

# FinTandem

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WHAT IS THAT?



## **A way of learning languages**

Tandem is not only a bike but also a method for learning languages. In tandem two individuals with different native languages learn each other's languages through interaction. The goal is to meet for two hours each week, either two hours at a time or two one hour meetings and speak each tandem language (which is the other person's mother tongue) for one hour. With the help of this method, both of the participants get to practise the tandem language and the person, whose native language you are speaking, can correct errors and function as a language model. Hence, tandem is language learning through communication with a native speaker.

## **Background**

At Vasa arbis tandem started the school year 2002-03. The school year 2006-07, the Adult Education Centre of Korsholm and Vasa arbis started collaborating in order to increase the possibility for the participants to receive a tandem partner. Naturally, the most common language pair is Finnish-Swedish as these languages co-exist in our region. As an example we can mention a tandem partnership where one person comes from a Swedish-speaking home and the other from a Finnish-speaking home. They want to learn each other's mother tongue and consequently speak Finnish one hour and Swedish the other hour once every week. Both get used to using the other language and learn through speaking and listening to their partner. At the same time they get to know the other culture and they make a new friend.

## **FinTandem**

In tandem there are two principles: the principle of *autonomy* and the principle of *reciprocity*. Autonomy means that the partners in the tandem pair decide the goals and means for their language learning themselves. They decide what to do and what to discuss when they speak the language they are learning. The tandem pair decides

together where, when and how often they want to meet. Reciprocity means that both of the partners will gain from the teamwork. It is important that the tandem partnership is as fair as possible. In other words, the tandem pair should spend an equal amount of time on both of the languages and support each other to the same extent. Therefore, it is essential that both know at least the basics in the language they want to learn so that the pair can communicate in both of the languages. One should avoid mixing the languages.

Apart from these two fundamental principles, there are not really any other rules. The participants can decide themselves which activities they want to try. There are many alternatives: free discussion, discussion about specific topics, reading and going through texts together, watching television programs or films in the target language, going to the theatre, lectures etc. FinTandem is also supposed to give the participants the possibility to get to know the other culture. Therefore activities such as cooking together can be great language practice. You can meet anywhere: at a café, at home, in the jogging track or at the gym. By varying the types of exercises as well as the places you meet at, you will widen your language skills in a versatile and interesting way.

At the five gatherings for all the participants that Vasa arbis and the Adult Education Centre of Korsholm arrange, you will get tips about different types of exercises and the opportunity to share your experiences with other FinTandem pairs. A FinTandem guide, which will help you get started, is included in the course fee. **You can sign up for FinTandem the whole year** on [www.vaasa.fi/tandem](http://www.vaasa.fi/tandem) or [www.korsholm.fi/tandem](http://www.korsholm.fi/tandem).

FinTandem is suitable for people in the working life, since FinTandem offers a flexible way to learn languages. Just as well, FinTandem suits students, as it can function as a good complement to the languages studies at school or university. Both partners do not need to be either students or in the working life, but a similar life situation can be helpful when you try to find topics to talk about.

## **Cooperation with others**

The FinTandem project gives the possibility to cooperate with other educational institutes or employers. For example, students at the University of Vaasa can get the FinTandem course accepted as language practice in Swedish. Students at upper secondary schools can get the FinTandem course approved as an applied course. Employees at the municipality of Vaasa and Mustasaari have the opportunity to participate in FinTandem as further education in Finnish or Swedish.

## **FinTandem – a course model**

The school year 2006-2007 Vasa arbis and the Adult Education Centre of Korsholm have written a guide for FinTandem coordinators. Educational institutions in other multilingual regions will be able to use the guide when starting the FinTandem course. The FinTandem guide for coordinators is available in Swedish and Finnish from September 2007 (pdf format). The Finnish National Board of Education has financed the project.

## **Do you want to know more?**

**For more information** about the method please contact the coordinators for FinTandem: Marika Boström, Katri Karjalainen or Pia Sandås.

### **Vasa arbis**

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