

# Running a STAR English conversation class



A guide for STAR volunteers who are leading English conversation classes. The pack contains:

1. Tips and advice for running a class
2. Ideas for classroom activities
3. Some useful online teaching resources
4. A template lesson plan sheet

## Introduction

Supporting refugees to learn English can make a huge difference to their lives. You can do this in really informal ways for example, through socials for or more formal ways like structured lessons. However, no matter how informal or formal your conversation class is, a bit of planning and organising will ensure that participants can get the most out of the experience. Here are some useful tips and advice to help you on your way....

## 1. Tips and advice for running a class

Here are some useful tips to help you run a successful English conversation class. The STAR mnemonic should help you to remember them!

The key areas that we have focused on are:

- S**- Structure
- T**- Topic based
- A**- Attractive
- R**- Rota

### **S Structure**

- Plan enough activities and short activities to maintain interest throughout session
- Choose activities which are adaptable to different levels and don't require too much planning
- Have lots of reinforcement and correction (especially at lower levels)
- Link activities and have progression each week (food vocabulary one week and supermarket shopping the next)
- Include a mixture of formal and informal teaching

### **T Topic-based**

- Ask students what topics interest them
- Use worksheets as a teaching aid. Include prompts/questions for informal conversation
- Check/adapt worksheets so they are sensitive to refugee issues
- Choose topics appropriate to needs e.g. health but not holidays
- Cater for different levels of English (divide into beginner/advanced groups).

## **A Attractive**

- Always start with warmer / ice-breaker to welcome and introduce everyone
- Make it fun, e.g. occasional game to change pace
- Have add-ons if possible, e.g. food, language exchange
- Have visuals/objects as focal point for discussion (short films or TV clips with subtitles, tie in with lesson theme).
- Involve students in contributing to input (bringing in objects / pictures / articles to talk about)

## **R Rota**

- Plan before who is to lead next week and find out which volunteers will be attending.
- Always have back-up or more than one person to lead different activities
- Give more responsibility to volunteers in planning lessons if they wish.
- Ensure good communication between lead people and back-up.
- Organise a training session for volunteers with information about classes and refugees in the UK – STAR national can help with this.

## **2. Ideas for classroom activities**

Stuck for activity ideas? Here are some simple and fun ideas. They are all food related but you can adapt them to use with lots of different topics.

- ★ **Name exchange** – Warmer / ice-breaker. Throw balloon / ball / orange (if doing food!) to someone in circle and say their name, they repeat action until everyone has thrown and received the balloon and learnt names!
- ★ **Alphabet food** – think of an item of food for each letter of alphabet. Good for beginner's level – reinforces alphabet, spelling and practises vocab.

- ★ **Fruit salad** – choose up to 5 fruits and give everyone a different one. Shout out ‘bananas’ and all those who are bananas form a group. Continue for other fruits. Good for all levels as warmer / filler and fun element. Good for kids too.
- ★ **Find someone who....** – give students prompts e.g. find someone who has never eaten curry / find someone who had cereal for breakfast this morning and tell them to ask each person in group until they find someone to match prompt. Better for higher levels as they have to think of the right question to ask. You may need to practise this together first. Once students are familiar with this activity you could get them writing own prompts. If you are unable to copy the prompt cards before, they can be written on a whiteboard or each one read out to a different student to memorise.
- ★ **I went to the market and I bought.....** – Each person says the start of the sentence and adds a food item for the next letter of the alphabet e.g. I went to the market and I bought an apple, a banana and a cauliflower. Better at higher levels as requires good memory, listening skills plus vocab. Can be used to practise some / any / a / an too.
- ★ **Role plays** – assign students different roles in food shop / café / market and get to practise dialogues. Needs some preparation such as prompt cards to make it work better. Can be adapted to any level, with simple instructions for low levels, and more complex instructions for higher levels.
- ★ **Recipes** – read and share recipes from different countries. Students and volunteers can be asked to collect from free newspapers / magazines and bring in following week. Better at higher levels because of language but you can simplify recipes yourself for low levels to basic instructions to practise verbs. Could bring in different foods from around the world.
- ★ **Interviews** – ask each other questions regarding favourite foods, eating habits, staple foods, food festivals, cooking, food production in respective countries etc. Can be adapted to low levels with very simple questions written down for students to ask you or question prompts for them to practise question formation and to higher levels with students thinking of own questions.
- ★ **Pictures / objects** –magazine pictures of food to prompt discussion at higher levels or to practise vocabulary at low levels, food ads. to evaluate and practise language of opinion, comparison, description etc, food products to prompt discussion about fair trade, packaging etc. and at low levels to practise reading labels. Products can also be used for shopping role play and then enjoyed e.g. biscuits, chocolate, fruit juice or pop corn!
- ★ **Crosswords/Word-searches** – complete word-searches/crosswords to do with food and drink (see links below). Then have to produce your own word-search/crossword with your favourite food and drink from your home country and the UK. When completed, swap with someone else who has to complete it.
- ★ **‘Who/What am I?’** – With a partner or in a big group have to describe or give clues about what kind of food you are. Such as I am round, healthy and come in different colours, normally I am red or green. What am I?

## ★ Quizzes

### 3. Some useful online teaching recourses

There is a wide availability of online teaching recourses on the internet. The internet can help with ideas for plans but make sure the topic chosen is appropriate for age range and ability (see topic based from the STAR mnemonic). Listed below are some recommended sites.

<http://bogglesworldesl.com/>

This site contains printable teaching resources that can be used either during lessons or given out as homework. There are a variety of fun informal adult ESL worksheets and activities such as crosswords and word searches.

[http://esl.about.com/od/englishlessonplans/English Lesson Plans for ESL EFL Classes .htm](http://esl.about.com/od/englishlessonplans/English_Lesson_Plans_for_ESL_EFL_Classes.htm)

A helpful website that contains lesson plans for beginner, intermediate and advanced levels of English. There are a number of different recourses focusing on reading, writing, listening, grammar, speaking and pronunciation.

<http://www.onestopenenglish.com/index.asp?catid=59495>

A useful recourse site aimed specifically for English language teachers. The website contains ideas for lesson plans and downloadable flashcards. Most of the recourses are aimed for children learning English but can be modified for adult learners.

<http://www.niace.org.uk/campaigns-events/campaigns/a-right-to-a-voice>

NIACE as part of it's Right to a Voice campaign has produced some useful resources for volunteers supporting refugees with learning English. There are only two lesson plans online so far but there is also a useful document with lots of links to other online resources. You can find them here at under the *Welcome to Britain* heading (you need to scroll down a bit).

**Contributors:** With thanks to Alison Lesley, Kalyani McCarthy, Sian Earl

#### **4. Template for a lesson plan**

**Aim:**

**Objectives:** By the end of the session participants will have:

<b>Time</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Format</b>	<b>Details/exercise</b>	<b>Resources required</b>