

# ***Making it Stick: Using language learning apps inside and outside the classroom***

*Fathom co-founder, Kevin McRobb takes an in-depth look at some of our favourite pieces of free language learning software, starting with our application of choice, Quizlet.*



*“Foreign language is so easy that I learned it on my commute to work!”*

- Nobody, ever

There are myriad apps on the language learning market which make somewhat dubious claims to be able to do just that. That being said, my years of teaching have shown me a few in particular that are more useful as a supplementary resource than most. I’m going to share one of my favourites with you today.

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## *Enter, Quizlet*

Over the last two years, Quizlet has gradually established itself as my go-to application for building live vocabulary lists with my students. It's available as a web version or an app, and allows you to craft an unlimited number of glossaries, on as many subjects as you desire. This feature, I've discovered, lends itself extremely well to both learning and teaching foreign languages.

The free version lets you to manage up to eight separate classes, and it allows groups to work together on the same set, producing and editing collaborative vocabulary lists. I normally have Quizlet open on my screen during class, and use it to enter all of the unexpected terms that crop up during a typical communicative lesson.

Using this method we are able to build a collection of hundreds of unfamiliar words and phrases, including images — a great resource for visual learning — which you can look back on and revise long after your semester has ended. My record in 2017 for a single group was over 1,300 entries!

## ***Take Another Look***



Quizlet gives you the ability to revise your word lists in the form of digital flashcards, and test yourself on that vocabulary using multiple choice, true/false, word matching or text entry. Your teacher is able to see your results from each attempt, giving us the ability to spot difficulties and rectify them before they become a stumbling block to your progress.

Teachers can also use Quizlet to create glossaries for reading assignments, or for specific subjects. If I'm working with an HR team, I might create a list called '*Interview*' and fill it with phrases you might need when meeting prospective recruits. The beauty of

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Quizlet is its flexibility: it can be as comprehensive or as detailed as you need it to be.

## ***The Verdict***

One of the best elements of Quizlet is that the mobile app allows you to access these word lists anywhere, anytime. I regularly use the app as a time-filler on public transport or during my lunch breaks at work.

The only drawback I might highlight is the overflow from STEM subjects in the image library. Occasionally I'm presented with a list of engineering diagrams or an infographic describing the nitrogen cycle, when all I want at that moment is a photo of a dolphin or a tulip.

Outside of the language classroom, I've also used Quizlet to accelerate my own learning. When I'm reading a novel, I keep the app open on my smartphone and enter anything new or unfamiliar for later reference

Overall, I see Quizlet as my application of choice for both teaching English and self-study. It's a great all-rounder and can be taken advantage of in almost any type of language course. Its collaborative features, if used properly, are nothing short of fantastic.

*Tell us about your own experience with Quizlet. What other language learning apps would you recommend? Let us know in the comments section!*

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