



Virtual Language Alive for a Lifestyle of Learning

Hello and thank you for your interest in Virtual Language Alive! I'd like to provide you with an overview of the program and some info about how I approach education.

My Philosophy

I take education very seriously, and I approach it differently than do many educators. I believe the student holds within herself/himself the ability to work independently and with excellence when given the sufficient tools. When lavished with trust and garnished with a small helping of accountability, the result is student self-motivation.

As it turns out, this self-propelled methodology I've used with my eight children for the past 25 years has yielded excellent results for all of my high school graduates. I've had perfect SAT scorers, nearly-perfect SAT scores. Nearly-perfect overall ACT scorers and perfect ACT scorers in the different sections of the ACT. All seven high school graduates to date [May 2019] have scored in the top percentiles on these [somewhat silly] exams. Coincidence? Not if you ask any of them. They would tell you that thinking through problems on their own each and every school day afforded them the ability to calmly process each question on exams. Self-learning inadvertently becomes a lifestyle.

What is my philosophy? I believe a self-learning environment best prepares students for educational success. There are some subjects, however, where a season of teacher intervention is helpful in the development of excellence. One of those subjects is language, which includes spelling, reading, and writing. Intervention can be necessary for feedback and encouragement.

Many parents feel inadequate to teach writing and grammar to their children. In reality, the more children read, the less instruction they need in language and writing. Good readers make good writers. It's a fact! That doesn't mean an avid reader will enjoy and gravitate to writing, but it means that when asked to write, the good reader *can* write.



The Virtual Language Alive method of instruction is based on this one tenet: Reading and writing go hand in hand.

There are no shortcuts to becoming a good writer. There are no shortcuts to becoming a good reader. If one enjoys the process, however, honing skills is much more likely to happen. That is where Virtual Language Alive comes in!

VLA Program Details

Virtual Language Alive is a curriculum that comes with private tutoring. It is offered in two very flexible 18-week segments throughout the year.

One of the goals of the Language Alive program is to provide students with a reason to read and a reason to write that goes beyond, "Because Mom and Dad said so." Helping students understand the *why* can be very motivating. Giving them a way to organize the process of becoming great readers and writers is pivotal, and that is one of the strengths of Virtual Language Alive. **It's an organized system that builds success upon success.**

What is the student expected to do each week?

- Download the week's file containing vocab and log sheets.
- Complete a vocab assignment each day.
- Write a short essay incorporating vocab words three times a week.
- Read for an hour, any book/magazine/comic book parent deems worthy.
- Fill in log sheet daily.
- E-mail an essay to me once a week along with log sheet and quiz score.

If your student already reads for an hour or more each school day, hooray! No extra reading is necessary. Vocabulary words will all come from SAT vocabulary lists. The daily assignments will include matching games, crossword puzzles, and manipulative activities to enable students to really master the words, not simply memorize them.

Students begin working at whatever level they are at currently. They move forward week by week, hardly noticing their progress, as vocab-building is slow and steady. But be prepared for your student to really, really enjoy the reading and writing process, especially if he or she hasn't been able to enjoy it in the past! My specialty is working with the reluctant reader and/or writer. But I love working with students of all ages and ability levels. It's all about building success upon success upon success.

What will I personally be providing your student?

Weekly:

- Vocab quiz for mastery.
- Instruction in grammar, punctuation, paragraph construction, and such as necessary.
- Encouragement/personal writing development suggestions/evaluation of one essay per week.
- SAT vocab words and exercises.
- A reason to read and write.

The Process

Each week the student will be expected to e-mail me one of his three essays for review, take the vocab quiz and e-mail her score, and fill out the log sheet. Again, I will be personally looking at the essay and quiz scores every week and providing feedback. *If a student does not turn in an essay, he misses out on the tutoring opportunity for that week.* I will not generally be offering the opportunity to make up this work simply because of the number of essays I handle per week. Doubling up just isn't possible for me, time wise.

A grade will be given for each mini-essay which reflects vocab mastery. An analysis of the student's writing progress will also be given at the end of each 18-week period.

Summary of Student Benefits

Each and every week, your student will:

- Build vocabulary
- Perfect spelling skills
- Read, read, read
- Learn or refresh learning of practical grammar rules
- Write for fun
- Receive private tutoring
- Build writing skills
- Work independently
- Be preparing for the SAT/ACT

I'd like to close with a quote from a book written by a colleague of mine, Dr. Tom Fischgrund. In 2000, he conducted a survey of students who were perfect SAT scorers. Here is a tidbit from his book regarding these "perfect score" students:



“Their drive comes from within. They have their own will to succeed, and they achieve for themselves, not for anyone else. What’s fascinating, though, is that perfect score students weren’t necessarily born with this self-motivation. Perfect score students nearly all agreed that their parents motivated them to learn in their early years and then gave them the tools to motivate themselves through high school.”¹

Virtual Language Alive is a tool that you can give to your students as early as 5th grade, which can enable them to motivate themselves through the high school years and beyond. A strong foundation in reading coupled with what I call “background writing”—writing *something* regularly three times a week—provides a student with an unparalleled advantage.

The Virtual Language Alive program is exactly what I’ve done, and continue to do with my own children, and which also has proven to be definitive SAT/ACT preparation. Beyond that, however, it has given my first kids a foundation and an advantage as they’ve won complete scholarship packages and gone off to their first-choice universities. When students have an extensive vocabulary and can write with excellence, they naturally stand out in a crowd.

Thank you so much for your interest in Virtual Language Alive; I would be honored to work with your student! If you have further questions surrounding course content or anything at all, I hope you will feel free to e-mail me. And if you would like to go ahead and reserve a spot, feel free to download the online registration form, fill it out, and get it back to me today!

Warmly,
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Fischgrund, Tom PhD. *SAT Perfect Score: 7 Secrets to Raise Your Score*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2003.