

# The Cadw Sŵn Guide to Speaking Cymraeg Simply, Confidently and Painlessly



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Llun gan William Brown

'Welsh' is an ugly word; it means foreign. 'Wales' means land of the foreigner. Cymry means 'my people', Cymru 'the land of my people'.

Likewise in Cymraeg 'dysgwr/dysgwraig' refers to someone who is learning Cymraeg. Unfortunately it is often used to describe someone who has learnt welsh, the term Cymro Cymraeg/Cymraes Cymraeg being reserved for 'Welsh speakers'.

The sooner we ditch these historically misleading terms in both languages the better for all of us. Let's just get on with living and speaking our chosen languages whoever we are, wherever we live.

## The Myth of 'Difficult' Languages

Cymraeg is a straightforward language to learn and speak. I don't joke about these things. If you've come this far, then with a little perseverance and application you will become a perfectly happy and confident speaker of Cymraeg.

You will find many opportunities in your life to speak with other siaradwyr wherever you live.

You will notice the value of the language in your professional and business life.

You will also have another window on the world, with another perspective. Many more books, films and stories to experience; sometimes a clearer picture.

It's certainly worth the effort, and a funny thing seems to happen at this point;

You get more out than you put in.

We can sometimes make things appear difficult, however. Tutors, in particular, seem take a perverse pride in displaying the intricacies of grammar; they think it makes them look good. They might be wrong.

The truth is that if a language, any language, were 'difficult' people just wouldn't speak it. It wouldn't work, it wouldn't hold together. It might be 'different' in some ways, it might make you laugh at its simplicity or frustrated at its apparent complexity, but if it's difficult then you're just not looking at it the right way. (We'll return to this later.)

Anyway, from my perspective, ie an average 'dysgwr', who became an average 'siaradwr' here are a few tips I picked up along the way. If only I knew now what I knew then. (Or should that be the other way around?)

## The magical first-language Welsh speaker

We seem to burden 'learners' with an awful amount of rules about grammar, mutations, yes/no answers, tenses etc. And yet every year, thousands of children from homes where one or more people speak Cymraeg turn up on their first day of school with a perfectly good command of the language. And do you know what? They haven't had a single grammar lesson! At no point did a well-meaning adult sit them down and explain the nasal mutation or definite articles or diphthongs or the price of fish to them. Why should they?

People speak Cymraeg like any other language; with a 'feel' for how everyone else speaks it. Most of the 'rules' were written after some academic had too much time on their hands one rainy afternoon. Never ask a speaker of Cymraeg a grammatical question; they'll look at you with a pained expression. They may never speak Cymraeg to you ever again. They are not fountains of the secret knowledge of language, they just happen to speak it!

We can make things difficult by wanting to be correct. We can make things difficult by wanting to know how things work. The truth is that no language works by people learning intricate rules or constructions.

If something is difficult there are two possible explanations:

1. You're looking at it the wrong way. Come back to it later, it'll make more sense.
2. It's difficult. The chances are that most other people think so too. Forget it completely, life's too short.

## Idiots Guide

I've met a few idiots who speak Cymraeg. Some even mutate in the right places and conjugate their prepositions. They wouldn't know a preposition if you covered it in lard and pushed it through their letterbox. You're obviously not an idiot, but here's a guide anyway:

1. Start a statement with a verb, unless you want to emphasise something.
2. Get your tenses right. God forbid, if necessary learn them! No, really; it works. Get them absolutely right. Every time. You've got a piece of paper with them all on somewhere. It's blue, and there's not a huge amount on it. It'll take you two days maximum.
3. Don't bother with Yes and No unless you want to become a gibbering wreck. Just throw in the odd 'Oes' whenever it seems right. Otherwise please use IE and NA. Pretty please.
4. Don't get tied up with mutations. You know how to mutate, but you're not certain when. The simple fact is that if you worry about it you will mutate in the wrong places. Just forget it, and you will naturally speak as everyone else does. Which may not always be 100% correct, by the way.
5. If you don't know how to say something *don't*. Say something else. Or nothing. Because the moment you turn to English the spell is broken. They just won't speak to you in Cymraeg again. That's how their minds work.
6. Obviously, if you don't know the word for something use the English, but don't say 'I can't say this in Welsh so I'll say it in English.' **Unless you're a doctor.**

## The Secret to Siarad Cymraeg

Which brings us to the magic formula, y Greal Sanctaidd.

The Secret of Speaking Cymraeg is...

...i siarad Cymraeg.

Soon after I became semi-fluent in Cymraeg I made a decision; I decided that I didn't want to be a learner forever. So I decided that I would not speak English to siaradwyr Cymraeg; *dim ond yn Gymraeg*. It worked for me. There were very many times when I wanted to say something, but I couldn't. That's how it was. I soon picked up any vocabulary I needed, and they spoke only Cymraeg to me without thinking. And have done ever since.

Just by making that one decision, and that by realising that there was nothing life-threateningly important that I wanted to say, I stopped being a learner.

You might also like to try that with other dysgwyr; it's all you need to do, really.

## The Cadw Sŵn Home Study Course

‘an impressive teaching technique’

David Greenslade in Ninnau, the North American Welsh newspaper

‘a refreshing approach... ..with each lesson comes a wealth of new vocabulary (which you pick up effortlessly – much more effectively than learning lists off rote) and an immediate improvement in reading ability... ..a complete package that covers all the elements necessary for a beginner.’

Rachel Treadaway, BBC online

‘The results are staggering: I’m convinced!’

William Brown, internationally acclaimed artist and first Cadw Swn pupil

‘you may find that you can pick up Welsh more quickly than you thought. As my auntie once said to me, “It’s Mozart Bach.”’

Meic Stephens in The Western Mail

Cadw Sŵn; the speedy way to learn Welsh using the revolutionary power of classical music. Full details at

[www.cadwswn.com](http://www.cadwswn.com)

Follow the simple steps in this booklet honestly and sincerely and help yourself to speak Cymraeg easily and effectively. Amaze your friends!



'You've paid your money, and by God  
I'm going to teach you!'

Colin Jones, Cwm Llyfi

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