

## English as a Second Language (ESL) for Evangelism

Classes represent an opportunity for churches to serve international communities, including refugees. It is a great tool to reach other cultures and have a global impact. People come to this country from all over the world as refugees, immigrants, international students, and international business people. Some of them and their family members will need English classes to survive and thrive in this country.

Christian-based ESL allows believers to reach this community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as they help people learn English.

Although secular life skill curriculum is often used, the gospel can be incorporated through short devotions and prayers.

Volunteers often develop meaningful relationships with their students both inside and outside the classroom, which will allow them the opportunity to share the Gospel.

Anyone who loves Jesus (and wants to share the love of Jesus with others) and speaks English fluently is qualified to teach.  
They do not need to speak another language. Students will learn English by immersion.

ESL is English as Second Language. ESOL is English for Speakers of Other Languages. Since many people from other countries speak more than one language, ESOL is the more accurate descriptive.

### **Starting an ESL class**

#### **Goal:**

To empower churches to reach out to students, refugees, immigrants, and internationals living in their communities, to show Christian love, assist them in transition, and create opportunity to share the gospel.

Step 1. Make an international friend or two and begin to pray!

Step 2. Find students who want to improve their English skills,

Step 3. Find teachers willing to help,

Step 4. Find and a place to meet.

#### **Find out:**

Consider what other ESL programs are available in your community.

Find out who else is engaged in this ministry.

Find out what they are doing in their ESL ministries.

Visit existing programs, observe some classes, and talk with the students, coordinators and teachers.

Find out who the internationals around you are.

Find out where they are.

Wherever your church is located, it's likely some need for ESL instruction.

#### **Location:**

You will need a class location close to the population you wish to reach is helpful as they may not have access to transportation.

Determine where do you plan to hold classes.

If using the church building, plan to have the class before Sunday service or before midweek bible study, so you can invite your students to attend the service after class.

Consider having the class during kids church if adult ESL students have kids.

Room for classes important, think also about storage for supplies and records (registration forms, tests results, attendance charts), and textbooks or a library.

### **ESL student's Needs:**

- To improve their ability to continue work, or their education,
- For community support, friendships, and help.
- Some are interested in Christianity or the Bible.

### **Define Your Mission:**

Is it exclusively to teach English to others as a social service to your community?

Is it to offer ESL Bible classes?

Is it to build connections to share the Gospel?

### **Find a Coordinator:**

- Responsible for determining what curriculum to use,
- ordering the curriculum,
- recruiting,
- training,
- supervising and supporting teachers,
- recruiting and registering students,
- keeping student attendance,
- dealing with teaching resource needs,
- planning events,
- arranging snacks and refreshments,
- making announcements,
- reporting to the congregation and church leadership.

### **Recruit a Team:**

Once you have a Coordinator in place, begin recruiting other teachers or facilitators.

Some ideas for recruitment are:

- Prepare job descriptions. Include specific duties, qualifications, and other expectations.
- Pray for the right people.
- Put invitations in the church newsletter.
- Make announcements in church about your program and that you are looking for possible teachers, language partners, people to provide snacks, do childcare, etc.
- Are there internationals in your church? Are there immigrants? They may understand the need and have an interest in reaching out to the international community.
- Network with other members in the church to determine who might be interested in serving
- Find professional teachers in the church, invite them to teach in the program, help organize it, and train others who are willing but don't have experience.
- Offer an information evening.
- Invite interested people to view other ESL programs.

- Offer or arrange for initial training for volunteers and then regular meetings and ongoing training.
- Make it as easy as possible for people to be involved by letting them start as a language partner in class at the beginning or commit for a limited period.
- Publicly recognize the efforts of the volunteers to encourage them and to stimulate the interest of others.
- Get the church praying for students and volunteers. Be willing to start small. You can always recruit additional teachers as your program grows.

Start with at least two teachers even for one initial class of students. There are several benefits to team-teaching. If the lead teacher must be absent, a substitute is already in place. Also, you have a helper for small group activities.

It is preferable to have small classes (10-12) students per class.

As your group grows, the need for additional teachers may arise. The lead teacher would help with selecting a curriculum, teacher training, classroom methodology and student placement.

It is ideal if your lead teacher is a qualified teacher with formal teaching experience; however, this is not absolutely necessary.

Have your volunteers complete an application. The application should include spiritual experience, commitment to your mission, their teaching experience, level preference and availability. This provides you with a good reference in placing teachers and planning your program. Classes should be conducted in English only, since the purpose of an ESL class is to encourage students to use English.

### **Decide Program Details:**

- What space do you have available?
- Design a formal program with registration, set times, set expectations for good attendance, and how to report absences.
- Will you have continuous intake to accept students whenever they come, or set terms or semesters only?
- Teach all 4 skills (listening/speaking/reading/writing)
- Consider teaching a range of classes at different levels, a language or computer lab where several people can work on their own with one teacher circulating around to help, one-on-one tutoring, and maybe about different focuses (to gain basic skills, to pass a test, to enter the workforce)
- Will you have daytime or evening classes, weekday or weekend? Once or twice a week?
- How long will your classes be? One and a half or two-hour sessions seem to work well. You may want to add 15 minutes for opening announcements, 10 minutes for a refreshment break, and time for discussion and group activities.
- Set a start and end date. You may want your classes to be ongoing or you may want to divide them into 10 or 12-week sessions.
- Organize field trips or social events together with additional church people.
- Include a chapel time in class or offer ESL Bible classes. If you include a Bible session in class tell students they can study the Bible as “Cultural, historical, or for faith purposes” and stress you will not pressure them.
- Will you teach adults only, or offer classes for children?
- Will you provide childcare? (Be sure to prepare volunteers for the cultural differences.)

- There are differing opinions about charging a fee for the classes. Charging a modest fee to cover the cost of the curriculum and photocopying attracts students who are serious about learning English. It gives them a higher commitment level. It also raises their expectations on quality. If you decide not to charge, no one will be excluded due to funds, but they may not feel a sense of commitment.

### **Curriculum:**

Most students want a textbook if they are in a more formal program.

In choosing from curriculum and ESL materials available, think about who your teachers and students are and choose a curriculum suited to them.

Consider whether you want to use Bible-based curriculum, secular language materials, or a combination of both, and whether you want to use a text or teacher-prepared materials.

Additional materials like picture dictionaries are a great tool for beginning students helping them develop a basic English vocabulary.

Intermediate students are often interested in activities that advance their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills.

Many advanced students not only want to address reading, writing, and listening, but also want to perfect their oral English as this is the most important skill they require in their jobs. You will want to incorporate all of these to help your students be well rounded. You will need flash cards of various types, language games, maps, posters, calendars, etc.

### **Provide Orientation and Training for Teachers and Students:**

Training is very important.

Hold orientation/training sessions for newly recruited teachers shortly before the classes begin so that teachers know one another, and how they fit into the team and the overall programs of the church, basic language teaching techniques and resources, and to discuss issues or questions.

Teach them not to lecture, but to get students doing the communication.

Teach them drills. Teach them to use conversations and conversation partners. Teach them how to correct grammar and pronunciation without focusing on a particular student.

Train them to use the curriculum in the time you have allotted for class.

Discuss how each session will proceed as well as possible challenges in the classroom.

Teach them basic cross-cultural awareness in areas such as customs, religion, history, government, foods, family traditions, holidays.

Use ongoing training sessions to equip both experienced and inexperienced teachers with ideas for instruction.

Teach you volunteers how to plan a lesson using a different of methods and assessment tools.

Periodically model lessons and activities for teachers.

Encourage teachers to incorporate other teaching materials including: reading materials, newspapers & magazines, dictation exercises, flash card activities, games, and vocabulary expansion exercises.

Consider using government materials and websites for job search, health topics, immigrant issues.

Plan together before classes, ground rules for the program or class.

On the first day of class, you might give out a school program with a calendar, a map of the church and its rooms, transportation information, and information about the school and the teachers, and rules about absences, meals, fire escapes, and other information.

**Advertising:**

Several weeks before your start date, advertise the classes in your community in both English and another language if it is in your area.

Make sure you advertise to the students you wish to attract.

Provide all the information they need, make it simple.

Some ideas for advertising are as follows:

- Ask local businesses and libraries to post notices about the classes. They are often willing to do so if the classes are a free service to the community. You can also put up posters at local universities.
- Contact local apartment managers where target people live to see if they will put your notices in their newsletters to residents.
- Advertise in your local community papers. You may be able to advertise for free if you do not charge for your classes.
- Display a large sign in front of or near your church.
- Advertise in your church bulletin or send notices home with your congregation so they can post them or hand them out anywhere they have contacts.
- Have flyers available at the church.
- Distribute flyers in the neighborhood of the church, and directly to possible students for your program.
- Post the information on your church website, and social media.
- Let local ethnic groups and churches know about your program so that they can refer prospective students.
- Ask students to invite others they know. Word-of-mouth from one student to another is the best advertising.

**Registration:**

Register Students Once you advertise the classes and start receiving calls for additional information, be sure to inform the secretary and or receptionists of the information they need to answer questions and collect information.

Pre-register students with registration cards for basic contact information or hold preregistration on a separate day.

**Student Placement:**

It is best to start with a couple level.

Separate the beginners from more advanced students.

If you have students at varying levels, you may want to have beginner, intermediate, and advanced.

Students may have a preference for which level they want to start in, it is best to administer an oral test to help determine student placement.

If your teachers help with testing, they will begin to get to know the students before classes begin.

Some test questions to determine placement can include:

- Where are you from? Tell me about yourself.

(They are beginners if they cannot answer)

- Tell me about your family or friends.

- What can you tell me about this picture?

(They are intermediate if they can do this with some proficiency.)

- How long have you studied English? When do you use spoken English? When do you use written English? If the student is unable to understand the meaning of simple spoken questions or answer you in simple English, he/she is a beginner. If the student can understand and can answer with understandable responses, he/she should be in the intermediate class.

Students who are fluent and can communicate easily should be in the advanced class. The oral test can be a good starting point but consider letting students have an option of trying another level if the class does not seem right for them.

### **Child Care:**

Many adult students will want to bring their children to class.

If you have ability you might want to take advantage of this built-in opportunity to hold children's classes at the same time.

Depending on the number and ages of the children, the classes can include singing, crafts, and Bible stories, and supervised play.

Nursery care is likely to be necessary as well.

### **Transportation:**

Many students will not have cars. Finding transportation to classes may be challenging.

If possible, find someone in your congregation or another student from the same area to provide rides.

### **Opening Class:**

Consider a tea-time for everyone to introduce themselves.

Make people comfortable. Make it fun. Help students and staff interact and communicate.

Be sure to pay attention to the lower level students.

Give students something to take home.

Schedule Provide each student with an information sheet containing the class schedule, basic procedures, expectations and contact numbers and information.

Make sure responsible people at your church have copies to give out to interested people.

### **Food:**

Eating together is a vital component of building friendships and trust in many of our worlds cultures.

Gathering around food provides an opportunity for students and teachers to get to know one another informally and share culture.

Incorporate games, singing or sharing personal events in the refreshment time. It is likely your students are lonely and are looking for friendships.

The food can be provided by the church at the first gatherings but expect students to contribute and share their cultural foods, too.

### **Debrief and Pray:**

Bring teachers together for a brief time of sharing either at the beginning or at the conclusion of each class session.

There are likely to be cultural issues that come up and need to be discussed and understood.

There will be encouraging stories to report.

A time of debriefing allows teachers to support each another, gain ideas from each other, and hear important updates.

Conclude the debriefing with prayer for students and the ministry.

**Social Service Help:**

Some of your students may need social service help.

They may need to visit a health care professional.

They may need help with enrolling in schooling, with helping kids with homework.

They may need help with immigration and legal matters.

It is helpful for you to be familiar with resources.

If the students are **refugees**, they will have access to some services, but they may need help:

- finding jobs,
- health care,
- citizenship classes,
- income tax,
- driving and buying a car.

Helping with some of these things will be appreciated and very successful for strengthening relationships.

**Celebrate Special Occasions:**

Plan celebrations for Christmas, New Year, Valentine's Day, Easter, etc. Have them tell you about their holidays, too.

Celebrate the conclusion of each session.

Teach students what a potluck is.

Let them provide some of their own foods and enjoy that of each other's cultures.

Encourage students to plan some entertainment by sharing songs, dances, and games.

Give out a certificate of completion.

Encourage them to invite their friends to the next session.

Parties and fun will keep them working through the difficulties of language learning.

**Budget:**

It is possible to start an ESL program with few resources but if you plan to maintain such a ministry long-term, you will need to have a budget to meet the expenses that such a ministry will incur.

This is particularly true if you decide not to charge or only ask for a "materials fee".

Expenses may include:

- curriculum,
- supplies,
- refreshments,
- childcare providers and
- party expenses.

**Develop Church Support for the Ministry:**

- Get church leaders on board and praying
- Meet with the pastor or other staff regularly.
- Display promotional materials.
- Have an open house for church members to come and meet students.
- Recognize volunteers publicly at church

Develop Community Relationships are important to your students.

Let students know about social activities at church.

Tell them about the services of the church.

Don't put pressure on them to attend.

If students of other faiths come, it is important that they feel welcomed by Christians.

Someone should explain what the church is doing and why.

Introduce them to a few people who would show interest and provide relationship and helps.

**Additional Thoughts:**

In working with students, we have discovered that we must be flexible.

Occasionally classes will not go as we might have expected.

Attendance will fluctuate as students come and go.

Attendance may be related to weather, family, job commitments, children's school, their cultural holidays. Etc.

Some students will get discouraged not seeing progress.

Some students will be frustrated with others holding them back.

Some students will misinterpret teacher behaviors and may need feel shamed or offended.

Make every effort to preserve relationship and continued study.

**Resources:**

<https://www.crescentproject.org/>