

# Basic lesson plan and tips for free-flow ESOL sessions

## When first meeting the student

You will be making a new friend, all the while having a wonderful positive influence in someone's life.

Use the first session to **get to know the student**, develop a rapport with them, and to get a better idea of what their goals are, as well as what you feel their goals should be.

Depending on the student's level, you may need to use very basic words and phrases (hi/hello, my name is, what is your name, nice to meet you, what food do you like, what do you do for fun outside of work, etc.). With beginner students, you may need more than one session to get to know them, and with advanced students you may have already dived into helping them with pronunciation by the end of the first session.

Play it by ear, take it slow, and don't worry about whether you are helping them enough – your hour with your student will already have been extremely helpful to them by allowing them to practice their language skills.

At the end of the session, add your observations to the student's Google Docs record. This will help us track long term progress, as well as any additional resources that might help you and your student on your journey together.

## Regular sessions

**Start by asking the student about their week or weekend**, depending on which day of the week you are teaching them. Asking them about their week will allow you to gauge whether they've encountered communication problems at work, and asking them about their weekend will allow you to gauge issues they need help with in their life.

Your student may only have the opportunity to speak English during their session with you. Help them practice their skills by asking open ended questions and allowing them to speak 50% to 90% of the time, depending on their level and fluency.

Keep a notebook with you so you can **take notes without interrupting the student**. This way they

may fully finish sharing their stories while also allowing you to address grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation issues at a later time. Only help the student if they prompt you, such as their not being able to express an idea, or them being unsure you understood them – always **be encouraging**, and if needing to correct an important mistake, do so by mirroring back the correct way rather than pointing out the "wrong". Your notes will allow you to address issues later, so don't worry too much about having the student get it right while in the middle of their story. **Building up their confidence is key.**

When not sure if the student is seeking your help, especially if their eyes are looking to the side, use the 5-second trick: counting to 5 in your head will allow for enough silence for the student to find the words they were looking for, or to correct themselves on their own.

When ready, use your notes to help the student practice better ways of expressing themselves. Use your fingers to visually count to 10 when the student needs to repeat a new concept/habit. Remember that **practice makes permanent**, so be sure to first help the student get as close to correct as possible before proceeding, and don't be afraid to restart the count at 1 should they waver.

Should you not be sure how to address something you've taken note of, check out our [WiKi](#) for helpful resources, or email us at [esl-admins@mit.edu](mailto:esl-admins@mit.edu) and we will be more than happy to share resources, tips, and tricks with you.

Since the sessions are tailored to each student, you do not need to get through a set curriculum in a set amount of time, so you can always wait until future sessions to put together a plan, and if it is something the student is requesting, you can let them know that you will prepare it for the next session.

Should the student express a strong preference for a set curriculum rather than a custom one, email us at [esl-admins@mit.edu](mailto:esl-admins@mit.edu) and we can chat about the [Ventures books](#) we have available.

Remember to add your observations to the student's record as soon as you can, and most importantly **have fun and enjoy** helping your new friend!