

Ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig ...

Learning Gaelic. Scottish Gaelic is considered an endangered language because there are so few native speakers — probably no more than 30,000 in the whole world. As with many such languages, efforts are being made to at least keep it alive and foster its growth.

Why learn Gaelic?

Learning a second language is hard, especially if you don't live in an area where you can mix with native speakers and acquire language by osmosis as well as through structured learning. But it's not impossible, and has a lot of benefits.

You get an insight into the culture the language springs from, and how the fate of the Gaelic language illustrates what has happened to its native speakers.

And it's a journey of discovery. With 18 letters in its alphabet, no direct equivalent for 'no' or 'yes' and five syllables needed to say 'please', it is very different from English. It gives access to a unique treasure trove of history, literature, song and storytelling, and vocabulary to express ideas not readily put into English.

Knowing some Gaelic will open doors when you travel — in a Gaelic-speaking area even a few halting attempts at conversation will make an immediate connection with locals. You can learn more about the place of Gaelic in modern Scotland in this [short video](#).

Learning any second language also has wider benefits. It exercises your memory and other functions such as problem-solving, and gives a sense of achievement. Help resist the effects of ageing, and take up learning Gaelic!

Close to home

There are few opportunities in New Zealand to join with others and learn Gaelic.

In Dunedin the Gaelic Society of Dunedin aims to foster the language and bring together native speakers, proficient speakers, Gaelic learners and those who want to hear the language, music, poetry and stories of Gaeldom past and present. Contact Alison Thornton at GaelicSocDnNZ@gmail.com

There seems to have been a Gaelic Society in Auckland, but it doesn't seem to be active now, at least online. Does anyone know?

Occasionally there are continuing education courses in Gaelic at universities.

As announced in our last newsletter, Brendan Paris is working to form an online group of Gaelic learners for collaboration and support. You can contact Brendan through our [Facebook group](#) or at Brendan.Paris@hotmail.co.nz.



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Online

These days you don't have to be in the same room as someone to learn a language.

The Gaelic language board in Scotland, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, has partnered with other organisations to provide [LearnGaelic](#), which has a range of free courses and reference material. [Speak Gaelic](#) is one of those resources.

CoffeeBreak Languages has a series of [one-minute Gaelic lessons](#) on YouTube. You'll find lessons from other providers on YouTube.

Some Scottish universities and colleges offer formal distance learning courses. One is [Sabahl Mòr Ostaig](#), the National Centre for Gaelic Learning and Culture based on Skye. It is an academic partner in LearnGaelic but also offers its own courses. Another is [Ceòlas](#), based on Uist in the Outer Hebrides. The [University of Dundee](#) also has online courses.



Colaisde na Gàidhlig, the Gaelic College in Nova Scotia, has [online courses](#) as does Sgoil Ghàidhlig an Àrd-bhaile, the [Gaelic Language Society of Halifax](#) in Nova Scotia.

An Comunn Gàidhealach Ameireaganach, the American Scottish Gaelic Society, has a [directory](#) of classes and distance learning providers, including tutors who offer individual classes.

Some providers offer residential courses. Once you've reached a certain level on your own, wouldn't a live-in course in the Scottish Highlands or Nova Scotia be a great way of taking your learning to the next level as well as a fun focus for an overseas holiday?



Exploring the Isle of Skye

As well as courses from institutions, there are commercial providers such as [italki](#), [Love Gaelic](#) and book/CD courses you can buy online.

Media

A great way of supporting your learning is to listen to programmes in Gaelic. Even if most of the dialogue washes over you to begin with, this will help you pick out words and learn how to pronounce words and phrases.

The BBC's Gaelic radio station [Radio Nan Gàidheal](#) is available online from anywhere. It broadcasts in Gaelic every day from 1700 to 2400 local time.

[BBC Alba](#) is a digital TV channel in Gaelic. It is available from satellite and cable providers in the UK and on the BBC's iPlayer, but rights restrictions mean you can't access content from outside the UK. Using a virtual private network (VPN) may be one way around this.

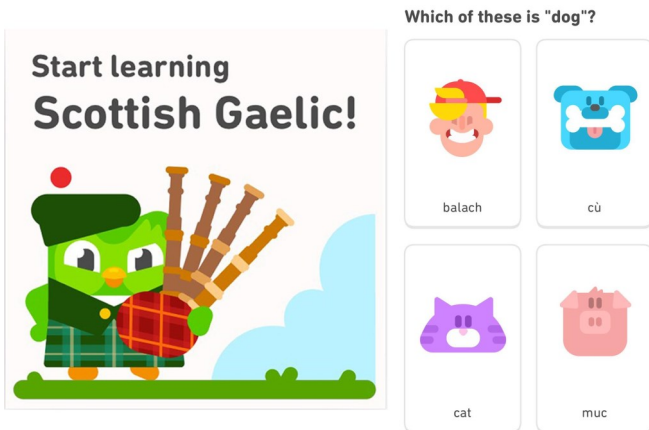


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There's an app for that

You can also learn Scottish Gaelic on [Duolingo](#), a free language learning app that delivers bite-sized lessons to develop your reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. Since Gaelic was launched on St Andrew's Day (when else?) in 2019, 1.5 million people have started using it, and currently 450,000 are active learners.

Duolingo delivers short lessons that take only 3 or so minutes to complete. The basic app is free to use, but as it is a freemium product you receive frequent invitations to subscribe to a paid version.



Duolingo 'gamifies' language learning, with points, hearts, treasure chests and progress trackers to motivate learners. Purists may not like this approach, but surely anything that gets people learning is a good thing. You can ignore most of the game aspects of the app, though working to keep an unbroken streak of taking a lesson each day is quite compelling.



You can kick off your Gaelic learning by launching into Duolingo, or use it to complement language lessons or classes.

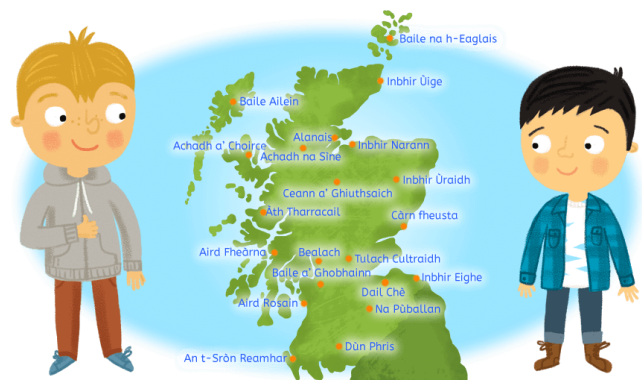
Support groups

The Facebook group [Luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig - Scottish Gaelic Learners](#) could be a good support group as you set out on your learning journey.

Here's a fascinating short [documentary](#) called 'Bun is Bàrr', which is Gaelic for 'root and branch'. It shows the use of mentors to support inter-generational learning of Gaelic in Nova Scotia.

Give it a go!

The wealth of resources available online means that this is a great time to start exercising those brain cells and learning some Gaelic. Have a crack! Then you'll be able to say "tha beagan Gàidhlig agam" rather than "tha mi duilich, chan eil mi a'tuigsinn".



Are you using any other resources to learn Gaelic? How is your learning coming along? Feel free to share your experience through our [Facebook group](#).

