Conversation Partner Program: Guidelines for ESL Students

WHY SHOULD I SIGN UP FOR A CONVERSATION PARTNER?
You can meet with a UWM student who is around your age and ask them questions about American culture. You can practice speaking English face to face with one person. If the American student wants to learn your language, you can help him/her practice your language.

DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR THIS? DO I GET PAID?
No, this is a volunteer program. Do not sign up if you do not have an hour a week to spend with your partner.

WILL MY CONVERSATION PARTNER HELP ME WITH GRAMMAR AND MY HOMEWORK?
No! Conversation partners are to help you practice conversational skills. Just talk!

WHAT IF I WANT MY CONVERSATION PARTNER TO HELP ME WITH MY PRONUNCIATION?
Maybe they will help you if you ask them to, but they may not know how to help you. And, remember that when someone keeps correcting your pronunciation, you may feel shy about speaking in front of them.

WHAT IF I DON’T HEAR FROM MY PARTNER?
You should email him/her three different times. If that doesn’t work, try to call him/her. If that doesn’t work, email the program coordinator at convpart@uwm.edu and tell her the problem. She’ll try to help.

WHEN DO WE MEET?
You and your partner will choose a time and place to meet with each other that works for both of you. You may need to be ready to meet at times that are not convenient for you if your partner’s schedule is too busy.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I MEET MY PARTNER?
You should meet once a week for an hour. If both you and your partner agree, you can meet more often. Conversation partners are to help you practice speaking English one hour per week. Most UWM students are busy with classes and jobs, so you should not push them to meet more often than they can.

REMEMBER!
It is considered rude in American culture to agree to meet someone and then not go there. In the beginning, it is sometimes hard to meet your partner. Make sure you know the gender of your partner and the difference between Tuesday and Thursday. Go to the place on time. Please be patient!

HOW DO I COMMUNICATE WITH MY PARTNER?
If your partner is learning your language, you may choose to spend half the time speaking English and half the time speaking your language. If your partner is not learning your language, you will spend the whole time speaking English.

WHAT SHOULD I TALK ABOUT?
You are welcome to talk about any shared interests. You could also ask your partner questions about his/her family, the weather, his/her major, his/her friends, university, culture, language, favorite music and movies, etc.

If you cannot continue for any reason, please write your partner and the coordinator ASAP.

Please contact the program coordinator right away if there are any problems. convpart@uwm.edu

Thank you for your participation in this program. We hope you will enjoy the experience.