

# How Certain Gestures Help You Learn New Words

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When learning a foreign language, most people fall back on traditional methods: reading, writing, listening and repeating. But if you also [gesture with your arms](#) while studying, you can remember the vocabulary better, even months later. Linking a word to brain areas responsible for movement strengthens the memory of its meaning. This is the conclusion a research team reached after using magnetic pulses to deliberately disrupt these areas in language learners. “Our results provide neuroscientific evidence for why learning techniques that involve the body’s motor system should be used more often,” neuroscientist Brian Mathias, of the Max Planck Institute for Human Cognitive and Brain Sciences in Leipzig, said in a news release.

As Mathias and his colleagues [describe](#) in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, they had 22 German-speaking adults learn a total of 90 invented artificial words (such as “lamube” for “camera,” and “atesi” for “thought”) over four days. While the test subjects first heard the new vocabulary, they were simultaneously shown a video of a person making a gesture that matched the meaning of the word. When the word was repeated, the subjects performed the gesture themselves.

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