

Conversation Partner Program: Guidelines for IEP students

WHY SHOULD I SIGN UP FOR A CONVERSATION PARTNER?

You can meet with an American student who is around your age and ask them questions about American culture and slang. 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 thing. Please do not sign up if you do not have an hour a week to spend with your partner. No one will be checking up on you unless we hear that there are problems.

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. Remember that when someone keeps correcting your pronunciation, you may feel shy about speaking in front of them.

HOW DO I SIGN UP?

This is a first-sign-up, first-served program. Not everyone will get a partner. You can sign up online at <https://uwm.edu/intensive-english-program/current-students/conversation-partner-program/>. You **MUST** know your email address in order to sign up. Answer **ALL** the questions.

WHAT IF I HAVE A SPECIFIC PREFERENCE FOR A PARTNER?

We will try to match you with a partner who is around your age. You may get a male or a female. You should be open to either. This is **NOT** a dating service; it is not a way to find a boyfriend or girlfriend. We don't know what your partner looks like, so don't try to sign up for a "hot girl."

HOW DO I KNOW IF I WILL GET A PARTNER?

You will receive an email the second or third week of classes with information about the pizza party. At the pizza party, you will meet your partner. **NOTE:** If you don't get a partner right away, you will be put on a waiting list, and you may get a partner later in the semester.

WHAT DO I DO AFTER I FIND OUT THAT I WILL HAVE A PARTNER?

- FIRST**, attend the pizza party to meet your partner. If either you or your partner do not attend, you will receive an email with your partner's information after the pizza party.
- THEN**, wait for the American to email you. Your partner will suggest some times that he/she is free to meet.
- NEXT**, you should email your partner back and set up a time to meet them when they are available. Do **NOT** set up meetings during your IEP class times. You could meet before or after your classes Monday through Friday, or on weekends if your partner is available. Your partner will suggest a specific place to meet, such as The Grind Coffee Shop in the Union. **Make sure you know where the place is.**
- LAST**, if you did not meet at the pizza party, describe yourself and/or email a picture and/or look your partner up on Facebook. Try to be specific. E.g. "I am an Asian male in my early 20s. I have black glasses, collar-length black hair, a brown leather jacket, black jeans and white athletic shoes. I am 5' 9" tall." (Note: most Americans don't know what 175 m. means.) This will help your partner find you.

NOTE: EMAIL YOUR PARTNER DIRECTLY. Do not go through the ELA office to contact your partner.

WHAT IF I DON'T HEAR FROM MY PARTNER IN A WEEK AFTER I GET THE EMAIL WITH MY PARTNER'S INFORMATION?

If your partner does not email you within a week, 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 English Language Academy at el-academy@uwm.edu to contact someone about the problem.

CAN I JUST CALL MY PARTNER?

It is easier to understand each other in writing in the beginning. Later, if you want, you can call or text each other.

WHEN DO WE MEET?

You and your partner will set up a time 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. You will probably stop meeting about two or three weeks before the end of the semester.

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!

WHAT IF I WANT TO SPEND A LOT MORE TIME WITH MY PARTNER THAN ONE HOUR A WEEK?

Conversation partners are to help you practice speaking English one hour a week. Most American UWM students are busy with classes and jobs and may not have time to meet more than an hour a week. You should not push them.

HOW DO I COMMUNICATE WITH MY PARTNER?

If your American 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. Half the time, you might talk about your culture, and half the time you could talk about American culture.

WHAT SHOULD I TALK ABOUT?

You could 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 let the English Language Academy know.

Please contact the English Language Academy right away. el-academy@uwm.edu.

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