



Conversation Partner Guidelines for Americans

The purpose of having a Conversation Partner is to make friends with someone from another country. This is an opportunity to learn about another culture and to help someone else learn about the American culture. Your international partner also wants to practice his/her English and make friends with an American.

Please plan to meet your partner for one hour each week. (You may meet more than one hour a week if you like, of course.) Try to be interested in your partner's culture and to understand the way your partner thinks.

If you are seeking volunteer credit through the FSU Servescript program, you and your Conversation Partner will need to verify contact hours before we can sign your Servescript form.

Your international partner does not expect you to entertain him/her, but just to be a conversational friend. You do not always have to make special plans for your partner's benefit, but just include him/her in some of your usual activities.

Some Suggested Activities:

- Meet for coffee
- Eat lunch on campus together
- Ask your partner to teach you to cook some of his/her native food
- Invite your partner to join you and your friends for an activity
- Go to an FSU sports event
- Etc.!

Have fun and enjoy getting to know each other and each other's cultures!
Please fill out, sign and return the attached application to:

Ramin Yazdanpanah-Activity Coordinator
Center for Intensive English Studies

Conversation Partner Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the *Conversation Partner* (CP) program. Due to the tremendous response that we have had from FSU and the surrounding community, we may not be able to provide partners for all of our volunteers at this time. **If you are assigned a conversation partner, you will be notified either by phone or e-mail in the near future.** Be prepared at that time to attend a mandatory “introductory social” at a time to be announced. You will be introduced to your partner at the social.

The CP program’s purpose is to provide newly-arrived internationals with an opportunity to make an American’s acquaintance, one who will willingly spend some time with them conversing and orienting each other to FSU, the community, etc., WHILE learning about each others’ lives, cultures and goals.

While many volunteers express a sincere interest in forming “acquaintanceships” with international students, I feel obligated to stress the importance of common courtesy, maturity, and responsibility when meeting with your partners. Please consider the following real examples of inappropriate and unacceptable behavior that have occurred with surprising frequency among volunteers who are expecting to receive a grade or addendum to their transcript for participation in this program:

- **Do not use this pairing to proselytize, preach religion and strive to convert our CIES students.** This is totally unacceptable behavior and is in defiance of the university’s codes of student conduct. Along with this, please **do not try to date your conversation partner.** Remember that as the American, you are in a position of a host and helper. Please do not take advantage of this in any way to influence your conversation partner. Treat them with respect.
- **Do not use your partner as a chance to only practice your second language!** CIES students are here to learn English and learn about the culture of the United States. They are not here to act as a Spanish, Chinese or Korean teacher. Language exchange is fine; just make sure that you are helping your partner develop his/her English and understanding of American culture.
- **Do not treat the international student as an “obligation”.** CIES students are aware that many volunteers fulfill educational, professional, as well as personal goals through this partnership. That’s OK. What is not OK is to insult CIES students by making them think that your only purpose is to put in the time and neglect politeness completely. Some volunteers go so far as to actually say, “I have to talk with you for 60 minutes, and time’s up.” Smooth entry and exit are part of the experience. Just employ common courtesy.
- **Do not wait until the last two weeks of the semester and attempt to squeeze your “required hours” into one or two meetings.** If for some reason you are unable to meet with your partner for a period of time during your commitment, please communicate with them to make other arrangements. Again, this is a point of courtesy.
- **CIES cannot guarantee that you will be able to fulfill your “required hours” through participation in this program.** While many partnerships created through this program continue for semesters and even years, personal and cultural incompatibilities have arisen between individuals in semesters and inevitably result in waning interest and involvement. Please have a back-up plan, with another organization, perhaps, if you must complete a certain number of hours for your class, job, etc.

While human problems on both sides prevent 100% success of this program, we hope that by addressing these issues in an honest, up-front and forthright manner we can minimize their future occurrence. Please let me know if you have any questions, concerns or reservations about participating in the program.

This program is a great one when entered into by both parties with a spirit of international friendship, cross-cultural learning and cross teaching. **By signing below you acknowledge that you have read the guidelines above and agree to abide by them.** Thanks again for your interest.

Ramin Yazdanpanah, CP Coordinator

Conversation Partner Volunteer

Center for Intensive English Studies (CIES) Conversation Partner Volunteer Application

Thank you for volunteering to be a *Conversation Partner* with an international student. This is a good opportunity to make an international friend. The students at the CIES are excited about meeting friendly Americans to talk and share time together.

***Conversation Partners* meet each other for at least one hour a week to talk.** Please remember that CIES students want to learn English and the culture of the United States. They are not here to help you get better in Spanish, Chinese, French, etc. This is *not* a language exchange program.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Telephone number: _____ E-mail (FSU Account only!): _____

Gender: M / F 1st Language: _____ Marital Status: _____ Age (optional): __

What do you plan to study (or what do you do for a living)? _____

Please check any of the following activities in which you would like to participate with your partner:

Movie Coffee Lunch Party
 Sporting Event Concert Dinner/Cooking Trip
 Exposure to each other's language/culture Conversation Tutoring

Are you interested in meeting with someone from a particular culture or language group? If so, which one? _____

If you *cannot* be paired with your choice of a particular culture or language group, would you still be interested in being a conversation partner? Y / N

We try to match volunteers with same-sex Conversation Partners. Sometimes, however, this is not possible. Would you be willing to accept a Conversation Partner of the opposite sex? Y / N

How did you find out about the Conversation Partner Program? (e.g., my Diverse Population class) _____

I hereby commit to meeting with my Conversation Partner for a minimum of one hour per week for at least two months.

Your Name: _____ Signature: _____