



*...E Pluribus Unum
Out of many is one*

International Education Center (IEC) Volunteer Resource Book

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Volunteers

Thank you for volunteering your time at The International Education Center (IEC). Volunteers are a critical and valuable asset to the organization. As a nonprofit the IEC depends on the professional skills and time volunteers bring to our program.

As a volunteer at the IEC you will get to know remarkable people from various countries. The adult students come to the IEC wanting to learn the English language and express themselves clearly and confidently. They value the chance to interact with experienced English speakers, and your interaction with them is one of the best tools in helping them build their confidence and abilities.

Benefits

Volunteering brings many benefits. People volunteer for different reasons, some of which are to:

- Improve the community
- Increase personal satisfaction
- Develop social networks
- Gain work experience
- Utilize untapped skills
- Learn new skills
- Build self-confidence and self esteem
- Enjoy the contact they get with other people
- Maintain existing skills
- Do satisfying work
- Meet new challenges
- Enhance responsibility
- Find that volunteering looks good on your curriculum vitae
- Build a pathway to employment
- Assist in meeting components of government or study guidelines
- Have fun!

Roles

The International Education Center recruits and places volunteers to help adult immigrant and refugee students develop English skills and gain confidence to navigate U.S. culture. Volunteers are matched and placed, based on preference and need, into one of the following environments:

- Classroom Assistant: Assist instructors in the classrooms or computer lab
- Citizenship Tutor: Assist students in preparing for the citizenship exam

- Elective Instructor: Instruct an elective class on a specific subject matter
- Guest Speaker: Serve as a speaker at seminars and workshops on careers, post-secondary education, law, finances, etc.
- Conversation Group Specialist: Meet with students once or twice a week to participate in conversation to assist them with pronunciation and interpretation
- Office Assistant: Serve as an assistant to staff and teachers to help with general office duties as needed
- Special Projects: Assist in special projects as needed: ex. Market Researcher, Newsletter Coordinator, Event Planner, Fundraising, etc.

Rights

As a volunteer, you have the right:

- To work in a healthy and safe environment
- To be interviewed and engaged in accordance with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination legislation
- To be given accurate and truthful information about the organization
- To be given a copy of the Volunteer Resource Book
- Not to fill a position previously held by a paid worker
- To have a role description and agreed hours of contribution
- To be provided with orientation to the organization and the role
- To be provided with appropriate training and support to carry out your role

Responsibilities

The Volunteer Coordinator develops a schedule for the term, and the volunteer is matched to work with the same teacher, student, group, class, or staff member for that term. If a placement doesn't work out due to scheduling, attendance, or other concerns, a new arrangement will be made. Once placed, volunteers are expected to:

- Dedicate at least one hour a week to volunteer
- Commit to volunteering for the entire term if possible
- Notify the instructor, Volunteer Coordinator, or other IEC employee if there is need to cancel
- Be respectful of differences in culture, religion, age, and communication/learning styles
- Be reliable
- Respect confidentiality
- Carry out the specified position description accordingly
- Be accountable for your actions
- Be a positive representative of the organization
- Undertake training as required by the organization

- Ask for support when you need it
- Be courteous to students, staff and other volunteers
- Give notice before you leave the organization
- Provide the organization with feedback of your experience

Confidentiality

As a volunteer you may have access to personal information about students or staff. Under common law people have the right to have their confidentiality respected and can pursue legal action if a significant breach of confidentiality occurs.

No information about students or staff, including their identity, should be given to any person or agency outside of the organization without permission, unless there is a legal requirement to do so. These matters should be discussed with your Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteers should not use or disclose any confidential information about a student, fellow volunteer or staff member.

At times discussions will occur about a student. Sharing of information should be limited to those with whom there is a need to discuss such details, and who are authorized to receive student information.

For further information regarding Privacy/Confidentiality practices within the IEC, please speak to your Volunteer Coordinator.

The IEC

Our mission is to provide the tools by which first generation immigrants, refugees, and their families can become independent and productive members of the Twin Cities community.

We define these tools as increased cultural proficiency, self-sufficiency, employability, and civic engagement. Our core programming includes curriculum to support students entering and retaining employment, entering postsecondary education and training, and U.S. cultural proficiency.

What we do

The IEC was established in 1991 as Gateway, a non-profit English language school for adults of international origin. As the need for English language instruction grew due to increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees relocating to the Twin Cities, the program grew in size and became an adult basic education (ABE) program under the umbrella organization The Institute for New Americans (INA).

From 1994 to 2006 the INA included the Hmong elders program, an English and cultural proficiency program that supported older members of the Hmong community. From 1996-2007 the INA also included Abraham Lincoln High School, an alternative high school focused on serving immigrant and refugee teens.

In 2006, Volunteers of America took over the Hmong elders program, and in 2007 the high school became its own charter. The remaining adult education program became the Institute for New Americans doing business as the International Education Center. In addition to continuing its English language instruction, the IEC incorporated GED preparation, citizenship, computer, and math classes. At various points it has offered a TOEFL class, career-specific language classes, and was contracted to provide on-site English instruction to employees at local businesses.

The IEC provides instruction to more than 1,000 students from more than 70 countries each year. The current student body is approximately 49% Black, 32% Latino, 9% Asian, 9% White, and 1% other. Students range in age from 16 to over 80, with the largest percentage (~60%) between the ages of 25 and 44.

We prepare students to enroll in higher education; to search and apply for jobs; to function at a higher level in American culture; or simply to become more productive and independent members of our community. Multi-lingual, multi-cultural individuals can be a great asset to any organization operating in a global market.

We offer several classes, including:

- English as a second language (ESL) instruction for immigrants and refugees
- GED preparation courses for native and non-native speakers of English
- Math classes
- Computer classes

Classes are offered year-round in the morning, afternoon and evening at our location in downtown Minneapolis. The school year is divided into winter, spring, summer and fall terms.

Rights

The IEC has a right to:

- Make decisions about appropriate placement of its volunteers
- Review volunteer performance according to organizational policies and procedures
- Expect volunteers to perform the given tasks to the best of their ability, be prompt and reliable
- Expect from all volunteers respect and courtesy toward all students, and paid and voluntary staff
- Set the parameters and guidelines of the volunteer work positions
- Release a volunteer who is not appropriate for the volunteer work

Responsibilities

The IEC has a responsibility to:

- Provide a clear outline of duties
- Provide orientation and necessary training
- Set clear lines of communication about complaints and conflict resolution procedures
- Provide safe, healthy working conditions
- Include volunteers in relevant decision making processes
- Provide supervision and support
- Acknowledge and thank the volunteer on a regular basis

Immigrants and Refugees

An immigrant is someone with citizenship in one country who enters another country to settle permanently. A refugee (as defined by Section 101(a)42 of the Immigration and Nationality Act) is an immigrant who is unable or unwilling to return to their home country because of a well-founded fear of persecution due to race, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, religion, or national origin.

Immigration is a process that has a profound impact on one's identity and sense of self. Studies show that the degree to which one experiences negative outcomes from immigration is affected by several factors:

- A range of sociodemographic variables, both pre-migratory factors (e.g. prior travel, language proficiency, socioeconomic status) and post-migratory factors (e.g. accommodation, employment, education, isolation).
- Identification with their own ethnic group.
- Personal family history of coping with stress.
- The extent of similarities and dissimilarities between the culture of origin and the new culture.
- The availability of friends and relatives who have lived longer in the new culture and can serve as mediators and interpreters. (Berger et al., 2002; Nesdale et al., 1997)

Culture shock refers to the internal reaction to the stress of relocation. It denotes the existential crisis, the disconfirmation of one's core assumptions about the world, caused by immigration. It may lead to feelings of helplessness, insecurity, a sense of emptiness and meaninglessness, a shaken sense of self, a lowered self-esteem, confusion, disorientation, frustration, anger, depression, and familial discord.
(Berger & Weiss, 2002)

War trauma – severe, repeated, and prolonged exposure to the violent events of war – has been experienced by nearly all refugees. The Center for Victims of Torture uses the triple trauma paradigm to describe the impact of war trauma on individuals' lives. Aside from dealing with health problems, injuries, or disfigurement, survivors also commonly are faced with a sense of shame or humiliation associated with the trauma. They are left with a sense of profound vulnerability, betrayal, or guilt for having survived when their friends and family did not (The Center for Victims of Torture, 2001)¹. Survivors of war trauma or torture may face an array of challenges regarding health care that other immigrants may not.

¹ The Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) is a Minnesota-based private nonprofit founded in 1985. It is the first organization of its kind in the United States and the third in the world.

The Triple Trauma Paradigm		
PRE-FLIGHT	FLIGHT	POST-FLIGHT
Harassment/intimidation/threats	Fear of being caught or returned	Low social and economic status
Fear of unexpected arrest	Living in hiding/underground	Lack of legal status
Loss of job/livelihood	Detention at checkpoints/borders	Language barriers
Loss of home and possessions	Loss of home, possessions	Transportation, service barriers
Disruption of studies, life dreams	Loss of job/schooling	Loss of identity, roles
Repeated relocation	Illness	Bad news from home
Living in hiding/underground	Robbery	Unmet expectations
Societal chaos/breakdown	Exploitation/bribes	Unemployment/underemployment
Prohibition of traditional practices	Physical assault, rape, or injury	Racial/ethnic discrimination
Lack of medical care	Witnessing violence	Inadequate, dangerous housing
Separation/isolation of family	Lack of medical care	Repeated relocation/migration
Malnutrition	Separation/isolation of family	Social and cultural isolation
Need for secrecy, silence, distrust	Malnutrition	Family separation/reunification
Brief arrests	Crowded, unsanitary conditions	Unresolved losses/disappearances
Being followed or monitored	Long waits in refugee camps	Unrealistic expectations from home
Imprisonment	Great uncertainty about future	Shock of new climate
Torture		Symptoms often worsen
Other forms of violence		Conflict: internal, marital, generational, community
Witnessing violence		
Disappearances/deaths		

Source: Center for Victims of Torture, 2001



Cross-Cultural Communication

Communication across cultures can be challenging. Some helpful tips in communicating are:

- Work toward self-awareness. Spend time identifying and understanding your own culture and how you relate to that culture.
- Acknowledge your own stereotypes. Accept that they'll pop up as an automatic response but know that they can be discarded.
- As much as possible, foster an attitude that accepts differences. Agree to disagree without necessarily having to be "right."
- Develop cultural discernment. Not every culturally-based behavior will work equally well in every situation.
- Listen and observe; much can be learned in silence.
- Identify cross-cultural commonalities. Build relationships in these common comfort zones.
- Ask individuals from other cultures for help in understanding their cultural values and how they personally relate to those values.

- Be flexible. Don't be afraid to use trial and error making adjustments based on reactions.
- Cultivate and nurture your sense of humor.
- Take time out to rest, to reflect, to sort out your feelings. Communicating respectfully with someone from another culture takes a lot of energy.

Rubin, Joan and Irene Thompson. *How to Be a More Successful Language Learner (Teaching Methods)*. Heinle, 2 edition, January 1994.

Stewart, Edward C. and Milton J. Bennett. *American Cultural Patterns: A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, 1991.

Storti, Craig. *A Few Minor Adjustments: A Handbook for Volunteers*. Office of Special Services, Peace Corps, 1991.

Valerian, Linda. Director of Volunteer Services, Center for Victims of Torture. 717 E. River Road, Minneapolis, MN 55455.

Adult ESL Learners

Adult learners come from a variety of educational backgrounds, which often have been interrupted at varying stages. Keep in mind the difficulty that adult learners face in not being able to express the mature, complex thoughts and emotions they are accustomed to expressing in another language. It's important to show respect especially for those currently at low proficiency levels. Generally, the following differences between adult and child learners can be helpful to keep in mind:

- Adults are more able to handle abstract rules and concepts. Language must still be meaningful and firmly grounded in its real-life applications.
- Sensory input need not always be as varied but it's important to appeal to multiple learning styles.
- Adults have longer attention spans. Activities should still be to the point, short and sweet.
- Adults often bring more self-confidence to the classroom, but there may be other emotional factors to take into consideration.
- Adults can focus more easily on isolated linguistic questions as long as these digressions are drawn back to the original meaningful context.

Adult learners bring to class:

- Language: Adult learners already know another language. That language plays a major role in their sense of identity and in their means of relating to others. A first language both helps and hinders the process of learning a second language. Learning a new language represents a new risk of sounding foolish, being misunderstood, or in some cases of feeling estranged from the learner's original culture.

- **Background knowledge**: Adult learners bring with them the life skills and experience they've gained over a longer period of time. These skills can often serve as a base for learning new skills.
- **Expectations**: Learners with prior language experiences will bring with them expectations of how classes should be taught and how language should be learned. It's important to understand these expectations and to negotiate the new relationship between the teacher and the student. Learners with no prior experience may feel intimidated by language classes. As much as possible, clarifying and explaining expectations on both sides can facilitate learning.
- **Motivation**: Despite the widely heterogeneous nature of adult learners, they all need to use the language to function in their new environment. Learners must have a sense that what they are learning is of interest and value to them in order to be motivated. The relevance of the language can be emphasized through thematic, content-based language learning.
- **Personal circumstances**: Age, health, problems with employment, transportation, health care, and family are some of the things that can affect the learner's abilities. There will be a wide range of learners in a given class interacting not only with the teacher but also with one another. Flexibility is important and teaching needs to be informed by understanding the students' situations.

Brown, Douglas H. *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Pearson Education, 2 edition, June 2000.
 MacKay, Heather and Abigail Tom. *Teaching Adult Second Language Learners*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Tutoring Tips and Methods

Helpful hints for successful ESL tutoring:

- Relax and be yourself. The time you spend in conversation with students is, in itself, of great benefit. It is important to remember that when students work with tutors they are automatically challenged to use their English skills and encouraged to further develop their abilities. Be creative and enjoy your volunteering experience.
- Take some time to establish a friendly rapport with your students. Use the first minutes of the tutoring session to get acquainted with your student. Learn a bit about your students' language, culture, and experiences.
- Try to work at the student's optimum pace. Slow down and simplify when needed. When working with ESL students it is often very important to simplify and be creative in your communication. For example, the use of visual aids, physical gestures, and/or drawing pictures can be very effective ways of communicating new vocabulary words and ideas. A tutor can then ask the student to write new words on paper or under the drawings that have been made.

- Teach structure (accuracy) and function (fluency). Students need to learn vocabulary and grammatical structures and they need to communicate ideas. It is important to teach both at all levels.
- Avoid correcting every error all the time. There will be certain times for monitoring accuracy and other times for allowing practice in fluency. Error correction should be focused on the area being worked on specifically. This is true for all skill areas: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Try to challenge the student but avoid becoming too difficult. It is not uncommon for the ESL student to come to a point in the day where they feel exhausted and/or become overwhelmed. At this point most students simply shut down.
- Teach students by using themes or categories if possible. The language must be meaningful. Bringing continuity to lessons and activities reminds us to teach and learn with a purpose.
- Teach conversational English. The language you use every day is what you should be teaching your students.
- Take time for plenty of review. Repetition is an important tool for learning.
- Encourage students to speak more during the tutoring session rather than listen to you speak. Tutoring sessions are excellent opportunities for students to exercise the speaking skills they have. Ask open questions that will allow them to find the answers on their own and leave wait time after asking the questions so they have a chance to speak.

Minnesota Literacy Council, 756 Transfer Road, St. Paul, MN and the International Education Center

Methods

Useful methods for tutoring ESL students:

- Reading using the “catch word” method for understanding and developing vocabulary.
- Encourage your student to write down vocabulary words on paper, practicing spelling and word recognition, and review the words for homework.
- Frequently check that students understand. Ask the questions: Do you understand what this word means? Use this word in a sentence. Tell me what this paragraph is saying using your own words. Summarize what you have read by writing a few sentences.
- Review and recycle. Do not be afraid to go back over things. Repetition is a good tool for learning and retaining words and information. Going over the same concept many different ways is very helpful.

- Keep the details of an exercise in perspective. Helping a student to develop their language skills is a higher priority than memorizing detailed information from an assignment.
- Help beginning level students learn survival skills and survival phrases first.
 - learning the ABCs
 - letter and number recognition
 - the use of key phrases:
 - How do you say...? Please speak slower. Please repeat that. Where is...? How do you spell that? What is it? I don't understand.
- Draw on a student's life experiences for conversation and writing activities. What did you do on the weekend? Write a paragraph describing your first day in the United States. Tell me about your first week of school. What was it like?
- For a fun reading and writing activity keep a dialogue journal. Write a question on a piece of paper for the student to respond to by writing back. Try to keep this written communication going without using any spoken words and see how long you and your student can go.
- Ask your student what he or she needs most help on. Question yourself about what most impedes your student's ability to communicate. Which areas can you most effectively address?
- A basic sample outline for a lesson plan:
 - Warm-up/Small talk/Review
 - Dialogue/Role-play
 - Define and discuss new vocabulary
 - Review and practice

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Resources

As a volunteer at the IEC, the three areas you may be working within are conversation sessions, pronunciation, and/or basic writing practice. The IEC has resources in all of these areas. Feel free to ask the instructor, the Volunteer Coordinator, or the Student Services Admin to access these materials.

Conversation

Individual or small group conversation is one of the best ways to improve language ability and confidence. Some activities to get conversation going are (dependent on level):

- Interviews – past activities, present situation, future plans, interests

- Life stories
- News stories
- TV/Movies
- Role play life situations (bank, work, bus, store, etc.)
- Likes and dislikes
- Picture descriptions, stories, drawing
- Realia – bring in real-life objects to discuss
- Games (LifeStories, Scruples, etc.)

Many resources are available in the IEC resource room, public libraries, the Minnesota Literacy Council library, and bookstores. Titles include:

Klippel, F. (1984). *Keep Talking*. Cambridge University Press.

Zelman, N.E. (1986). *Conversation Inspirations*. Pro Lingua Associates.

Christison, M. (1995). *Look Who's Talking!* Alta Book Center Publishers.

Pronunciation

Practice with pronunciation is a common request that we receive from students. In addition to feedback in conversation sessions, there are some specific activities that focus on this area:

- Repetition of problematic words or phrases
- Slow, methodical pronunciation of problem sounds
- Reading aloud of news stories, class work, or other printed material
- Focused exercises, such as those found in pronunciation texts, e.g. *Pronunciation Exercises in English* by M.E. Clarey and R. Dixon (Prentice Hall Regents 2Publishers).

Writing

At the IEC there is a wide range of literacy and writing abilities, even in the higher levels. Students come to the IEC with many different literacy and schooling backgrounds. Tutoring could involve practice in forming alphabet letters, correcting and rewriting journal entries, or editing an academic essay.