Duolingo's newest reviews call it *fun*; on rivals' pages, Busuu's reviewers who name it prefer Busuu

> 9% of Duolingo's newest reviews (two days of them) say it is fun or easy; Busuu's 4% (weeks). Of its 54 one- and two-star reviews, 10 are about the energy limit and 6 say it doesn't teach enough. On rivals' pages, 39 of 43 Busuu reviews naming it prefer Busuu; Babbel's split 18 to 15. The opening: Babbel's paywall (7% of its two months' reviews).

Duolingo
against Babbel, Busuu, Pimsleur

1,362 reviews read
App Store, Google Play
dated 2 Sep 2026 to 1 Nov 2026

509 of the 1,362 in a theme
sorted by a model, 4 corrected by hand, counted exactly

November 2, 2026
public reviews only; no reviewer names

THE SHORT VERSION

Duolingo's edge is *fun*; its low stars are energy and teaching; Babbel's paywall is the opening

9%

of Duolingo's newest reviews say it is fun or easy

Busuu 4%, Pimsleur 2%, Babbel 2%

6%

of Duolingo's say the energy limit cuts lessons short

Busuu 0%, Babbel 0%

39

of the 43 Busuu reviews naming Duolingo prefer Busuu

Babbel: 18 prefer Babbel, 15 Duolingo. Pimsleur: 9 of 13

393

Duolingo reviews read, from two days; the rivals' from up to two months

App Store and Google Play

01 **Fun is Duolingo's edge**

37 of its 393 reviews from two days say fun or easy (9%). Busuu's 4% and Babbel's 2% run over weeks.

02 **Low stars: energy, ads, AI**

Of its 54 one- and two-star reviews, 10 are about energy, 6 teaching, 6 ads (most for Super), 6 AI, 4 billing. Some AI reviews say they quit.

03 **Busuu's and Pimsleur's pages lean to the rival; Babbel's split**

Written on rivals' own pages: Busuu 39 to 1, Pimsleur 9 to 1, Babbel 18 to 15. The reasons vary, with teaching and grammar among them; slide six shows some both ways.

Counts are of the 1,362 reviews we read (App Store, Google Play), not of everyone who uses it. A share is of each app's own reviews read. Themes are a model's sorting; the counts of that sorting are exact.

WHAT WE READ

The newest 200 reviews per app and store, back two months at most: two days of Duolingo's

Both stores list reviews newest first. Duolingo gets so many that its 393 cover two days; the rivals' run weeks to two months. Each store's own star rating covers every rating, not just these.

APP	APP STORE	GOOGLE PLAY	1-2★ READ
Duolingo YOU	**4.72★** · 5.6M ratings read 197: 31 Oct 2026 to 1 Nov 2026; 17% 1-2★	**4.75★** · 51.5M ratings read 196: 1 Nov 2026; 10% 1-2★	14% (54 of 393)
Babbel RIVAL the other big paid language app on both stores	**4.72★** · 757K ratings read 183: 2 Sep 2026 to 1 Nov 2026; 39% 1-2★	**4.57★** · 1.1M ratings read 148: 2 Sep 2026 to 1 Nov 2026; 74% 1-2★	55% (181 of 331)
Busuu RIVAL a language app sold on native-speaker feedback, on both stores	**4.71★** · 101K ratings read 200: 9 Sep 2026 to 31 Oct 2026; 6% 1-2★	**4.65★** · 1.2M ratings read 196: 15 Oct 2026 to 1 Nov 2026; 15% 1-2★	10% (40 of 396)
Pimsleur RIVAL a paid language app sold on speaking, on both stores	**4.74★** · 31K ratings read 163: 2 Sep 2026 to 30 Oct 2026; 10% 1-2★	**4.09★** · 17K ratings read 79: 2 Sep 2026 to 1 Nov 2026; 20% 1-2★	13% (32 of 242)

Both stores list newest first: we read the newest 200 per store, then only the last 60 days (dates per store). The star rating and count are each store's own, over every rating; the 1-2★ share is of what we read, and the newest reviews can run angrier than an all-time rating.

SIDE BY SIDE

Fun or easy is Duolingo's (9% to Busuu's 4%); the paywall is Babbel's (7%)

Each cell is the share of that app's reviews read, over its own window (below): two days for Duolingo, weeks to two months for the rest. Green is praise, red a complaint. The "better than Duolingo" row is a theme; slide six's counts read the reviews naming Duolingo.

SHARE OF EACH APP'S REVIEWS READ THAT SAY IT · REVIEWS IN BRACKETS

THEMES SORTED BY A MODEL (GEMINI) · COUNTS EXACT

WHAT REVIEWERS SAY	DUOLINGO	BABBEL	BUSUU	PIMSLEUR
PRAISE makes learning fun or easy	9% (37)	2% (5)	4% (14)	2% (6)
PRAISE good for speaking practice	1% (4)	2% (5)	0% (1)	18% (44)
COMPLAINT too many ads (Duolingo's mostly for Super)	5% (19)	0% (0)	7% (29)	0% (0)
PRAISE practical phrases and clear explanations	1% (3)	3% (11)	4% (15)	1% (3)
COMPLAINT locked behind a paywall too soon	0% (0)	7% (24)	0% (0)	1% (2)
COMPLAINT the energy limit cuts lessons short	6% (25)	0% (0)	0% (1)	0% (0)
PRAISE feedback and corrections from native speakers	0% (0)	0% (0)	6% (22)	0% (0)
COMPLAINT too much AI, or AI done badly	2% (7)	2% (5)	1% (4)	0% (1)

Other themes: much better than Duolingo (51); please add more language options (37); unfair auto renewals and refused refunds (30); too difficult for beginners (27); subscription is too expensive (26); unresponsive or unhelpful customer support (24); and 9 more. 509 of the 1,362 reviews are in a theme; of the 853 that are not, 355 are a few words of four- or five-star praise and 98 give one or two stars. Every review is listed in the HTML version. Each share is over its own window: Duolingo 2 days; Babbel 61 days; Busuu 54 days; Pimsleur 61 days.

A model (Gemini) named one set of themes for every app and marked which each review says (up to three); we count its sorting. Base per app: Duolingo 393 reviews; Babbel 331 reviews; Busuu 396 reviews; Pimsleur 242 reviews.

WHAT DUOLINGO'S REVIEWERS COMPLAIN ABOUT

Duolingo's low stars are about the *energy limit*, teaching, ads and AI

Energy is mostly an App Store complaint (21 of 25). Teaching holds 6 low-star reviews across two themes (“does not teach grammar at all”). Billing holds 4. The AI reviews are few, but include reviewers who say they left.

the energy limit cuts lessons short

share of reviews, then of low stars: Duolingo 6%, 19% · Babbel 0%, 0% · Busuu 0%, 0% · Pimsleur 0%, 0%

Energy

“I hate that I can only go on for only about one lesson before a run out of energy. Then what? I just want to learn the language.”

2★ · Duolingo · App Store · version 7.146.1 · Oct 2026

Free Mode Battery Recharges So Slow

“Can’t the energy refill faster if you’re playing free?? I can barely play!”

3★ · Duolingo · App Store · version 7.146.1 · Oct 2026

too many ads (Duolingo's mostly for Super)

share of reviews, then of low stars: Duolingo 5%, 11% · Babbel 0%, 0% · Busuu 7%, 42% · Pimsleur 0%, 0%

Too many ads

“It is helping a lot with my Spanish and other languages and chest, but there’s too many ads that is pushing super Duolingo and it is very annoying”

3★ · Duolingo · App Store · version 7.146.1 · Oct 2026

I love dulingo but plz stop the ads for dulingo plus

“I already pay for dulingo and to not have ads. If I pay for no ads, how can you constantly put on ads for dulingo plus??? Also I would love if I can turn some of the game features and just learn the language.”

2★ · Duolingo · App Store · version 7.146.1 · Oct 2026

too much AI, or AI done badly

share of reviews, then of low stars: Duolingo 2%, 11% · Babbel 2%, 2% · Busuu 1%, 8% · Pimsleur 0%, 0%

AI 👎

“Your replacement of actual employees in favor of AI was a horrible move and I will never use your app again.”

1★ · Duolingo · App Store · version 7.146.1 · Oct 2026

AI

“Not supporting anymore since they are an “AI first” company, no thx”

1★ · Duolingo · App Store · version 7.146.1 · Oct 2026

The themes here hold 20 of Duolingo's 54 one- and two-star reviews read; 17 are in other themes and 17 in no theme. Quoted as written, whole, without reviewer names; each quote is an example, the share beside the theme the evidence.

WHAT THE RIVALS' REVIEWERS SAY

Busuu's and Pimsleur's pages lean to them; Babbel's split evenly, with its paywall the opening

Reviews naming Duolingo, both ways, written on the rivals' own pages. Babbel's paywall (7%, two months) is the opening, but 19% of Duolingo's low stars fault its energy limit and 12% of Babbel's its paywall: don't claim free.

locked behind a paywall too soon

share of reviews, then of low stars: Duolingo 0%, 0% · Babbel 7%, 12% · Busuu 0%, 0% · Pimsleur 1%, 6%

Pay wall

“Bruh I just started, got two lessons in and got hit with an immediate paywall”

1★ · Babbel · App Store · version 22.20.0 · Oct 2026

Why!!?

“I can only do 1 lesson without using money?!”

3★ · Babbel · App Store · version 22.13.0 · Sep 2026

Babbel reviews that name Duolingo

38 of Babbel's 331 reviews read; 15 prefer Duolingo, 18 prefer Babbel

No good n too expensive

“Free version of Duolingo its much better. After one lesson, they just want to charge you...totally uncool”

1★ · Babbel · App Store · version 22.18.0 · Oct 2026

Switched from Duo

“Learning faster and more in depth with Babbel, less time wasted on kiddy characters, and better explanations for deeper understanding of grammar. Practical, and meets my learning style better.”

5★ · Babbel · App Store · version 22.18.0 · Oct 2026

Busuu reviews that name Duolingo

43 of Busuu's 396 reviews read; 1 prefers Duolingo, 39 prefer Busuu

Excellent language app

“Switched from Dulingo to Busuu. Much more robust and thoughtfully considered but still lightly gamified. Giving and getting feedback from native speakers is really cool.”

5★ · Busuu · App Store · version 30.27.0 · Sep 2026

Really good

“It’s way better than Duolingo and it actually sticks”

5★ · Busuu · App Store · version 30.29.0 · Oct 2026

Quoted as written, whole, without reviewer names. Each quote is one review: an example of its theme; the shares beside the theme are the evidence.

WHAT REVIEWERS PRAISE

Duolingo is praised for *fun or easy*; Busuu for native speakers; Pimsleur for speaking practice

What each app's reviewers praise, with every app's share beside the theme.

makes learning fun or easy

Duolingo 9% · Babbel 2% · Busuu 4% · Pimsleur 2%

Merci Duo

“So fun and I feel like I’m actually learning my language”

5★ · Duolingo · App Store · version 7.146.1 · Nov 2026

“this app is a fun way of learning new languages and its not just a meme its a good learning tool👍👍👍 ”

5★ · Duolingo · Google Play · version 6.101.2 · Nov 2026

good for speaking practice

Duolingo 1% · Babbel 2% · Busuu 0% · Pimsleur 18%

Preparing for a trip

“Great way to turn Biblical Hebrew knowledge to spoken”

5★ · Pimsleur · App Store · version 8.0.2 · Oct 2026

Best language method

“Very nice app and method that help u actually speak the language.”

5★ · Pimsleur · App Store · version 7.9.1 · Sep 2026

feedback and corrections from native speakers

Duolingo 0% · Babbel 0% · Busuu 6% · Pimsleur 0%

Great

“I love that I can get advice from the native speakers of the language I am learning!”

5★ · Busuu · App Store · version 30.29.0 · Oct 2026

This is probably the best app to learn a language.

“I love how it helps you learn the alphabet of the language and how you can get opinions from fluent speakers of that language to help correct you on what you say/type.”

5★ · Busuu · App Store · version 30.31.0 · Oct 2026

THEIR WORDS, AND THREE MOVES

Say *fun*, answer Babbel's paywall with what free learners say, and show a real result

The phrases reviewers repeat (each chip says how many are Duolingo's), and three lines taken from the reviews.

PHRASES 4+ REVIEWS WROTE · REVIEWS, DUOLINGO'S OF THEM

- want to learn 19 Duolingo 8
- every day 15 Duolingo 7
- learn spanish 13 Duolingo 6
- super duolingo 12 Duolingo 12
- many ads 11 Duolingo 4
- different languages 10 Duolingo 6

Counted, not chosen by a model: runs of 2 to 4 words that 4 or more of the reviews we read wrote, names left out; 6 of the 40 counted.

STORE LISTING · MAKES LEARNING FUN OR EASY

Lead the listing with fun

START FROM THEIR WORDS

“It actually makes it fun to learn Spanish”

9% of its reviews from two days; Babbel's 2% and Busuu's 4% over weeks.

From reviews: #55 (Duolingo), #53 (Duolingo)

COMPARISON PAGE, WITH THE ENERGY LIMIT STATED BESIDE IT · LOCKED BEHIND A PAYWALL TOO SOON

Answer Babbel's paywall

START FROM THEIR WORDS

“Don't have Super, and it's very fun and easy to learn”

7% of Babbel's reviews say a paywall comes too soon. A free learner's words answer it; 25 reviews fault the energy limit, so state it.

From reviews: #72 (Duolingo), #415 (Babbel)

ADS AND LESSON PREVIEWS · PRACTICAL PHRASES AND CLEAR EXPLANATIONS

Show a real result

START FROM THEIR WORDS

“Learned to introduce myself and order food”

1% praise what it teaches, against Busuu's 4% over its weeks. A plain result shows the learning behind the fun; it doesn't settle the grammar reviews.

From reviews: #6 (Duolingo), #53 (Duolingo)

Each line takes a run of 3 or more words from the first review named; the others are on the same subject (#n = its number in the HTML list). Built on reviewers' words, with a few of our own where a reply needs them: match it to Duolingo's own voice before using it.

HOW WE READ IT

What we read, how it was sorted, and what it cannot tell you

What was asked. “Duolingo”: we read it as Duolingo (language learning app). No rivals were named, so we picked 3: Babbel (the other big paid language app on both stores); Busuu (a language app sold on native-speaker feedback, on both stores); Pimsleur (a paid language app sold on speaking, on both stores).

The reviews. The newest 200 reviews per app on each store, then only those from the last 60 days (225 older ones left out): the US App Store, in whatever language each reviewer wrote, and Google Play set to US English (a few are in other languages). Reviewer names and the developer's replies are not kept.

Dates. Duolingo on App Store 31 Oct 2026 to 1 Nov 2026; Duolingo on Google Play 1 Nov 2026; Babbel on App Store 2 Sep 2026 to 1 Nov 2026; Babbel on Google Play 2 Sep 2026 to 1 Nov 2026; Busuu on App Store 9 Sep 2026 to 31 Oct 2026; Busuu on Google Play 15 Oct 2026 to 1 Nov 2026; Pimsleur on App Store 2 Sep 2026 to 30 Oct 2026; Pimsleur on Google Play 2 Sep 2026 to 1 Nov 2026; read November 2, 2026.

The themes. A model (Gemini) named one set of themes from a sample of the reviews, added themes for reviews it left out, then read each of the 1,362 reviews and marked the themes it says, up to three; a second pass reread each against its theme and kept only those that say it. 509 of the 1,362 reviews are in a theme (4 corrected by hand, each with its reason in the HTML list). The counts are exact tallies of that sorting; the sorting is a reading, not a measurement.

The quotes. Every quote is one review, stored as written and shown whole. No reviewer names. Reviews that name an account, carry a link, or name or describe a private person are counted but never quoted (16 left out for naming a person). 13 reviews with only emoji in the body left out.

What it cannot tell you. Store reviews come from people who chose to write one, mostly the delighted and the annoyed; a newest-first read is what reviewers say now, not over the app's life. A share is of the reviews we read, not of users.

The evidence. The HTML version of this report lists every review we read, by theme, with a link to the review on Google Play, to the app's reviews page on the App Store.