

FAQs and Tips - How to Recruit and Work with Volunteers

*From a 2001 TESOL workshop, compiled by Ronna Timpa (Ronna@WorkplaceESL.com),
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Volunteers- What roles do they have?

1. Classroom assistants
 - Assess incoming students
 - Role play and dialogue modeling with teacher
 - Help with administrative tasks (help students make calls)
2. Tutors
 - Works one on one
 - Conversation
 - Pronunciation
 - Literacy
3. Conversation Partners
 - Volunteers work with intermediate/advanced students
 - "Talk Time " based on Tacoma House
 - Volunteers chat with 3-5 students
 - Coffee, snacks and a topic are provided
 - Students practice in a relaxed atmosphere

How do you find volunteers?

1. Library
2. Attend Volunteer Fairs and Community Events
3. Post flyers and leave brochures where you can (ethnic stores)
4. Free ads in newspaper - use a press release
5. Every cable system has community access - local cable channel
6. Word of mouth
7. Do an internet search for volunteer sites

What kind of person do you want?

- Culturally sensitive / open minded
- Resourceful / creative
- Enthusiastic
- Flexible
- Responsible / reliable
- Have realistic expectations
- Patient

Screen Potential Volunteers

- Direct referrals are best
- Pay attention to the application
- Screen by phone- have a real conversation
- It's ok to ask about an applicant's motivation
- Give opportunity to "test drive" the program - schedule a visit
- Ask for and check references

Training - Four hours

- Training is a necessity - don't offer it apologetically
- Schedule according to need
- Cover program history, rules, "hands on" activities a tutor will be doing
- Cultural information
- Boundaries
- General techniques - i.e., simple language, using articles, speaking slowly

Responsibilities in the Classroom - Tutor

1. Be reliable and punctual
2. Act professionally
3. Follow the teacher's plan
4. Ask for clarification
5. Give the teacher feedback
6. Give the students full attention

Responsibilities in the Classroom - Teacher

1. Don't assume tutor is a mind reader
2. Be specific and complete in providing instructions
3. Make sure tutor knows the goal
4. Let students know there is no stigma in working with a tutor
5. Don't delegate only tasks you dislike

Feedback for Volunteers

- Clarify responsibilities
- Publish a newsletter
- Say thank you often and sincerely
- Teachers and volunteers should debrief after class

Benefits of using Volunteers

- Free help
- Friendships
- New career path for volunteer
- Increased community awareness of your program