in go
g ĵ 'soft' g as in age
ĝ 'hard' like j in Andalusean Spanish jota
h or ch in Scottish loch
j y as in year
jŭ like s in pleasure
s always like s in sip
ŝ sh as in shoe
Ŭ w as in west

All of the other consonants are like in English, except note that r is slightly trilled, like in Spanish. The dot over the j is lost in ĵ.

Combinations involving vowels:

aj like y in sky
ej like ay in day
oj like oy in boy
uj like ouy in bouy, but as one syllable
aŭ like ow in cow
eŭ say ch+w as one syllable

The stress in Esperanto always falls on the second-to-last vowel. Be careful with words like radio and familio, in which the last i is stressed. Also, be aware that there are no "silent" letters in Esperanto. So in words with combinations such as kn or sc at the beginning, both consonants must be sounded out. The se combination may be tricky, but in reality it is common in English, in words such as chest. This combination appears on the beginning of some common Esperanto words.

STRUCTURE
(NOUNS, ADJECTIVES & VERBS)

Esperanto words consist of an assembly of parts put together in a logical fashion. Their function in a sentence is signaled by their grammatical endings. The ability to make words by combination greatly reduces the need for memorization. This principle is found in nature, where, from approximately 110 elements, millions of substances can be created by various combinations.

Root words, or base words, give the general idea, but they lack a definite meaning until they receive a grammatical ending. Take the root akv-, for example, which means "water." Adding -o makes the singular noun akvo, a thing, "water." Adding -j makes it plural, so that akvoj means "waters." Alternatively, adding -a to akv- makes akva, an adjective, "watery."

The Guinness Book of World Records lists Esperanto as the only language in which there are no irregular verbs to learn. By comparison, French has 2238, and Spanish and German have about 700 apiece. There is only one pattern in Esperanto, which consists of just 6 endings for verbs. The present, past and future are shown by the endings -as, -is and -os, respectively. The infinitive is shown by -i, the imperative by -u, and the conditional by -us. So, from the root for "speak," parol-, and mi (meaning "I") we make:

mi parolas I speak, I am speaking
mi parolis I spoke, I was speaking
mi parolos I will speak
paroli to speak
parolu! speak!
mi parolu I should speak
mi parolus I would speak

To ask a yes/no question in Esperanto, the word ĉu is used. Any sentence that begins with ĉu is saying, “Is it true that…?” Ĉu li parolis?
Means “Did you speak?” In non-interrogatory, contexts, ĉu means “whether.”

PRONOUNS

mi I, me
ni we, us
vi you (whether one or many)
lī he, him
ši she, her
ili they, them
ĝi it

sī reflexive pronoun for when the actor
of a verb is also the recipient of the action.
oni one/they
Example: Oni diras ke... They say that...

Adding -a to a pronoun makes it possessive. mia = my. These possessive pronouns behave in the same manner as adjectives, in that they can go before or after the noun, and they will be in the plural (and accusative, see below) if the noun is also. “My house” could be mia domo or domo mia.

AFFIXES

Prefixes

bo- in-law
filo son
bofilo son-in-law
dis- separation
doni to give
disdoni to distribute
edzo husband
eksedzo ex-husband
ek- start
vidi to see
ekvidi to catch a glimpse of
fi- immoral
libro book
filibro dirty book
ge- both sexes
patro father/parent
gepatroj parents
mal- opposite (note: not "bad")
varma warm
malvarma cold
pra- long ago
historio history
prahistorio prehistory
re- again
legi to read
relegi to read again

Suffixes

-ar āč filthy
vetero weather
veteraĉo foul weather
-ad ad continuation
studi to study
studado act of studying
-aj aj thing
manĝi to eat
manĝajo food
-ank ank a member
klubo club
klubano club member
-ar ar collection
arbo tree
arbaro forest
-ebli possible
vidi to see
videbla visible
-ec quality
libera free
libereco freedom
-eg increases
domo house
domego mansion
-ej ej place
kuiri to cook
kuirejo kitchen
-em tendency
paroli speak
parolema talkative
-er piece of
polvo dust
polvero dust mote
-esr boss
lernejo school
lernejestro principal
-et reduces
domo house
dometo cottage
-id offsping
kato cat
katido kitten
-ig become
naski to bear
naskiĝi to be born
-ig causation
dormi to sleep
dormigi to put to sleep
-il tool
tranĉi to cut
tranĉilo knife
-ind worthy
laudi to praise
laudinda praiseworthy
-ing socket
kandelo candle
kandelingo candlestick
-j ĵ male diminutive
patro father
paĵo papa
-in female
avo grandfather
avino grandmother
-leonino leonino
-leono leon
-leono leonino
-marksmismo Marxism
-marksmismo Marxism
-baki to bake
baki to bake

mama

-op group  tri 3  triopo  threesome
-uj container  cigar  cigarujo  cigar box
-ul guy  nova  new  novulo  newbie/novice

-um (wild card)

um is an affix with no definite meaning that you can use when no others are appropriate.

folio  leaf  foliumi  to leaf through (a book, for example)
cerbo  brain  cerbumi  to brainstorm

Whole words can be built from the affixes. ilo  tool, ilaro  a set of tools, ilarujo  a toolbox. See how creative you can be!

ADVERBS

Adverbs are words that modify a verb, adjective or another adverb and describe how some action is done. They are formed by adding -e to the root. So Li rapide kuras means "he quickly runs." -e can be attached to almost any root, so a sentence such as Kata kato kate katas meaning "a catlike cat cattishly behaves as a cat," is entirely possible. Note there is no Esperanto word for "a or an." There is only one word, la, for "the."

There is a separate class of adverbs, marked by -aŭ. When a word has this ending, it is incorporated into the root. For example, "soon" is baldaŭ, but there is no root bald-. You can, however, add affixes and grammatical endings to make words such as baldaŭa, which would mean "forthcoming."

NUMBERS

The numerals are completely regular, and are built with a small number of elements.

0  nul
1  unu
2  du
3  tri
4  kvar
5  kvin
6  ses
7  sepe
8  ok
9  naŭ
10  cent
100  mil

From these thirteen root words, you can make any number under a million

11  dek unu
12  dek du
13  dek tri
20  dudek
21  dudek unu
39  tridek naŭ
140  cent kvardek
1999  mil naŭcent naŭdek naŭ
2000  du mil

The numbers listed above are called cardinal numbers. Ordinal numbers, which are used to put things in their order, (such as "first," "second," "third," etc.), are formed by putting -a at the end. So, "the 7th father" is la sepa patro. But "7 fathers" would be sepatroj.

CORRELATIVES

The idea behind correlative words is that certain words like where, there, nowhere, everywhere and somewhere are related, as are whose, that person's, no one's, everyone's and someone's.

Each correlative word consists of three parts, with i being in the middle of every word (it is also the accented syllable in every correlative word).

The last part of each word shows the topic. Here are the nine in alphabetical order:

a  kind
al  motive or reason
am  time
e  place
el  manner
es  possession
o  object
om  amount
At the beginning comes the five ways to think about the topics. These parts are:

- **k** question
- **t** definite answer
- **nen** indefinite
- **ĉ** universality
- **nien** negation

After assembling the nine endings and five beginnings, we can logically create 45 words, although some meanings would have to be stretched in precise English translation.

- **kia** what kind of?
- **tia** that kind of
- **ia** some kind of
- **nenia** no kind of
- **ĉia** every kind of

- **kiem** for what reason? why?
- **tiam** for that reason, therefore
- **iam** for some reason
- **nieniam** for no reason
- **ĉiam** for every reason

- **kie** at what place? where?
- **tie** at that place, there
- **ie** at some place, somewhere
- **nenie** at no place, nowhere
- **ĉie** at every place, everywhere

- **kie** at what manner? how?
- **tie** in that manner, thus
- **ie** in some manner
- **nenie** in no manner
- **ĉie** in every manner

- **kies** belonging to whom? whose?
- **ties** that one's
- **ies** someone's
- **nenies** nobody's
- **ĉies** everybody's

- **kio** what thing? what?
- **tio** that thing
- **io** something
- **nenio** nothing
- **ĉio** everything

- **kiom** what quantity? how much/many?
- **tiom** that much/many
- **iom** some of
- **neniom** none of
- **ĉiom** all of

- **kiu** who/which person?
- **tiu** that person
- **iu** someone
- **neniu** no one
- **ĉiu** each person

The table in a more concise format looks like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-i-</th>
<th>in the middle</th>
<th>k-</th>
<th>question</th>
<th>t-</th>
<th>definite answer</th>
<th>(blank)</th>
<th>indefinite</th>
<th>nen-</th>
<th>negation</th>
<th>ĉ-</th>
<th>universality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-a-</td>
<td>kind</td>
<td>kia</td>
<td>what kind?</td>
<td>tia</td>
<td>kind</td>
<td>ia</td>
<td>some kind of</td>
<td>nenia</td>
<td>no kind of</td>
<td>ĉia</td>
<td>every kind of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The correlative ending with -u can be pluralized into kiu, tiu, iu, neniuj and ĉiu, which mean which people?, those people, some people, (neniuj) is possible, but not logical), and everyone.

kiu fenestro which window?
tiu fenestro that window
iu fenestro some window
neniu fenestro no window
ĉiu fenestro every window

Correlatives can serve as root words and be built upon. Esperantists ask Kion estas la horo? meaning "What time is it," or more precisely, "how many is the hour?" Another example is the word kialo which means "a reason."

Notice how the correlatives save time by reducing the amount of memorization. From 14 parts (9 + 5), you get 45 words (9 × 5).

Adding one more word, ajn, to the ki- words and the i- words, you give it uncertainty. kie means where, so kie ajn means wherever and iu means somewhere, and le ajn means somewhere else. This pattern applies to all of the correlatives that start with ki- and i-.

Also, the particle ĉi added to the t- correlatives indicates nearness. ĉi tie means "here," and ĉi iam means "at this time." It can come before or after the correlative.

**PARTICIPLES**

Participles are usually based on verbs. If we say, "he is dividing the cake, now the cake is divided," we use one active participle (dividing) and one passive participle (divided).

Esperanto participles are very precise. They not only indicate whether a participle is active or passive, they also tell whether they are taking place in the past, present or future, using i, a, or o, matching the letters for the simple tenses.

A falanta botelo is a bottle which will fall. A falanta botelo is one that is falling through the air. After it hits the floor, it is a falinta botelo. This illustrates the active participle's three forms.

The passive participle is analogous. A cake that is going to be divided is a dividita kuko. When it is in the process of being divided, it is a dividata kuko. Having been cut, it is now a dividita kuko.

These participles can be combined with the three tenses of esti ("to be") to form 9 compound tenses with the active participle and 9 with the passive. This requires some memorization and should be avoided in original expression. They may, however, become necessary for rigorous translation from English. As an example, we can say that in the future, the bottle will have fallen by saying La botele estas falinta.

If the noun ending o is used instead of the adjectival a, the participle becomes a person. A vidanto is a person who sees. A person who did see is a vidinto. A person who will see is called a vidanto. In the passive, a vidato is a person who is being seen right now, a vidito is one who has been seen and a vidoto is one who will be seen in the future.

All these facts apply to every single verb in the language, without exception.

**ACCUSATIVE**

Esperanto words contain more information than do English words. Esperanto words clearly show what function they fulfill in a sentence, while English words require placement within a sentence in order to determine what function it fulfills. This structure requires a bit more precision on the part of the Esperanto speaker, but the payoff is that the listener can understand the ideas more clearly, and the speaker can take great liberty with the order in which he speaks his words.

The letter n marks nouns and their adjectives which receive the direct action of the verb. In order to say the dog saw the big cat, you would say, la hundo vidis la grandan katon. English requires rigid word order, so that "man bites dog" and "dog bites man" mean two completely different things, even though the only difference is the order in which the words are written. But la grandan katon vidis la hundo has will have the same meaning, regardless of word order.

Notice that the adjective grandan takes the accusative because it agrees with the noun katon. This is true of the plural as well. Esperantists say grandaj katoj if there are more than one. The plural is used together with the accusative. "The dog saw the big cats" would be la hundo vidis la grandajn katojn.

The use of the accusative is extended to motion toward. For instance, la kato kuras sub la tablo means that the cat is under the table, running around. La kato kuras sub la tablon, however, means that the cat ran from somewhere else to underneath the table.

Expressions of time take the accusative ending as well. Instead of saying "I will come on Sunday," Esperantists say Mi venos dimanĉon. Notice that there is no equivalent to "on" in the Esperanto expression of time.
The accusative is used to show measurement, too. In English, we say "I weigh 100 kilograms." In Esperanto, one would say *Mi pezas cent kilogramojn*, which literally means "I am heavy 100 kilograms." (Note that in international speech, relatively few will know how much a pound weighs). The accusative will be applied to the unit of measurement for cost, periods of time, length, width, height, distance, temperature, mass, weight, volume, density, speed etc.

Pronouns (mi, vi, ili...) and correlatives ending in vowels do take the accusative when necessary. Ordinal numbers (first, second, third… ending in Esperanto in -a) take the accusative, but cardinal numbers (one, two, three…) never do.

**PREPOSITIONS**

Prepositions are particles placed before a noun or adjective/noun to form a clause. In English, an example would be "at the beach." In that prepositional phrase, the preposition is "at." Esperanto forms these type of phrases similarly, so "at the beach" would be *ĉe la plaĝo*. In that sentence, *ĉe* is the preposition. Some Esperanto prepositions are more concise than English prepositions, for example, "according to me" would be *laŭ mi*, since *laŭ* means "according to." Prepositions are often used as affixes, like *ĉe-esti* means "to attend," or "to be at." Where logic permits, most can also stand as root words that can be built upon, such as *ekster*a, which means "external."

al to
anstataŭ instead of
antaŭ before, in front of
apud near
ĉe at
ĉirkcaŭ around
de of, from, by
dum during
ekster outside
e en in
ĝis until
inter among
kontraŭ against
krom besides
kun with
kvazaŭ as if
laŭ according to, along
malantaŭ after, behind (mal=antaŭ to make the opposite of 'before/in front of')
malgraŭ in spite of
ol than (in comparison)
per by means of
po at a rate of, @
por in order to
post after
preter beyond
pri about, concerning
pro on account of
sen without
sub under
super above
sur on
tra through
trans across

Like the -um suffix, there is a similar "wild card" preposition: je. It is useful in certain phrases such as "I bet money on the horse." The preposition *sur* ("on top of") does not accurately capture the meaning, so to mean 'on' you can use the preposition *je*, which has no definite meaning. This is commonly used with expressions of time. “At 3 o’clock” is not a place, so *ĉe* to mean “at” does not work. For that purpose, *je* is used.