Project SHINE SJSU

Volunteer Handbook

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**Purpose of This Handbook**

This Handbook has been produced to help you become a better Project SHINE volunteer. This book will share with you a little of our history, philosophy, practices, and policies, as well as all the benefits we will provide to you as a valued volunteer. We hope this Handbook will allow you to feel more comfortable with the service you are about to embark upon and that it will also familiarize you with what will be expected of you throughout the semester. We believe you will find your service to be both educational and enjoyable, and we are excited to have you on board.

 We ask that you read this Handbook carefully, and refer to it whenever questions arise. No volunteer handbook can answer all the questions you might have about our program, but this book should be a good place to start. If after reading this Handbook you have additional questions, please contact the project coordinator or any of the Project SHINE staff.

**Introduction to Service-Learning Through Project SHINE**

In general, service-learning blends the skills and abilities of students with the community where applied work provides the opportunity to grasp academic theories. Through the SHINE program, students work with immigrants and refugees over the age of 50 who are seeking United States citizenship, and help them to build their basic English abilities and/or prepare them for the citizenship interview and test.

To help you better understand the training you are about to receive, it is necessary to establish a SHINE service-learning vocabulary. For the purpose of this training, terms are used as follows:

*Tutors (students):* College student participants.

*Learners (elders):* Immigrant participants.

*Immigrants:* People living in the United States who were not born here.

*Bi-lingual students:* Students who are fluent in English and at least one other language, and who are, typically, personally connected to or identified with an immigrant group.

*Tutoring:* Independent work by college students with immigrants entailing establishing learners’ goals, lesson planning, diverse materials and methods and tutor-developed lessons.

*Site/Community Partner:* Community site where student-community activities take place.

*Site Coordinator:* Community site student leader.

*Site Director:* The site instructor.

**History: About Project SHINE**

 Project SHINE began in 1997 in response to legislation that jeopardized the public benefits of legally immigrated non-citizens. As social safety nets for non-citizen remain tenuous, naturalization for elderly immigrants continues to be an urgent need.

 Older immigrants face particular obstacles in their quest for citizenship. Elder learners may experience difficulties learning English because of changes in memory, vision, hearing and mobility that cannot be accommodated in overcrowded ESL (English as a Second Language) or citizenship classes. Without a basic knowledge of English, immigrant elders experience barriers to full participation in American society.

 SHINE is coordinated through the Center for Intergenerational Learning at Temple University and is currently being replicated at 17 institutions of higher education in 15 cities across the U.S. from 1997-2000, over 3,000 college students have provided more than 60,000 hours of service to 9,000 older immigrants and refugees around the country.

 As an intercultural and intergenerational program, SHINE brings essential services directly to immigrant communities. SHINE students work with elders one-on-one or in small groups, creating comfortable learning environments and individualized lessons.

 SHINE helps faculty members create links between classroom teaching and relevant field experience. It provides an opportunity to deepen students’ theoretical understanding in a broad range of disciplines. Students gain knowledge of diverse cultures and life experiences, develop skills beyond the textbook, and find powerful ways to reinforce their academic studies.

 Here in San Jose, the service that Project SHINE provides is extremely valuable and needed. San Jose is one of the most diverse cities in the United States. While Santa Clara County provides many services for immigrants, immigrant families still lie in disproportionate levels of poverty. Learning English is essential for gaining access to better jobs, understanding benefits and participating fully in American society, all of which are instrumental in moving out of poverty.

 Project SHINE provides tutoring for adult immigrants of all ages, but makes a special effort to reach out to the elderly, who are especially underserved and vulnerable population. SHINE provides tutors at senior centers, senior residences and other community organizations throughout the downtown San Jose area.

 San Jose State University is also participating in a Health Literacy initiative funded by the MetLife Foundation. The Project SHINE-MetLife Foundation Health Literacy Initiative builds partnerships among universities and community based-organizations nationally to address the health literacy needs of elderly immigrants and refugees.

**Mission**

The goals of Project SHINE are to:

* Promote intercultural and intergenerational understanding within diverse communities;
* Improve the ability of older immigrants to communicate, access healthcare, exercise their rights, and perform their responsibilities as family and community members;
* Increase the academic knowledge, personal growth and civic engagement of college students;
* Enhance the ability of faculty members to create stronger links between community service and academic coursework:
* Build the capacity of community colleges and universities to develop sustainable, mutually beneficial partnerships with immigrant communities.

**Project SHINE Coordinator Job Descriptions**

 The **Project SHINE Coordinator** works closely with the Program Director, Advisor, community partner site supervisors, and other student volunteers to ensure that the program mission and objectives are met and all volunteering services are being conducted in a professional manner. The position of **Project SHINE Coordinator** is a **leader** who is responsible, articulate, self-motivated, self-driven, creative, friendly and has the ability to work well with anyone that he/she comes in contact with.

**Job Responsibilities**

* **Leadership** - Lead and direct a group of student volunteers as a team project. This is a new experience for most students. It is important that everyone feels comfortable and at ease throughout the semester. Conduct an on-site training and tour of your facility.
* **Recruitment** - Recruiting students will require you to team up with other Coordinators by attending campus fairs, posting flyers, conducting class presentations, sending out letters to class professors who need volunteer hours, and holding Project SHINE trainings. You will be invited to give a presentation by the professor who is interested in the service learning program.
* **Training** - Training is required by both the Coordinator and student volunteer. Coordinators will be responsible for conducting three training sessions to interested student volunteers.
* **Work Plan** - Once you have met your site supervisor, student volunteers and visited your site, prepare a work plan that everyone can follow in meeting the objective of the community partner facility and the SHINE program. Encourage the tutor to do the same; develop a tutoring work plan between the senior learner to measure progress at the end of the semester.
* **On Site Follow Up Meetings** - Conduct bi-monthly meetings with your student volunteers to discuss progress, fears, research ideas, issues, and ensure that their classroom expectations are being met. Students must attend a minimum of one session per month; encourage self-motivation and confidence. Be available to answer or research any questions that are presented. Sitting in on tutoring sessions is also a way to see how the tutor/learner sessions are being conducted. Conduct unannounced drop in visits, if warranted.
* **Encouragement** - Encourage creativity, spontaneity, research development to meet the learner's needs. Students are encouraged to extend the required tutoring hours throughout the entire semester. Initiate a professor meeting or phone call in the event a student is resistant.
* **Substitute Tutoring Sessions** - In the event a tutor is unavailable to attend a volunteer session, or the senior is unavailable to attend a session, incorporate the Absence Policy process. Establish a substitute tutoring protocol for your facility. Please be advised that absences are tracked. Inform the student of the Absence Policy during each occurrence. (Refer to Absence Policy)
* **Student Information Spreadsheet** - Create a student information database or spreadsheet with pertinent information: Name, Email Address, Cell Phone #, Professor Name, Class #/Name, Tutoring Schedule, Tutoring Hours, Tutor/Learner Objective (ESL, Citizenship Preparation, Citizenship Test status, Computer, Health, English Comprehension), Absences/Tardies, # of Tutors, # of Senior Learners.
* **Reporting** - A primary Project SHINE Program database/spreadsheet will be maintained and will track information described in the spreadsheet, specific to each facility.
* **CCLL Office Hours** - Clark Hall, CL203. Collaborate with other Project SHINE Coordinators to create an office schedule. Office duties include: Answer phones, handle walk-ins, train and recruit interested students, assist in placement where the need is greater, maintain a facility/learner/tutor calendar that is visible for other Coordinators to quick glance at for placements. Prepare for and table job fairs to market Project SHINE, make copies of handbooks, brochures, research tutoring material - maintain in an organized binder for easy access to others. Provide leadership and mentoring when applicable.

***Good Luck and Have FUN!***

**Project SHINE Volunteer Job Descriptions**

**ESL or Citizenship Tutor**

**Job Description**

 ESL and Citizenship tutors will work with a small group of about 3-4 seniors for a minimum of 2 hours per week. Tutors will develop lesson plans according to the needs and interests of their seniors. The SHINE coordinators and resource library will be available to you if you need assistance with lesson planning.

**Study INS material**

You may end up tutoring a senior who plans on taking their citizenship exam. Get familiar with the 100 questions that are asked on the exam. Be familiar with the INS forms.

**Have lesson plans**

Do some research on lesson plans for teachers. There are a wide variety of resources on the World Wide Web as well as at the library. The Project SHINE website has a variety of websites to look at as well.

 **Get familiar with the site**

It’s a good idea to get familiar with the site that you will be tutoring at. Talk to your supervisor. Ask questions about their job there. It’s a good opportunity for you to learn more about the community and possibly even identify any needs that are there.

 **Log your hours weekly**

Keep track of the amount of hours that you tutor weekly. It is easy to forget how many hours you’ve done after a month or so goes by with no record of the hours that you’ve put in.

 **Keep in contact with your site coordinator**

It’s important that you know who your site coordinator is so that you can be comfortable working with them and asking questions and so forth.

 **Come Prepared**

Unless the senior has something in mind to discuss during a session, it’s good to come to each session with a lesson plan. Gather some materials, create a game, or do a little research that will give you a structured tutoring session.

 **Be on time!**

It’s very important that you show up on time to your scheduled tutoring sessions. Your senior(s) will always be there early if not on time anxiously awaiting your arrival. These tutoring sessions mean a lot to them so be the best you can.

**Job Responsibilities**

* Attend the required 2-hour orientation and training
* Attend all tutoring sessions. Always contact the site coordinator if unable to make a session. Maintain communication with both the program and site coordinators regarding attendance.
* Assess the level of your learners and identify their ESL or citizenship strengths and weaknesses.
* Create/design and implement your own lessons with the help of the SHINE coordinator and SHINE library materials.
* Complete the required amount of hours, as specified by your professor (minimum of 20 hours).
* Complete all academic work associated with Project SHINE as assigned by your professor.
* Complete all required paperwork: Student Volunteer Applications and timesheets.

**Skills Needed**

* Proficiency in English (bilingual skills are most welcome!)
* Good interpersonal communication skills
* Reliability and promptness
* Patience, flexibility, good sense of humor
* Interest in and enjoyment of people, especially those from other cultures
* Lesson planning skills (or the willingness to try and learn)
* Commitment

**Qualities to possess**

Compassionate, patient, optimistic, dedicated

**Personal History Project Participant**

 Students involved with the Personal History Project will work one-on-one with a senior to develop a personal narrative that the senior will be proud to share with his or her grandchildren. A set of guidelines and activities has been developed for each session that will provide a framework for each student to follow throughout this process. Each session will include reading, discussion and writing activities that will help the seniors think about their past and what story(ies) they might want to tell, as well as help them to express these stories in English.

**Conversation Partner**

Conversation Partners will meet one-on-one with a senior for one hour a week to engage in English conversation. The seniors involved with this program have a fairly advanced level of English and are looking for an opportunity to practice and interact with English speakers. Conversation starters and activities will be provided to help you if you get stuck.

**What You Can Expect From Project SHINE**

1. Receive a clear specific job description.
2. Be assigned appropriate assignments according to skill, interests, availability, and training.
3. Be trusted with confidential information if it arises in interaction with learners.
4. Be given appropriate expressions of appreciation and recognition.
5. Receive orientation, training, and supervision for the job you will be performing.
6. Your time will not be wasted by lack of planning, coordination and cooperation within the program.
7. Be reimbursed for out-of-pocket costs, such as TB testing and fingerprinting, if needed to volunteer at certain sites.
8. Receive constructive feedback and assistance from SHINE staff.
9. A letter for reference written by SHINE staff upon the completion of the program if requested.
10. Be treated as a fellow staff member who contributes to Project SHINE’s goals through your volunteer work.
11. Have all these things down in a spirit of friendliness and cooperation.

**What Project SHINE Expects From You**

1. Your first responsibility is to know your own duties and how to do them promptly, correctly, and pleasantly.
2. You are expected to cooperate with staff and your fellow volunteers and maintain a good team attitude.
3. We expect you to voice your opinions and contribute your suggestions to improve the quality of Project SHINE.
4. You will attend an orientation and training prior to beginning your service.
5. You will sign in each time you arrive for a tutoring session.
6. You need to inform your site coordinator and site director as soon as possible of any planned absence or lateness.
7. You are expected to keep all sensitive communications with or concerning clients confidential.
8. You will report for tutoring on time.
9. You will provide feedback to the program to help us continually improve.

**Walk-Through of your First Day**

 You will be asked to arrive at your site 15 minutes early on your first day to ensure that your tutoring session starts on time. The staff at your tutoring site will be expecting you. You will either be greeted by the site coordinator or directed by another staff member to the location where your tutoring will take place. A staff member will also show you where the Project SHINE binder is located. This is where you will keep your timesheets and sign in at each session. You will then be introduced to your learners. If you are doing the traditional ESL/citizenship tutoring, make sure you find out from the site coordinator if your learners are preparing for the citizenship exam or if they just want ESL grammar and conversation tutoring.

 At this point, you will be left alone with your learners and it will be up to you to lead the rest of the session. Start by having your learners write down their names for you and be sure that you can pronounce their names correctly. Don’t be embarrassed if you have trouble the first couple times. They will be happy to help you. Then do the same with your name. They will most likely never use your name again (they often prefer to call you “teacher”) but it is still good for them to know how to say your name.

 Next, you can exchange contact information with your learners, if they are comfortable with this. Give them your phone number so they can call you if they won’t be able to make it to one of your tutoring sessions.

 The first day of tutoring will mostly be about getting to know your learners. To start off this process, it is best to tell them a little about yourself first. Bring in a family photo and tell them about your family, where you live, where you have traveled. Ask them to tell you about their families, their home countries, etc. If your learners are more advanced and talkative, this may take you through our entire first tutoring session, which is completely fine.

 If, however, it is not easy to engage your learners in conversation you should move onto the language assessments provided at the back of this handbook. There is an assessment for English language ability and an assessment for U.S. history and civics. Help them through these assessments and pinpoint areas where they especially need help. Also be sure to ask your learners what they are interested in learning.

 If after completing the assessments you still have time left in your session, you will need to work off the cuff to come up with some exercises to work on. Use the assessments to help you do this. If they did fine reading the letters but had some trouble with the numbers, do some practice with numbers. If they had trouble answering some of the questions, go over the vocabulary that was difficult for them. This part of your first session may be a little rough, but once you know your learners’ levels and interests, it will be easier to come up with material to teach them the following week.

 When your time is up, thank your learners for their hard work and remind them that you will expect to see them again next week at the same day and time.

**Policies and Procedures**

**Attendance**

Sign-in timesheets are necessary for our program in order for us to keep an accurate record of your contribution to the agencies with which you serve. Volunteers are required to sign in and out each time in the Project SHINE binder. Timesheets for each month are provided at the back for this handbook.

 You are to leave your timesheets in the binder at your site. On the first business day of each month the program coordinator will pick up the previous month’s timesheets. In order to save the coordinator the effort of tracking down individual tutors, it is important that all timesheets are in the binder when the coordinator comes to collect.

**Lateness and Absence Policy**

The positions volunteers will fill are critical to this organization. If you are unable to report to volunteer, or if you will arrive late, please contact your (1) site supervisor, (2) site coordinator (3) fellow tutors (if applicable), and (4) learners (if applicable) immediately, preferably 24 hours before notice.

 Volunteers who miss their tutoring sessions twice without notice will result to SHINE contacting their professors. Student volunteers who have **two** unannounced absences will result to **losing hours** towards your cumulative total volunteer hours. The first unannounced absence will be considered a warning. The second absence puts the penalty in action. Excessive absences may be cause for termination. If you plan to be absent consecutively for a week or more, please inform the SHINE program coordinator and site coordinator well in advance.

**Permission to Use Student’s Classroom Work**

 As a part of your coursework you may be asked to write a paper or complete a project related to your experience with Project SHINE. When doing reporting and developing public relations materials, the SHINE staff may want to use your work. If we do use your work, we will maintain confidentiality and will not disclose your name, unless otherwise discussed.

 At orientation you will be asked to sign a form permitting SHINE to read and use your work. If you are uncomfortable with this, you are not required to sign the form. If we do not have a signed permission form from you, we will not use your work.

**Photograph Consent Form**

If you would like to take photographs of your learners as part of an assignment for your course you must have your learners sign a consent form, located in the back of this handbook. This form informs the learners that their photo may be displayed in public. If your learner does not want their photo to be used in this way, we ask that you honor that request.

 Photograph consent forms are printed in English, Chinese, Spanish and Vietnamese to ensure that the learners understand what is being asked of them. Please return this form to the SHINE coordinator.

**Feedback**

 Satisfied volunteers are an essential element of an efficient, successful organization. Therefore, Project SHINE takes all volunteer grievances seriously, regardless of whether the problems are large or small. Please feel free to contact us with any complaints or suggestions you have throughout the semester. We can’t promise to make all the changes you suggest, but we do value your feedback and are constantly striving to make SHINE a better program.

 If there are any problems at you site or with your learners, you should contact the SHINE coordinator immediately. The sooner the problem is brought to our attention, the sooner it can be dealt with.

**Confidential Information**

 We have an obligation to our clients to maintain their confidentiality and respect their privacy. Every client served by Project SHINE has the right to confidentiality. But at the same time, every volunteer must use his or her best judgment. If you are aware of a client issue that requires immediate attention, please inform your site coordinator.

 As you work with the staff, information of a confidential matter may be shared with you. You must not share this information with anyone who does not have a professional right or need to know it.

 No one is permitted to remove or make copies of any Project SHINE records, reports or documents without prior approval. Release of confidential information to unauthorized persons can result in dismissal from your services, and could involve you in legal proceedings.

**Dress Code**

Project SHINE t-shirts will be provided for you, and will be required for you to wear during your volunteer hours. Please dress appropriately for the job you are doing. We ask that your attire be neat and conservative.

 Personal appearance should be a matter of concern for each volunteer. If your site coordinator sees that your attire is inappropriate, you will not be allowed to do your volunteer hours.

**Gifts and Tipping**

 Do not accept any monetary gift from learners, their families or friend. We do not want to create an atmosphere where our learners feel obligated to reward Project SHINE volunteers for doing their job. However, learners may bring you small gifts to show their appreciation for your teaching. As long as these gifts are not excessive or extravagant it is best to accept them graciously to avoid any hurt feelings. If a learner continuously tries to give you money or tries giving you gift that makes you uncomfortable, please contact your site coordinator.

**Expense Reimbursement**

 Because the elderly are considered an at-risk population, some of our sites require that all volunteers be fingerprinted and tested for tuberculosis within the first week of service.

 Fingerprinting can be done on campus at the campus police station and TB tests are available at the student health center. If you are charged for either of these services, the site you are volunteering with will reimburse you for these expenses.

**Parking and Traffic Violations**

 In the case that you drive yourself to a community site, please use the parking facilities provided and make sure that you have an appropriate parking permit if needed. If you should damage another car while parking or leaving, immediately report the incident, along with the license numbers of both vehicles and any other pertinent information to the site coordinator. Project SHINE does not assume any liability for any loss of damages you may sustain. You will be considered completely responsible for any accidents, fines or traffic violations incurred.

**Standards of Conduct**

 By accepting to volunteer with us, you have a responsibility to Project SHINE and to your fellow volunteers to act in a mature and responsible way at all time. For behavior guidelines, please refer to the San Jose State University Student Code of Conduct.

Grounds for immediate dismissal from Project SHINE may include, but are not limited to:

* Gross misconduct or insubordination
* Reporting for a volunteer assignment under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
* Theft of property or misuse of program funds, equipment or materials
* Illegal, violent or unsafe acts
* Abuse or mistreatment of clients of volunteers
* Releasing confidential information
* Unwillingness to support and further the mission of the organization

**Working with Mature Learners and non-Native English Speakers**

For many Project SHINE tutors this will be their first experience tutoring in English as a second language. The prospect of being responsible for another person's language acquisition or success on the citizenship exam can be an overwhelming and frightening thought. Remember that your learners know that you are not a professional and they cannot expect you to teach them the entire English language in one semester. Your job is simply to provide extra help to those who are either already in formal ESL and citizenship classes or who are looking to brush up on old skills that may not have been put to use for a long time.

 While we want the SHINE tutoring experience to be as comfortable and fun as possible, in order for the tutoring to be valuable and effective a certain amount of tutor preparation is necessary. The following sections provide advice for working with older learners and learners of English as a second language.

 For more suggestions on what topics would be helpful to cover with your learners, see the "Tutor Goal Checklist" located at the back of this handbook.

**Suggestions for working with English Learners**

* Speak a little slower than usual while learners are getting used to communicating with you. You can return to a more normal speed little by little.
* Pronounce words as clearly as possible without distorting sounds. Try repeating the same sentence (without variation) at least three times. Rephrasing may be confusing: the learner may not be able to pick up all the words in the sentence initially, but after a few repetitions may understand. If not, then try rephrasing (below).
* Don't be discouraged by blank stares. When learners don't seem to understand, try drawings, gestures, acting out verbs, and pointing out items in pictures to "get through" to them. Also, paraphrasing questions may help.

Example: What's your address? (silence)

Where do you live? (silence)

Where is your house? (draw a house if necessary)

* A good get-acquainted activity with learners at all levels is to talk about yourself and your family and encourage them to talk about theirs. Photographs are very useful for this. You could also bring pictures that illustrate sports and hobbies you're interested in. You may find learners who share your interests and start a conversation from there.
* When learners do not want to speak, you can find out if they understand you by asking them to do something. ("Please sit in this chair." "Put the pencil on the book.” “Could you close the door?” etc.) You can also work with picture and word cards this way to help improve their listening comprehension.
* When learners repeat what you’ve just said instead of responding, try to make sure that they understand the meaning of whatever they are repeating.
* When helping learners with a written assignment, give them time to do as much of it as possible on their own, then ask questions to help them identify errors or problems with their work.
* When leading a small group discussion, make sure that everyone in the group understands the vocabulary that is relevant to the topic before the conversation begins.
* Keep in mind that a student’s level in one skill area may be completely different from their level in other areas. Some learners can communicate well orally, but are virtually unable to read or write. Others read or write well, but can’t participate in conversation.
* Always let the SHINE coordinator know if you need more material or clarification. We will assume that everything is going fine unless you tell us otherwise. If you alert us to a particular area of difficulty for a student, we can provide practice activities and help you find resources to work on this skill area.
* Remember that English is a difficult language to learn. Help the students to relax as much as possible. A student who is nervous or intimidated cannot possibly learn, so try to be very encouraging – and smile a lot!

Above all, **HAVE FUN!** You can learn a lot from this experience, too. Get to know the students as well as you can. It makes them feel good to know that someone is interested in their life, their country, their family, and their interests.

**Main Barriers to Learning a New Language in Later Life**

* Low motivation to learn: Some elders may be “comfortable” with family and friends of their own backgrounds and feel little need to learn a new language. Others may have little formal education or may have had bad experiences in school, so may be reluctant to try.
* The (false) belief that older adults can’t learn. Even if you know that elders can learn, they may accept the popular notion that you “can’t teach old dogs new tricks.” Ageism is common in many cultures, even those where elders are shown much respect.
* Limited formal education and/or negative prior experiences with school. Some of the elders you work with may not be literate in their native languages.
* Fear of making a mistake or looking foolish or maybe even fear of "senility" (dementia).
* Fear of disrupting social norms. Women may be hesitant to speak in the presence of their husbands or other men. Elders may feel uncomfortable learning from someone much younger than they are.
* Sensory problems, such as hearing impairments or vision impairments.
* Health problems, particularly ones that cause depression, fatigue, or confusion. Sometimes medications can interfere with learning. Sometimes older adults have problems with alcohol or drug misuse.
* Loss of memory. Some of your learners may have had better English skills in the past but are now having trouble remembering. Others have trouble remembering new information.

**What You Can Do to Help**

To increase motivation:

* Point out the benefits of speaking English and of becoming a U.S. citizen.
* Provide a lot of encouragement, support and concern

To reduce social barriers (ageist beliefs, concerns and social norms):

* Show respect. Address elders as Mr. or Mrs., stand when they stand, and listen with courtesy.
* Talk about learning and memory issues with elders.
* Draw on learners' experience and expertise to build self-confidence.

To support learning:

* Present information in a clear and well-organized way.
* Break down new vocabulary into segments.
* Keep lessons short and focused (especially for beginners and for students with limited education or energy). Take breaks if needed.
* Repeat key points in different contexts.
* Use content that students can relate to from their own experiences. Encourage them to give examples and to draw on their own expertise.
* Speak slowly and clearly. If someone has impaired hearing, be sure to look at them when you speak.

**Intercultural Communication/Cultural Sensitivity**

 Newcomers to this country are bombarded by many different sights and sounds. *Culture stress* soon sets in. Most expect language problems, but they cannot imagine or prepare for the trauma of changing from self-assured individuals to uninformed, dependent persons.

 *Culture Stress* is not a phenomenon affecting only those coming to the United States. Consider how you might feel when faced with the same set of circumstances in another country!

 Culture is a mold in which we are all cast, and it controls our daily lives in many unsuspecting ways. We are cultivated by our culture. Such things as the history of our past, religion, educational systems, environment, marriage and family structure all combine to make us who we are.

 Culture is important to you as an English tutor. English teaching techniques can be mastered fairly quickly, but your teaching success will be greater if you are sensitive to your learners’ backgrounds and their reactions to our culture.

 Sometimes we try to push our own values onto our learners, either consciously or unconsciously. Customs that we take for granted here may be quite different in other countries. Learners are often thrown into situations in which the philosophy and values are entirely contrary to their way of thinking. Sometimes we think something is right because we do it or that we can change centuries-old traditions because it’s convenient to do so.

 Little cultural misunderstandings may come up throughout your teaching experience, so it helps to become familiar with some of the common cultural characteristics of your learners’ countries. We suggest you read history books about your learners’ homelands, look at up-to-date maps of the areas, and read modern novels about their cultures (preferably one written by a national of that country).

 Ask your learners questions about their culture—these make good lessons. Show that you are interested in their countries, not just in changing them into instant Americans. Learners don’t come to the United States to have their cultures washed away, although sooner or later it may become more convenient or they become so Americanized that the “American Way” becomes their way.

 Learners often feel very strongly about some American customs. You should be prepared to be your learner’s link to American society, and you may find yourself explaining American customs. These moments will provide an excellent basis for language lessons. Use natural ways to teach culture: field trips, experience stories or drawings, newspapers. Don’t force discussion. Provide an opportunity to let it happen naturally.

Remember your learners' positions in their native countries. Sometimes you might have to discuss appropriate behavior and that might be embarrassing. Try not to constantly say, "We don't do it that way here." Your learners are sensitive adults. Offer suggestions positively, in a friendly manner. Don't fear offending your learner. Your presence at the tutoring session shows you are a friend.

As your lessons progress and your learners develop a larger English vocabulary, keep in mind that learning is not complete until your learners can feel confident knowing when and how to use their new vocabulary. The situations in which the language is to be used, as well as the social implications, are vitally important. These vary from culture to culture.

 Communicating clearly is important. It is frustrating not to be able to speak English and not to know our cultural rules. Thus, you can imagine your learner situations. But communication is distorted even among people who use the same language, which adds to problems. It is important to you as a tutor to understand how communication works among those speaking the same language. Much communication depends on the listener. His/her experiences affect and influence his/her interpretations of a message. Assumptions, perceptions, and feelings of both the speaker and the listener distorted communication.

We hear what we expect to hear. We often hear not what is said, but what we lead ourselves to believe is meant. The same sets of facts may be interpreted differently by different people. Also, emotions affect what is heard. Sometimes we tend to evaluate the person sending the message and accept or reject it based on our feelings about him/her. We also use non-verbal signals to communicate. Many of these do not carry across cultures or else carry different meanings. Body postures and even the way we use the space around us also communicates our feelings.

To reduce problems in communication:

1. Be sensitive to other people. Know where "they're coming from."
2. Ask for feedback. Deliberately create opportunities for reaction.
3. Listen actively, not by mentally preparing a response. Use eye contact, facial expressions, and/or verbal sounds. Paraphrasing often helps.

Cultural understanding, as well as the mechanics of English, are very important to you as an English tutor and as a sensitive adult.

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**Reasons For Learning English**

 It is helpful to know why your student wants to learn English. Conversational English students have specific motivations for language learning. For example:

1. They need to be functional in their new country—to be able to go shopping, get to a doctor or clinic, answer the telephone, listen to the radio and TV, and enjoy American movies.
2. They want to become citizens and need help to pass the citizenship exam.
3. They want to be able to make friends in this country and communicate with their neighbors.
4. They want to be able to speak English with the younger members of the family. Older students who cannot speak English often are embarrassed and ashamed because the younger people in their household only want to speak English.

If you can understand an individual’s reasons for wanting to learn, you can zero in on helpful ideas.

**ESL Tutoring and Conversation Resources and Aides**

In the following sections you will find tips on teaching English as a second language and effective lesson planning. In addition, we have provided a list of online resources that will be helpful to you during the lesson planning process.

**Tips for Effective Lesson Planning**

Never go to a tutoring session without a clear idea of what you want to teach. Planning lessons will help from diverting you and your students from the topic(s) you have selected. It is your job to introduce a broad range of materials to this class and this takes planning.

 From diagnosis and knowledge of the students' interests, lesson plans can be adapted to the students' individual learning style. Then use creative approaches and as many materials that you can invent. Located at the back of this handbook are a sample lesson plan that can be used as an example and a blank lesson plan worksheet.

* Articulate the learning goals at the beginning of the session
* Start with material that is already familiar to your learner
* Build on existing skills and knowledge
* Integrate listening, reading, writing, and speaking (discussion)
* Use a variety of activities
* Keep the lesson focused - don't try to cover too much material in one session
* Relate to your learners' interests (when possible) and build on their strengths
* Begin with a review and end with a summary
* Offer opportunities for group work as well as independent work
* Be flexible and ready to stray from your lesson plan if an activity isn't working

**Conversation Activities**

**Dialogue**

 Dialogues are useful in developing listening comprehension, oral fluency, decision making, and vocabulary. Dialogues can be adapted to any level and can be used with both literate and non-literate levels. Authentic situations and languages that your learners need are necessary to make this pertinent and fun. Props to help cue learners might be real items, pictures or stick figures. Get your learners up and out of their seats during dialogue activities.

**Discussions**

 Learner-generated discussions are useful for expressing ideas and opinions that are important to your learners. They provide learners with an opportunity to work on their fluency as well as their listening skills. Discussions help foster cooperation and respect for each other's experiences as well.

**Interviews**

 Interviews are an excellent way for learners to practice and learn how to ask questions. In addition, it is very important for learners to learn which questions are appropriate in what situations. This technique provides learners with an excellent opportunity to meet and find out more about Americans and our values.

**Additional Conversation Activities**

* Ask learners to draw a picture of their home in their native country. Ask them to sit back to back, each one describing his/her picture while the other one draws what he/she hears. Have them show each other the pictures and discuss the differences in their pictures.
* Have learners listen to a one-sided conversation on tape and come up with possible responses. Go over the dialogue together. Setting the context is crucial to this activity. Props and real objects can be used to help set context and to extend discussion of the conversation.
* Give each learner a sentence from a story on a piece of paper. Tell your learners that they have one minute to read and memorize it. Collect the strips and tell the learners they have to figure out the sequence of the story by telling each other their sentences. Beginners can be given a word and asked to form a sentence.
* Write open-ended questions on strips of paper and put the strips in a cup. Have each learner pull out a strip and ask the question to anyone in the group. This activity works on reading, listening and conversation skills.

**Conversation Starters**

 When engaging learners in conversation, remember to ask open-ended questions—questions that require more than just a yes or no answer. The following are suggestions for ways to get conversations going.

**Beginning Learners**

Why do you want to learn English?

Did you work in your country? What did you do?

What do you do in the morning?

What do you do in the afternoon?

What do you like best about the United States?

**Intermediate/Advanced Learners**

What is your most important reason for learning English?

How much do you practice between classes?

Do you have people to practice with—who could talk to you in English between classes?

What do you like to do with your time?

What is [school, family, life, raising children] like in your former country?

What do you like best about living in the U.S.? What would you like to be different?

**Sentence Completions**

I grew up in…

My childhood home was…

I miss my country because . . . .

If I could ever learn to..., I would . . . .

This time next year I want to be . . . .

A problem in my country is . . . .

English is difficult because . . . .

A funny thing happened to me when I . . . .

I really enjoy . . . .

I need to remember to . . . .

I can tell you how to . . . .

I feel . . . today because . . . .

I have always wanted to . . .

The strangest thing that ever happened to me is . . . .

One thing I like about California is . . . .

San Jose is an interesting city because . . . .

If I only had 24 hours to live, I would . . . .

If I had a million dollars, I would . . . .

Right now the most important thing in my life is . . . .

If I could visit any place in the world, I would go to…

**Language Activity Ideas**

1. Pin the name of another student on each student's back. One by one, the students turn around showing the other "who they are." They then ask *yes* or *no* questions to determine their identity. Be sure to include your own name in the game.
2. Visit a place of common interest to expand students' vocabulary and expose them to places that could be useful - the drug store, the public library, or city hall. This type of common experience can also serve as a springboard for other examples and discussions.
3. Read a series of five words to the group. Four of the words belong to a set, but the fifth word does not. For example: apple, orange, banana, cucumber, grapefruit: or hand, arm, pants, chest, head. Students identify the word that does not belong to the set.
4. Type up a sentence or paragraph and cut the sentence into words or the paragraph into sentences. Students arrange the pieces in the proper sequence.
5. Ask students to draw what you describe to them. This is particularly helpful when practicing the use of prepositions.
6. Have students practice using the telephone by calling places with recorded messages (such as the bus station, movie theater, or post office).
7. Create BINGO cards with words that sound similar ("sit" and "set" or "bug" and "bag"). Read the words out loud and have learners find the correct word on their BINGO card. This activity helps with listening and pronunciation skills.

Be creative! Think about activities you may have used in foreign language classes in high school or reading and writing activities you may have done in elementary or middle school. And use the SHINE coordinator and the website listed below for more ideas.

**ESL Materials Online**

**www.eslflow.com** - An easy-to-navigate site, ESL flow can be searched either by skill level or by topic/skill area. The activities and lessons are gathered from other websites, so opening one page may connect you to yet another site full of resources. This site provides tips for teaching specific aspects of the English language and for how to use different activities effectively. A large variety of printable worksheets and lesson plans is also available.

**www.mes-english.com** - This website is geared towards children but still has some really good resources that can be used with learners of all ages. The vocabulary handouts and flashcards are especially useful.

**www.esl-lab.com** - If you have a computer available to you during your tutoring session, this site is great for listening exercises. Even if you don’t have computer access, the scripts to the dialogues are available along with key vocabulary words and can be used as role play and conversation practice.

**www.eslcity.com** - This website is organized by beginner and advanced, writing, topics, games, and flashcards. The topics tend to cater to more advanced students and can be a little random (“Guns in America,” “Animal Abuse”) but are good for reading comprehension and critical thinking. The worksheets are great—attractively laid-out, with lots of pictures and large print.

**www.englishpage.com** - This site is great for more advanced learners, especially for explaining complicated grammar rules. This site offers explanations and practice for irregular verbs, verb tenses, prepositions, conditionals, and more.

**www.eslcafe.com** - Dave’s ESL café is especially useful for its “idea cookbook.” These ideas are posted by anyone who chooses to submit an idea that has worked for them in their classroom. These activities often require a little more work on your part as they do not come with printable worksheets and materials. On the plus side, most of the activities can be adapted to fit most skill levels and topics.

**esl.about.com/od/englishlessonplans/index.htm** – This site provides a wide variety of lesson plans for all levels of learners.

**www.english-to-go.com** - To get full access to this site a membership is required, but you can access the sample lesson plans for free. The reading comprehension lessons are especially useful.

**English-zone.com** – This website is primarily directed towards ESL learners with a lot of online quizzes and activities. However, the “Teacher Zone” section is a great resource for tutors with lots of printable worksheets and activity ideas. Also really helpful are the reading materials and the printable pronunciation worksheets.

**www.usingenglish.com** - Once again, this website is directed more towards ESL learners than teachers. But under the heading “Teacher Resources,” the PDF lesson plans and worksheets are great and cover a number of topics sorted into beginner, immediate and advanced. The teacher handouts and printables section can also be helpful, but the worksheets aren’t very exciting.

**http://www.englishpage.com/vocabulary/vocabulary.html** - This website provides ESL learners and teachers worksheets on grammar and vocabulary. Most vocabulary worksheets pertain to everyday activities, which will be very helpful to the learners.

**http://eslflashcards.com** - This link includes printable actions and adjectives flash cards.

**http://eslkidslab.com/** - This link includes resources for handouts, lessons, flash cards, and phonics worksheets. Beginner.

**http://www.elcivics.com/** - This link contains a variety of worksheets for beginner ESL learners.

**http://www.englishforeveryone.org/** - This link has hundreds of worksheets including reading passages with questions and answers. Material ranges from beginner to advance.

**http://www.esltower.com/** - This link includes activities, games, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar worksheets/handouts.

**Citizenship Resources**

**Overview of Naturalization Process**

**Basic Requirements for Naturalization:**

* Be at least 18 years old
* Permanent resident (have a green card)
* A period of continuous residence and physical presence in the United States
* Residence in a particular USCIS District prior to filing for at least 3 months
* An ability to read, write, and speak English (exemptions based on age and length of residency or disability)
* A knowledge and understanding of U.S. history and government
* Good moral character
* Attachment to the principles of the U.S. Constitution; and,
* Favorable disposition toward the United States

**Once someone is eligible the next steps are:**

* File N-400 form with photos and supporting documents
* Notice for fingerprints (over 75 exempt)
* Fingerprints to FBI (over 75 exempt)
* Notice for interview (when fingerprints are cleared)
* Interview (review N-400 and documents, English and civics test)
* Receive decision at end of interview
* Notice of oath
* Swearing in ceremony

For more information on the citizenship process and all that it entails, go to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website at www.uscis.gov.

**The Citizenship Exam**

 The U.S. Citizenship exam is designed to test applicants in all four language skill areas (listening, reading, writing and speaking) as well as basic knowledge of U.S. history and civics. No two USCIS interviews will be exactly alike, but there are certain elements that can be expected.

 To test for listening comprehension and writing skills, the USCIS officer will ask the applicant to do some dictation exercises. Dictation means that the USCIS officer will say sentences out loud which the applicant must write down exactly as the officer said to them. To test for knowledge of history and civics, the USCIS officer may either ask the applicant the questions orally or have the applicant read out loud and answer the questions. The USCIS has a list of 100 questions that are most often asked during this part of the exam.

 The most difficult portion of the interview is often the impromptu conversation with eh USCIS officer because the applicant can have no way of knowing exactly what the officer will ask. The interview usually lasts around 15 minutes and is designed to determine whether or not the applicant has a functional knowledge of the English language. The questions the officer asks can range from small talk to questions about why they moved to the United States and why they want to become a citizen.

 Many of your learners who are interested in taking the citizenship exam may have already had some citizenship coaching and may have the 100 questions memorized. In this case, it is your job as a tutor to make sure that they really *understand* the questions they are answering, to prepare them for the more impromptu interview portion of the exam, and to work on their writing skills for the dictation portion. Learners may simply want to be drilled on the 100 questions, but this will not be enough for them to pass the exam.

 A list of the 100 questions and answers is provided in the back of this handbook, along with an example of a “Citizenship BINGO” board. The BINGO game can be played by asking the questions on the card and if the learner gets the question right they can cross off that box until someone has all five boxes in one row crossed off. You can also adapt this game to however would work best for your learners.

**Tutoring Tips**

* Try to avoid mere drilling.
* Be sure to ask questions in different ways.
* Blend in some role playing, taking turns asking and answering questions, games, or other activities around content (such as days, calendar, weather, transportation, etc.).
* Mix in learning and practicing the useful phrases and other miscellany, not just the questions directly on the form.
* Remember that there is a difference between what the learner must be able to understand and respond to, and what they themselves must be able to say.

**Preparing Students for an INS Interview**

By Lynn Weintraub

**Emphasize Speaking and Listening**

* Seat students in a circle of chairs (rather than at desks);
* Put off note-taking until end of class;
* Repeat key words/questions frequently so students can hear them as many times as necessary;
* Encourage students to tape classes/practice interviews to practice later;
* Minimize paper and pencil exercises (if you use a text, it must have a strong audio component);
* Bring in guest “examiners” so students practice hearing voices/accents different from your own.

**Teach Listening Strategies**

* Focus on listening comprehension rather than rote question/response activities;
* Teach “key” words rather than memorizing every possible way a question might be asked;
* In practice interviews, vary the wordings of questions/commands each time.

**Beware of Sensitive Personal Information**

* Try to get a copy of students’ N-400 before starting class to avoid asking about sensitive issues;
* Wait until you can offer one-to-one practice in private to coach students who have special issues.

**Stay Up-to-Date and Strive for Authenticity**

* Join a local immigration advocacy group (if possible) to get updates on naturalization issues;
* Stay in touch with a well-informed Congressional office (if possible);
* Use the N-400 as a guide;
* Do “mini” practice interviews for each section of the N-400;
* Debrief every student after every INS interview; use information to practice interviews.

**Help Students Build Confidence**

* Provide as much practice as students want;
* Offer individual practice interviews before a real INS appointment;
* Make sure students know exactly what the interview process will consist of an how to respond;
* Offer (or encourage students to get) native language translations of likely questions:
* Reward any success no matter how small;
* Let students know that perfect grammar and understanding are not necessary for a successful interview;
* Express confidence in students’ abilities (“You answered my questions very well just now. I think you will be able to answer the INS examiners question well, too.”)
* Invite students who have recently become citizens to answer questions your class may have about the process;
* Go over the Oath of Naturalization (it’s on the first page of the N-400) so students know what they are promising. Language is complex and archaic so you will have to have a translation or simplify/reword a great deal.

**Advice to Offer Students**

* Be calm and polite;
* Know how to say: “Yes. That’s right.”/No. That’s not right”/That’s not correct.”/Excuse me, I don’t understand.”/”I didn’t hear you.”/”I have a question”;
* Speak clearly;
* Look at the examiner.

**Commands to Practice**

* “Follow me”;
* “Remain standing”;
* “Take out your green card and passport”;
* “Read this sentence/write this sentence”:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_;
* “Sign your name.”

**Important Vocabulary/Phrases**

* “Since you became a permanent resident, have you ever…?”;
* “Do you promise to tell the truth…?”;
* Current/currently; present/presently; previous/previously;
* Former (address, employer, spouse);
* “Have you ever failed…” (to register for selective service).

**The Basic Sequence of an Interview**

**Note:** Interview procedures may vary from office to office; this is an example.

1. Applicant enters waiting room and puts appointment slip in a box.
2. Examiner pulls appointment slip and file and calls applicant’s name.
3. Applicant is told to go to room #\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
4. Applicant is instructed to remain standing, raise right hand, and promise to tell the truth. (Applicant must answer “yes” or “I do.”
5. Applicant is asked to show green card and sometimes a passport or other ID.
6. Examiner reviews each section of the N-400 application, adds any new information, and has applicant sign application.
7. Examiner asks civics questions, gives a dictation (and sometimes as reading test.)

**If an Applicant Passes**

1. Applicant is asked to sign a certificate processing sheet and also sign on the side of his/her photos.
2. Applicant is scheduled for swearing-in (“Oath Ceremony”), usually a week later.

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**Online Citizenship Resources**

**www.elcivics.com** - Quizzes, crosswords and worksheets on the Statue of Liberty, Washington D.C., and the eagle

**www.civicsforimmigrants.org** - This website includes a section with worksheets, handouts and lesson plans on U.S. Government.

**http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.749cabd81f5ffc8fba713d10526e0aa0/?vgnextoid=1667cf2351488210VgnVCM10000025e6a00aRCRD&vgnextchannel=1667cf2351488210VgnVCM10000025e6a00aRCRD** - Unfortunately, the link is long. However, it contains helpful citizenship resources on the naturalization process guide and lesson plans. If the link doesn’t work, visit the website, http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis, and navigate the link by clicking on the resources tab.

**http://www.welcometousa.gov/Immigration\_citizenship/Naturalization\_test\_study\_materials.htm** - The website encompasses flash cards and a sample naturalization test.