



## Remote ESOL tutoring sessions — 8 tips and tricks

### ◆ The mute button is your friend

Be aware that there is a delay in sounds and images, and your verbal acknowledgement may arrive in the middle of a word rather than between words and sentences. We tend to acknowledge we are listening by saying “uh-huh”, but it can be disruptive when delayed. Staying on mute while the student is talking will ensure they can fully focus on expressing their thoughts.

### ◆ The 5 second rule

Counting to 5 after the student has seemingly stopped talking will allow for them to continue if they were just looking for the right word to use, and again, if there is a delay in sounds or images, waiting will ensure we do not interrupt the student’s train of thought.

### ◆ Minimize distractions

Pick a quiet room where you can fully focus on the student. When teaching in person we have the benefit of watching the student’s body language and hearing their voice with high fidelity quality. Over a phone or virtual meeting, some sounds will not be as accurately reproduced and we will need full focus to understand the student and subsequently be able to help them improve their skills.

### ◆ Let the student be your guide

Through the simple act of listening to your student and allowing them to talk about their life and the challenges they are running into, you will be able to gauge what their needs are, whether vocabulary they need for a doctor’s appointment, help pronouncing a particularly troublesome word, or help with their sentence structure. Keep the conversation open and flowing and soon you will have a good idea of how you can help your student.

### ◆ 50%-90%

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

### ◆ Use visual props for small screens

Most students will be on smartphones, and some will have rather small screens. If you do plan to use visual props like slides with text, pick large fonts or images that can be seen on a small screen. When you get to know your student, you can inquire about the kind of phone they have for an idea of how small you can go.

### ◆ We are here to help

We have a wonderful team of ESL coordinators who are more than happy to answer any questions you may have, whether about additional resources available, or about how to address a particular issue a student is encountering, or just how to better communicate virtually with your student.

### ◆ Have fun

Your hour with your student will be extremely helpful to them by allowing them to practice their language skills. Your paying attention to what sounds off and modeling correct sentences and sounds for them will already provide plenty of guidance for them to improve. Whether using free-flowing — but still guided — chats, or using more structured approaches for students who wish to use books, this should not stop you from having fun. Soon you will realize your student is yet another friend you’ve gained, all the while having a great positive influence in someone’s life.