

# Helping Beginners Learn

A guide for those volunteering with ESOL learners



Alison Robinson  
December 2017

## Contents

---

Introduction - What this guide will cover .....	3
Who might you be working with? .....	3
Definitions – asylum seeker, refugee, migrant.....	4
Why are they learning? .....	5
Challenges and Barriers to Learning.....	6
Cultural Differences .....	7
Language differences and first language interference .....	8
Top tips for working with beginners:.....	9
Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing .....	12
Speaking.....	12
Writing.....	15
Listening.....	16
Reading.....	17
Ways to develop literacy – reading and writing.....	18
Important - Social sight words and personal information.....	19
Safeguarding good practice for volunteers .....	20
Further help that volunteer groups can access.....	21
Appendix 1 Communication games.....	22
Communication/Listening Activities for Beginners .....	22
Appendix 2 Resources .....	31

ESOL trainers are free to copy this resource as they like, and to adapt for training purposes.

The author wishes to thank the Home Office, as primary funders.

Thanks also to North East ESOL tutors Alison Phillips, Mark Fitzpatrick, Abigail Flanagan and Helen Willis who contributed to the Communication Activities appendix and to Dr Ruth Dawson (<http://mhhs.org.uk/>) and colleagues at Action Foundation ([www.actionfoundation.org.uk](http://www.actionfoundation.org.uk)) for their encouragement and help with editing.

If you wish to contact the author about the contents of the resource, please email:  
[nemp@middlesbrough.gov.uk](mailto:nemp@middlesbrough.gov.uk)

Photos courtesy of Action Foundation

Typesetting & design - [www.lourobinson.co.uk](http://www.lourobinson.co.uk)

## Introduction - What this guide will cover

---

This guide is for volunteers who are helping to develop the language skills of people whose first language isn't English. The purpose of this guide is to develop a more in depth understanding of the learners that you may be helping, the difficulties they will face along the way, and some ways for you to help them use English and develop their confidence. Throughout this guide I will use the term 'learners' when referring to the people you are helping. I will avoid the term teach as most people reading this are probably not trained language teachers. The role of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teachers is a highly skilled one. An ideal situation for developing language skills is for learners to have both formal tuition in an ESOL class plus other opportunities to practice their skills and develop their confidence in a safe environment outside the formal classroom. This less formal language support is where you can help and build.

## Who might you be working with?

---

Learners who want or need to learn English come from a variety of backgrounds. There are many groups of learners who may need support with English in your area. They may be:

- Europeans
- from beyond the EU
- spouses of British citizens
- asylum seekers
- refugees
- refused asylum seekers
- migrant workers
- looking for work
- in work
- parents
- highly educated
- people who have never held a pen before
- those who have experienced great trauma
- from different religions and cultures
- very new to the UK
- those who have been in the UK for many years

## Definitions – asylum seeker, refugee, migrant.

---

These definitions are taken from:

[https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy\\_research/the\\_truth\\_about\\_asylum/the\\_facts\\_about\\_asylum](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_research/the_truth_about_asylum/the_facts_about_asylum)

### Refugee

“A person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.”

### The 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

In the UK, a person is officially a refugee when they have their claim for asylum accepted by the government.

### Asylum Seeker:

A person who has left their country of origin and formally applied for asylum in another country but whose application has not yet been concluded.

### Refused asylum seeker

A person whose asylum application has been unsuccessful and who has no other claim for protection awaiting a decision. Some refused asylum seekers voluntarily return home, others are forcibly returned and for some it is not safe or practical for them to return until conditions in their country change.

### Economic migrant

Someone who has moved to another country to work. Refugees are not economic migrants  
[https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy\\_research/the\\_truth\\_about\\_asylum/the\\_facts\\_about\\_asylum](https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/policy_research/the_truth_about_asylum/the_facts_about_asylum)

## Why are they learning?

Learners will come to classes or conversation groups for a variety of reasons. Here are some of them. They come because:

- The Job Centre mandated them
- They are keen to find work
- They need to learn English for fulfilling applications to the Home Office for indefinite leave to remain or British citizenship
- They want to gain qualifications and go to college or university
- They want to resume studies started in their own country
- They want to gain English skills so that they can return to the career they had in their own country
- They want to improve their prospects at work
- They want to be able to cope day to day with doctor's appointments, shopping and travelling
- They want to help their children with school work or daily activities
- They want to be able to talk to neighbours and make friends
- English is a universal language and it will be useful when or if they return home

Most of the funding that is available to colleges targets those who are not currently working but are permitted to work in the UK. The funding is designed to help learners progress into work. Some learners must pay for their courses with the Government only covering half of the cost.

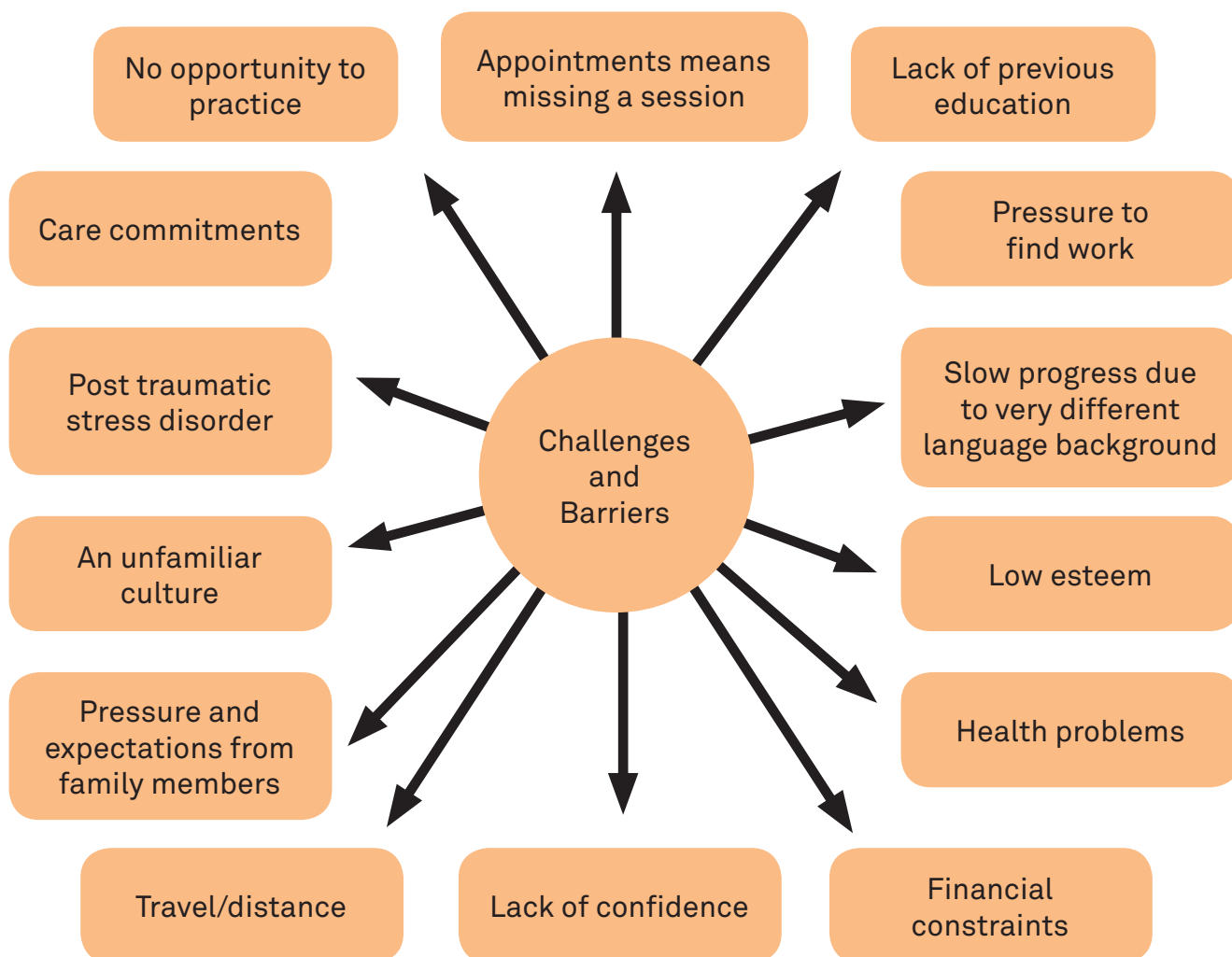
***Have a think about those you help.***

***Do you know what is motivating your learners?***



## Challenges and Barriers to Learning

Learning English is crucial for people who plan to settle in the UK. It will help them mix with others, gain qualifications, find jobs and integrate. However for many people concentrating on learning a new and difficult skill can be a challenge. Here are just some things that might make learning slow or difficult to engage in.



***Can you think of any more challenges and barriers to learning?  
What would you find hard if you went to a new country and tried to learn a new language?***



## Cultural Differences

---

***Take a minute to think about your own culture.***

***What is British culture?***

***Do your family have a tradition that is special to them?***

***Have you misunderstood a situation when abroad or with someone from another culture?***

***How did it make you feel?***

***What might have helped you in this situation?***

### culture - noun

The way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/culture>

Your learners will come from a range of different cultural backgrounds. There are a few things to remember about culture.

We each develop our world view in childhood. Our views come first from our family, and then friends and the wider circles we mix in. We might presume everyone behaves the way do. We might think everyone has the same idea of what is polite or we might presume everyone knows who David Beckham is because he is so much part of our popular culture.

Cultures and traditions differ greatly across the world and even from one family to another. Cultural differences are just variations in outlook and behaviour. We may differ in some things such as the way we dress but we are all the same in many respects. It is worth remembering that many subtle behaviours we take for granted such as tone of voice, hand gestures and degree of 'politeness' may be misinterpreted by new arrivals or by the people relating to those from a different cultural background.

I recently heard of a woman who thought it would be rude to talk to other mothers in the street or at the school. She felt she must invite them to her house for a coffee first. She didn't understand that it was fine to make friends at the school gates. Once she understood that it was acceptable to chat in the street, she was able to make friends.

Keep an open mind. Don't presume anything. Don't be afraid to ask questions. Read up about your learners' religions and cultures. This link may be useful to find out more:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/>

As a volunteer you may well be in a position to guide your learners and help them understand some of the cultural complexities of life in the UK.

Before we look at some of the mechanics of teaching beginners to use English let's consider some differences between languages that might help us plan our learning activities

## Language differences and first language interference

---

Let's presume for a moment that your learner's first language is Arabic and use this widely spoken language as an example. He or she may be highly educated or alternatively may have had very little, or no schooling. A lack of literacy will usually slow the development of literacy in English greatly.

He or she will almost certainly be able to speak Arabic fluently and will come to your class with a wealth of life experiences and skills.

It's worth remembering that Arabic has a different alphabet and is written from right to left. Books open from the 'back' first. Vowels are not written in the way we write them and there are far fewer vowel sounds. This can make spelling and pronunciation hard as the subtlety of our extra vowel sounds are hard to recognise and voice. Arabic speakers also find it hard to differentiate between the p and b sounds as there is no p sound in Arabic. Arabic and English each have sounds particular to them that may produce problems with pronunciation.

Arabic is a phonetic language so English spelling patterns and irregularities may well be a new concept. Verb tenses work in a very different way and there are concepts that cannot be directly translated from one language to another. Word order is different and some words won't have direct translation either. There are different stress and intonation patterns.

For those with no first language literacy you may find that there is a strong reliance on memory and that this is a highly developed skill which can be very useful in the learning process

Until we stop and think we may not realise that there are so many differences and each one poses a challenge to our learners. Each language background we encounter will bring its own challenges to the learning of English.

We've thought about who learners might be, why they want to learn and the challenges they face. Now we will look at some useful tips for you to use with your groups.



## Top tips for working with beginners:

---

### > Put yourself in their shoes

1. Imagine yourself in China learning the language. What would you want and need?
2. Let learners listen first. They'll speak when ready..
3. Speaking will naturally come before writing especially for those with no first language literacy, who may have, as a consequence, better practised memory skills.
4. If someone has never learned to read and write they may feel that they've got this far in life without the skill and don't need to learn. Alternatively they may be desperate to learn the skill they have never had the chance to learn.
5. We only learn if we are relaxed, it is important to create a relationship with the learners and build their trust.

### > Be clear

1. Make instructions very clear using as few words as possible.
2. Speak slowly but naturally. Do – not – pause – unnaturally – between – words.
3. Don't be afraid to use contracted forms e.g. Using I'm. This is what they'll hear outside class.
4. Rephrase instructions if learners aren't clear.
5. Avoid grammar language. This will confuse. It is language they don't need to know now.

### > Things to help you

1. Use visuals – pictures, flashcards, google images, photos.
2. Remember that your learners are adults and avoid resources aimed at children.
3. Use actions and mime. Be larger than life.
4. Use realia – real things such as medicine packets or foodstuffs.
5. Be confident enough to use silence, and wait.
6. See the list of websites and communication activities at the back of this guide.

### > Go slowly

1. Build on knowledge slowly.
2. Don't introduce too much. Emphasise 5 – 8 important vocabulary words a lesson.
3. Go slowly. Get used to silence. Give learners 15 – 20 seconds to answer your questions.
4. Drill and repeat. Drill and repeat. Learners will not learn something in one lesson.
5. Don't feel embarrassed getting learners to repeat and repeat.
6. Vary activities so repetition isn't boring.
7. Be confident enough not to rush things.

### > This is their opportunity

1. Limit how much you speak. Do everything to increase learner talking time.
2. Prepare well, prepare a lot, to keep them talking.
3. Let them chat too, in English! This will build confidence.
4. Keep everyone busy all the time. This is their chance to use English.

> **Equipped with the tools for the task**

1. Think about your session beforehand.
2. If you have a plan, what problems might you encounter?
3. If there's an activity you want to complete, for example a role-play pre-teach all vocabulary needed to complete your activity before you try it.
4. Or you might want a 'free' session – looking at some pictures, asking some questions and see where it takes you.

> **Equip them with the tools for life outside class**

1. Work with relevant topics. Work on a need to know basis – doctors, transport etc.
2. Practise transferable phrases: I'd like a ... Where's the... Don't worry about the individual words.
3. Help them transfer information already learnt to new situations.
4. Point out patterns in language e.g. **Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday**
5. Work on vocabulary before grammar. We understand 'I go to shop yesterday' – it's not correct but it's still clear.
6. Use lower case printed letters when writing (except for where capitals are required).
7. Practice skills of engaging in small talk. Talking about the weather. Talking about the weekend.

> **Build confidence**

1. Encourage learners 'to have a go' even if some of it is wrong.
2. Be clear that 'mistakes are good'. No one speaks perfectly.
3. If learners are concentrating on getting a particular thing right, don't correct other mistakes they might make.
4. Praise and encourage and give positive feedback.
5. Cater for all and vary activities – role play, board games, listening, matching.
6. Make learning fun.
7. Be open minded – you will learn something new from your learners every day.

> **Are they all learning?**

1. Check understanding by giving individual activities – point to pictures, ask for an object.
2. Allow time for all to succeed. Give something extra to quicker learners to keep them busy.
3. Provide different levels of task on the same topic.
4. Cater for all and vary activities – role play, board games, listening, matching.
5. Take breaks. Learning is tiring.
6. Show learners how to learn – practising at home, keeping papers in a file...

7. Provide feedback so learners can improve.

## Speaking in Simple language

This is something that most people struggle with at first. Sometimes we think we are using the simplest language but we are actually making it harder for our learners. Have a look at the sentence pairs below and decide which you think is the easiest for your learners to understand. Think about why you chose the one you did.

Sometimes every day or colloquial language may seem the most polite or friendly, but what would happen if you looked “tummy upset” up in the dictionary? Is it easy to find these phrases in a dictionary?

- ‘made off with’
- ‘show up’

If something isn’t clear to your learners at first, think of a way to rephrase what you have said, and speak naturally but a little slower.

Statement	Easy or hard? Why?
He’s gone down with a tummy upset.	
He’s got a stomach problem.	
He missed out on the job.	
He didn’t get the job.	
Next you will make notes on ...	
And, so, right, I’m going to ask you, in a minute, when you’ve done this, to write a bit, or make some notes on ...	
Yes please.	
Can I take you up on that offer?	
I’m proper knackered.	
I’m tired.	
What time did he show up?	
What time did he arrive?	
He made off with his mate.	
He went with his friend.	
She always sits down for Corrie. Don’t ring her when that’s on.	
She watches TV at 8 o’clock. Don’t ring her then.	

## Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing

---

Language is made up of four skills. You may want to help your learners with all of these skills. In the following sections we will look in a bit more depth at the English language and the skills that it requires.

Through helping others develop confidence in their language skills you may have become more interested in how language works. Because you are focussing on language you will have realised that you do things when you speak or write, or listen or read, that you'd not realised you were doing. You know how to use English, but sometimes you don't know why you do something.

For those interested in understanding some basics of the English language, we will look at the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing in turn and look at some of the aspects that might be useful to you when you are helping others.

### Speaking

---

First think about these questions:

- 1. When have you spoken today?***
- 2. What did you talk about?***
- 3. How did one speaking situation differ from another?***
- 4. What are the skills needed to make ourselves understood?***

> **The Mechanics of Speaking - We need to be able to:**

Pronounce sounds and full words correctly	Without being able to say the 'th' sound Tuesday and Thursday can sound very similar
Use stress in a word	Without the emphasis in the right place, sixteen and sixty can sound very similar but said correctly they are much clearer – <b>sixteen, sixty</b>
Stressing some words and not others	Now try saying these 2 sentences: <b>Can I have an apple?</b> <b>I can open a can of beans?</b>
	Listen to how the 3 instances of 'can' sound. The second 'can' is unstressed and should sound very different and shorter.
Use stress in a sentence	Try saying this sentence 3 times, each time with the stress on a different word: <b>She was late.</b> What did you notice?
Use the correct intonation for the situation and meaning	Try <b>She was late</b> again and with your voice becoming lower at the end, and a second time with it rising at the end. What do you notice?
Use the correct tone for the situation	Try the following sentence in a cross voice, a sad voice, a happy and excited voice. <b>It was his birthday yesterday.</b> Do you hear a story behind each way of saying it?
Know the words	Do you know another language? What situations would you find it difficult to operate in? Do you lack the vocabulary for that situation?
Have a knowledge of how to put the words together	Speech is clearer if words are in the correct order
Use the right sort of language in different settings	Think of a young man greeting: 1. His mate in the street 2. A prospective employer in an interview 3. The elderly lady next door Does he say the same thing each time?
Understand how turn-taking works	In the UK we tend to wait our turn to talk but in many cultures people talk over each other and this is completely acceptable. In the UK this would be seen as very rude.
Deal with difficulties and improvise where this is needed	Sometimes we don't know the word for something so we find a way out of the situation. If you forget 'gate' you can say 'a door in the garden wall'. Forgetting a word and improvising takes confidence.

## > **Developing Confidence to Speak**

At beginner level, any utterance is a success. Here are some ways to encourage participation in speaking activities.

- Repeat familiar vocabulary and build on that
- Repeat things more than you would think and keep it very simple
- Set achievable aims for your sessions
- Remind the learners what they have achieved this session/ week/ term
- Build activities that require the learner to speak
- Take every opportunity to get them to speak
- Encourage clear pronunciation but remember a strong accent is fine if speech is intelligible
- Encourage fluency. Remember not to correct all mistakes as this knocks confidence
- Praise all efforts
- Encourage the learners to try things out outside of class





## Writing

---

Think about these questions:

- 1. *Have you written anything today?***
- 2. *What did you write?***
- 3. *What was needed to make yourself understood?***

### **> The Mechanics of writing - We need to be able to:**

- Hold a pen
- Form letter correctly so they are clear eg. so that they sit on a line/ hang below the line (lower case y) have a stick that goes up (so a d looks different from an a)
- Make spaces between words
- Know the alphabet
- Know grammar
- Use punctuation
- Have clear handwriting
- Know letters, and groups of letters and their sounds
- Form letters – know where they start and end when you write them
- Use a dictionary/spellcheck
- Know vocabulary
- Know spelling rules and patterns
- Structure sentences
- Understand instructions

***These are just a few of the skills we use. Can you think of any more?***

## Listening

---

Think about these questions:

- 1. *What/who have you listened to today?***
- 2. *Did you understand everything you heard?***
- 3. *What knowledge helped you understand what you heard?***

### > **Skills we use when listening**

- When listening to something, a native speaker will quickly identify the topic and the genre – Are we listening to an interview, some instructions, or a drama?
- Once we know what we are listening to we predict what might come next. We half know what to expect if someone is telling us what to do to register for a class.
- Because we can predict what will come next, listening is made easy.
- Sometimes when we listen, we aren't listening for every word but for key bits of information such as listening to the train announcement for the change of platform number.
- Sometimes we need to listen for every detail.
- If we know the language well, we hope to know and understand every word.
- If anything is unclear we will use our cultural knowledge to fill in the gaps. 'Oh I know, he must be talking about ...'
- When listening we will understand the tone, stress and the intonation, the accent, idioms and slang and read a lot of information 'between the lines'.

***Which is easier, listening to a friend telling you about her weekend or listening to a lecture on genetics? Why is one easier than the other?***

## Reading

---

Think about these questions:

- 1. What have you read today?**
- 2. Did you understand everything you read?**
- 3. Did you read every word or skim over the text?**
- 4. What knowledge helped you understand what you read?**

- When reading someone with good literacy skills will quickly identify what type of text they are reading – is it a birthday card, an advert or some important information?
- Once we know what we are reading we predict what might come next. We know what to expect will come next in the birthday card or an invitation.
- When reading we sometimes skim to get a general feel of the text ‘Oh it’s sort of about ...’
- Sometimes we scan a text for the key bit of information – when does the class start?
- Sometimes we need to listen for every detail – what do I need to bring and do on my first day?
- As with listening if we know the language well, we hope to know and understand every word.
- And if anything is unclear we will use our cultural knowledge to fill in the gaps – ‘Ah, I think she’s talking about EastEnders, not her neighbour’.
- If we don’t understand a word we may be able to think about where it appeared in the sentence, what the sentence was about, relate it to another we know and guess its meaning.
- If we are reading and see a new word, we will use our knowledge of spelling patterns, perhaps relate it to similar words and guess how to pronounce the word.

***Which is easier, reading an email from a friend telling you about her holiday in Spain, or reading the terms and conditions in your new insurance policy?***

***Why is one easier than the other? Our cultural knowledge may help us with the email. We know what she is likely to have been doing on holiday and we are able to fill in the gaps.***

## Ways to develop literacy – reading and writing

---

- Keep things very simple
- Finger trace letters
- Join dots to form letters
- Copying letters, words and shapes
- Forming shapes with the use of a writing guide – see appendices
- Forming letters correctly
- Writing numbers
- Writing on a line
- Writing straight without a line
- Matching pictures to words
- Reading flashcards
- Concentrate on recognising initial sounds in words
- Move onto looking at final sounds and then consonant clusters ‘sh’ and ‘ch’ etc
- Reforming cut up words e.g. sta + tion = station
- Read very simple sentences
- Put missing words into very simple sentences
- Cut up sentences and reorder them
- Find a particular word in a text and circle/underline it
- Write a very simple sentence
- You read the text, they follow with their finger
- Using a writing frame, get them to write about themselves
- Fill forms
- Give a list of words – find the odd one out e.g. apple, banana, orange, dog
- Play bingo
- Sort words into categories – cut up words coffee, bread, water, milk, rice, egg, chicken – sort into two piles - food and drink
- Very simple dictation – could be done with cut up words too
- Reorder words in a mixed up sentence
- Use items from real life for reading practice – bills, bus tickets, notices
- Encourage learners to find the relevant information and not feel the need to understand every word
- Relate new things to previous learning and point out patterns e.g. –ing recurring in words
- Make activities fun

## **Important - Social sight words and personal information**

---

You will naturally want to start by teaching words that are easy to spell and learn. Many words do not follow simple spelling rules and are not easy to learn but are important words for your learners to know. For instance, their name and address.

Think also of these social sight words :

<b>Station</b>	<b>Entrance</b>
<b>Toilet</b>	<b>Gentlemen</b>
<b>Ladies</b>	<b>Exit</b>
<b>No Entry</b>	<b>Police</b>
<b>BUS</b>	<b>TAXI</b>
<b>First Aid</b>	<b>Fire</b>
<b>Reception</b>	<b>platform</b>
<b>LIFT</b>	<b>SALE</b>

## Safeguarding good practice for volunteers

---

*Advice supplied by 'Talk English'*

### You should

- Treat all learners or service users with respect and respect their right to personal privacy except where you feel a learner or others may be in danger.
- Ensure that, whenever practical, there is more than one volunteer or member of staff present during activities or that you are within sight or hearing of others but in any event operate within the guidance offered by this code.
- Exercise caution when discussing sensitive issues with learners or service users.
- Exercise caution in initiating any physical contact with a learner or service user.
- Challenge all unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations or suspicions of abuse.
- Ensure that learners or service users know how to contact you via the centre and return calls promptly.

### You should not

- Spend excessive time alone with a learner or service user, away from others.
- Take learners or service users alone, in your car, however short the journey.
- Take learners or service users to your home.
- Engage in physical or sexually provocative games including horseplay.
- Allow or engage in appropriate touching of any form.
- Make over-familiar or sexually suggestive comments or allow approaches made by a learner to go unchallenged or unrecorded.
- Do things of a personal nature that a learner or service user can do for themselves.
- Take photographs, videos or other images of a learner or service user without either their, or the express permission of their parents/carers.
- Give a learner or service user your mobile or landline personal telephone number.
- Accept gifts from learners or service users, contractors or outside suppliers. Generally, volunteers may accept insignificant items of token value such as pens, diaries etc., but volunteers, should seek the consent of their supervisor before accepting any gifts and this should be recorded. Additionally volunteers must not accept any money offered by learners or service users under any circumstances, the volunteer must inform their supervisor of the nature of the gift received.



## Further help that volunteer groups can access

---

If you are a member of a group that helps people to develop language skills you may like to get in touch with Action Language. They run LET project – Learn English Together – which provides training and resources to enable small community organisations to start beginner English language sessions. LET will support with:

- Training: Introduction to English language teaching, learner recruitment, safeguarding etc.
- Resources for 10 week courses.
- Monitoring and evaluation.
- Ongoing encouragement and advice.
- For further information call Malcolm or Nicola on 0191 211 3545  
[malcolmwarin@actionfoundation.org.uk](mailto:malcolmwarin@actionfoundation.org.uk)  
[www.actionfoundation.org.uk](http://www.actionfoundation.org.uk)

Ruth Dawson has completed a study of seven successful groups, in the voluntary sector: A snapshot of English language learning in seven voluntary sector organisations in 2017 [published September 2017]. It describes groups in the voluntary sector [including their practice and processes]. It's obtainable in a pdf, from NATECLA website, and hard copy available from Ruth: [drduthdawson@gmail.com](mailto:drduthdawson@gmail.com) or Nicola: [nicola.kennedy@mhts.org.uk](mailto:nicola.kennedy@mhts.org.uk)

Ruth is about to publish a Guide for Voluntary groups teaching English, available at the beginning of the summer term. This will cover areas such as setting up a group, volunteers, their training, skills and qualifications, recruitment and retention, outlines of suitable curriculum and how to evaluate your programme.

## Appendix 1 Communication games

---

### Communication/Listening Activities for Beginners

---

Ideas devised and compiled by Alison Robinson, with thanks for the valuable input from Alison Phillips, Mark Fitzpatrick, Abigail Flanagan and Helen Willis.

#### 1. Running sequencing

The learners work in pairs (Learner A and Learner B). In front of each pair of learners are 6 separate laminated pictures of (pre-taught) vocabulary eg. Table, chair, lamp, sofa, armchair, window. On 2 distant walls of the room are little versions of these pictures in different sequences.

First Learner A runs to the wall and comes back and tells learner B what sequence the pictures are in. Learner B places the pictures in order without physical help from A. With very low level learners learner A will need to run back and forth, remembering the words and checking what comes next. Mix the cards up and repeat this with Learner B running to the other picture sequence. If this is too easy, use a longer sequence or word cards.

#### 2. Running dictation

This is a version of the above for higher level learners. Find a very simple text. Cut this in half. Put one half on one wall and the other on the other wall (texts A and B). The same as above, learner A runs back and forth to text A relaying the words to B. They then swap and do the same with text B creating a whole text together. This is good for spelling, pronunciation, letter names and sounds.

#### 3. Flashcards

Have a set of 6 – 8 pictures of useful vocabulary. This might be train, bus, lorry, car, taxi, coach, metro, bike. Introduce the vocabulary. Learners can practice the vocabulary with various questions and answers and statements:

**Where is the ...?** – All the learners have one or two pictures in front of them. In turn learners asks 'Where is the ....?' Another learner answers 'Here it is'.

**Can I have the...?** – Same as before. The second learner hands the picture over and says 'Here you are' and first learners thanks the second.

**Do you have a ...?** Yes, here it is.

**How much is a ... to London?** Learners have flashcards with prices. In this activity – train, taxi, coach with prices attached. Learners ask each other for the prices. Second learner replies 'It's £57'

### Other ways to use the flashcards:

I go to London by ....

I like/ I don't like/ do you like?

I have a/ I don't have a/ Do you have?

I want/ I need/ Do you want?/Would you like?

I can/ I can't/ Can you

Where is the ...? It's on the left/ right. It's in/on

When is the appointment? It's on – days, It's in – months, It's at – time)

You could use flashcards on different themes – fruits, vegetables, foods, chemist items, furniture, jobs, hobbies and sports, housework activities, household items, clothes, places in the town, parts of the body, illnesses, colours, months, days of the week, travel, etc. etc.

## 4. Small Sets of Cards

Using cards to develop very simple dialogues (two or three lines), e.g.; 'Can I have a pen, please?' 'Here you are.' 'Thank you'. Here's an example with classroom objects...

- Sit your learners in pairs, Student A and B.
- For each pair of learners, you need about 6 small cards each with a pic of a classroom object, e.g. pen, pencil, rubber. The cards are placed upside down in a pile in front of Student A.
- Student A picks up the top card and shows it to B.
- B must ask Can I have a + whatever is in the picture.
- A says 'Here you are' and hands over the card.
- B says 'Thank you'
- Repeat with all the pictures, swap the cards over and A asks B for the objects.
- If you think learners will find this hard, find a confident learner and demonstrate the dialogue to the class with them.
- To round up the activity, ask a couple of confident learners to demonstrate a dialogue for the class.

Use this technique with pictures of food for dialogues in a café (build this up to include prices too), or pictures of personal possessions (a phone, a key etc.)

Use pictures of healthy/unhealthy activities, e.g. 'Do you smoke? / Do you exercise?' etc.

Sort pictures of healthy and unhealthy activities into two piles. Try this for foods and/or drinks.

Use pictures of common ailments, e.g. 'What's the problem? My head hurts' etc. Leading on to ... I've got a ...headache, stomach ache, and I feel ... dizzy, hot, sad.

Play pairs in pairs or small groups depending on how many cards you have. In this game learners have to say the words to help them learn. Turn over one card and then another and if it's a pair the learner keeps the pair. Then the other learner takes a turn. When all the cards have gone count how many pairs each learner has. The winner is the one with the most pairs.

### 5. Word Grab

You can use picture cards to play 'word grab' to re-enforce learners' vocabulary. Each pair of learners spreads the cards on the table in front of them. Each of the pair is playing against the other. You say the name of one of the objects on the card. Whoever finds and grabs the picture of that object first, wins the card. After you've said the names of each of the items, the learners count up how many cards they've won.

### 6. Directions

Make a very simple map of a street. See example on page 26. The street has 10 things on it. 5 on the left, 5 on the right.

Choose what will be helpful to your learners. These might be things like church, mosque, supermarket, bank, library, gym, advice office, school, park, factory, cafe. These could be largely pictorial (using clip art) although learning the appearance of 'social sight' words such as school is very valuable too.

#### Learners can practice:

'Church, park' etc

'This is the ...'

'I go to the ...'

'Where is the ...?'

'It's on the left/right'

'It's here'

**Build up to a role play:**

A. Excuse me, where is the ...?

B. It's on the left

A. Thank you

Or





A. Excuse me, where is the ...?

B. It's near the/ next to the ...

C. Thank you.

This can be extended so that you have 2 streets, and the role play extends to It's on Park Road on the left.

## Street Activitya

SCHOOL	   	GYM
BANK		CHURCH
PARK		SUPERMARKET
LIBRARY		MOSQUE
ADVICE OFFICE		BUS STOP



## 7. Mill Drills

These work with 6 or more learners and are good for asking and answering simple questions e.g. What's your favourite food? Where are you from? How do you come to class?

- The learners should be standing in a circle with the teacher.
- Get learners to repeat the target language after you. For lower levels this could be one single question you want them to get the hang of, e.g. 'What's your favourite food?' Get them to repeat this a few times so they can gain confidence by copying you.
- Indicate (by smiling and pointing) for a confident learner to ask you the question, and give your answer. Ask the confident learner the question and get his / her answer too.
- Go round the circle asking the same question to a few learners.
- Tell the learners (using gesture if you need to!) that you want each person to walk round the room and ask at least 5 (or 6, or 7...) other people the same question. This is the 'mill drill'. The first few times you do this, you might have to facilitate by pairing learners up, then moving them on to a new partner once they've asked the question, but if you use the technique frequently in class, they get the hang of it.
- Let the activity run until everyone has asked the question tons of times, then get everyone back in a circle for some feedback, e.g. 'What is Amir's favourite food?' See if anyone can remember.

## 8. Role Play

A restaurant role play has a lot of mileage and all they would need is some menus. Pre-teach food vocabulary and simple prices and put together some menus using the same vocabulary. Learners practice saying

- Can I have ...?
- How much is a ...?
- How much is a ... and a ...?
- That's £? please
- Here you are
- Thank you

And then put it all together into a role play.

## 9. Initial Letter Sounds

Introduce initial letter sounds. Have 6 – 8 large letters up around the room. The teacher holds up a picture of a banana and says 'banana' exaggerating the initial sound, and learners point to the 'b' on the wall. For very beginner learners, hold up a letter 'b' and get them to point to the 'b' on the wall. Bingo games are great with letter sounds too. OR have pictures around the room and say a word and learners point. The more repetition in a variety of ways, the better.

## 10. Alphabet Cards

You can buy packs of blank playing cards from Amazon, 100 cards for £3.

Write both upper / lower case alphabet letters on cards. (60 lower case, 40 upper case).

Put learners into 3 groups, mix the cards up and divide between groups (tutor may hold some back).

Each group is asked to complete the alphabet (2 groups lower case, 1 group upper case).

The groups will have missing letters so they need to go and politely ask other groups for cards to complete their own set. (Asking politely can be pre-taught and drilled).

Once the groups have completed their sets you can start creating some competition and award points to be displayed on the board. Each group uses the cards to spell out nouns on the table or short words such as man, dog, hat.

Depending on level teams can spell an animal cat, dog, fish (10 pts for being 1st, 5 pts to other groups if they spell correctly, bonus points awarded for extra-long words), fruit, city, boys name, girls name, etc... (higher level; adjectives of emotion, personality etc...)

Whiteboard points display

Group 1. 10 + 5 + 5 + 10 + 10 + 5 + 5 + 5

Group 2. 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 10 + 5

Group 3. 5 + 10 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 10

The whole class then add up the final scores.

## 11. Running Whiteboard Game

If tutor has been using flashcards then blu-tack them to the whiteboard or wall after each one has been shown / vocabulary practised alternatively you can just write key words / vocab up on w/b as you go along with the lesson.

Learners are put into teams and stand single file facing the whiteboard at a set distance, the starting point (which learners will sneak across to gain an advantage).

Tutor / volunteer calls out a question, does an action to a specific flashcard on the whiteboard.

The student at the front of each team is the only team member allowed to cross the line and grab the correct flashcard from the whiteboard. If written on whiteboard then learners at the front of each team are given a marker to circle the correct answer.

Other team members may help only by verbal communication, but not cross the start point. First learner to grab or circle correctly gets a point for their team. They then return to their team but at the back of their team line. A new team member is now at the front and ready for the next round.

Students love this game and are very competitive.

## 12. Word Tennis

Have 2 teams facing each other across a table. They throw a ball or something from one team to the next. The teacher gives them a topic like vegetables, transport or furniture in the living room and they have to say one word from that category before throwing to the other team. They keep going back and forth until they run out of words.

## 13. Speed dating

Learners sit in a line facing each other. You give them 1 minute to talk about something on a picture card. They then move around the table and onto another person and another topic. This gets noisy but is fun.

## 14. Guessing games







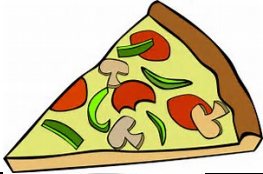








Mime actions such as jobs, sports, housework and others guess.

Place common items in a bag. Feel inside the bag and say the word.

Remember items on a tray. Look at the items for a minute, cover with a tea towel and say the words or write or draw...

## 15. Questions board game

A simple board game with pictorial or word prompts for the learners to ask questions to each other. Use different coloured paper clips to represent the learners who were playing (or anything else you have to hand) and you need some dice. See example board on the next page which you can print and laminate:

<h1>STOP</h1> 	<h1>GO</h1>
	
	
	
	
	
	
	

## Appendix 2 Resources

---

### Online ESOL Resources

<http://www.englishmyway.co.uk>  
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/aim-higher/>  
<https://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org/resources/money>  
<http://www.esoluk.co.uk>  
[http://www.learningunlimited.co/files/Welcome\\_to\\_the\\_UK\\_Toolkit.pdf](http://www.learningunlimited.co/files/Welcome_to_the_UK_Toolkit.pdf)  
<https://www.littlebridge.com/>  
<http://esol.britishcouncil.org/>  
<http://www.i-p-c.org/esol-for-life.html>  
<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/33697.html>  
<https://www.skillsworkshop.org/>  
<http://www.onestopenglish.com>  
<http://www.onestopenglish.com/methodology/minimal-resources/>  
<http://bogglesworldesl.com/flashcards.htm>  
<https://esol.britishcouncil.org/content/learners/grammar-and-vocabulary/beginners>  
<https://www.onlinecentresnetwork.org/resources/teaching-english>  
<http://englishlanguage.org.nz/topic-worksheets>  
<http://www.esolresources.co.uk/classroom-ideas>  
<http://esol.excellencegateway.org.uk/>  
<http://natecla.org.uk/content/654/ESOL-teaching-resources>  
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees/home>  
<https://www.stockton.gov.uk/media/875786/cultural-diversity-resource-pack-2017.pdf>

### Information for Voluntary Organisations, Tutors and Volunteers

[www.leslla.org/teacherresources.htm](http://www.leslla.org/teacherresources.htm)  
<https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Pages/cld17teachingesol.aspx>  
<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/teaching-adults>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9jliqMGXqoA>  
<https://research.ncl.ac.uk/eu-speak/>  
<https://writing.colostate.edu/guides/teaching/esl>  
<http://www.elc-training.com/>  
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/how-build-confidence-among-low-level-learners-english>  
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/volunteering-with-refugees>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIDeFsKVHRI> teaching writing

### Printed/CD ESOL resources:

ESOL Literacy Resource Pack CD-ROM by Lisa Karlsen  
First Resort (PDF) by R Picking & M Prudden  
Teaching Literacy in ESOL Classes by Joanne William  
ESOL Activities Pre-Entry by Elisabeth Babenko  
How to Write ESOL Materials (ELT Teacher2Writer, 2015): Kathryn Aldridge-Morris  
Teaching Basic Literacy to ESOL Learners by Spiegel and Sunderland  
English at Work with Audio CD: Practical Language Activities for Working in the UK by Anthony Cosgrove