

THE CANADIAN CENTRE FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE

CCVT VOLUNTEER ESL TUTOR ORIENTATION PACKAGE

*compiled by Jean Hackney and Lara Okihiro
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CANADIAN CENTRE FOR VICTIMS OF TORTURE

MANDATE

"Hope after the Horror"

The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT) aids survivors to overcome the lasting effects of torture and war. In partnership with the community, the Centre support survivors in the process of successful integration into Canadian society, works for their protection and integrity, and raises awareness of the continuing effects of torture and war on survivors and their families. The CCVT gives hope after the horror.

WELCOME

Congratulations - you have taken the first step to becoming a CCVT ESL volunteer tutor.

This orientation package is for tutors of English as a second or foreign language teaching in the specific teaching environment of CCVT. A group of volunteers are currently working on putting together a CCVT ESL tutor resource manual to assist you further in your role as a tutor.

In this document we have attempted to set out some basic principles, simply and clearly, to get you started in tutoring ESL. This document can be treated as a series of quick "recipes" for a successful beginning to your work with the language learner.

CONTACTING CCVT STAFF

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All CCVT staff can be contacted by phone using the CCVT phone number: 416-363-1066. If the person with whom you would like to speak is not available to take your call directly you can leave a voice mail or a message.

Chizuru Nobe, the Volunteer Coordinator, is probably your best contact. She can help you with any issues you may have as a volunteer, and if you are not sure who to contact with other questions and concerns she can help you.

Counsellors are available for discussion with ESL tutor volunteers as well as clients. They can be contacted to discuss concerns or questions you may have with regards to the person or people with whom you are working, or regarding the relationship you have with an ESL student.

HELP! I DON'T KNOW HOW TO TEACH!

So you're not a teacher, but you have taken the step that takes you closer toward helping a CCVT client to learn English. That's a tall order, but you can fill it. CCVT will be there to help you become comfortable with tutoring. In fact, there are mentors standing by to help you manage the process.

CCVT has an ESL tutor "Buddy System". Now that's something you are familiar with on this unknown territory – a buddy. The Centre has a "buddy" list in place of ESL volunteer tutors who are willing to spend time with you to talk to you about their experiences as an English language tutor. They can give you helpful tips to start you off in your first tutoring situation. These volunteers have all started off, just like you, at some time, at the beginning of their tutoring journey.

To be matched up with a "buddy" please call Chizuru Nobe at 416-363-1066.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A CCVT ESL TUTOR?

I had no previous tutoring or teaching experience when I began volunteering at CCVT. Initially, I was worried that my lack of experience would make me ill equipped to be any sort of authority or aid in someone's experience of learning English. I didn't know how to prepare lessons, nor did I really feel I had the time and confidence required to plan lessons and compile resources. However, my initial uncertainty over what I was supposed to do and how I was supposed to do it turned out to be not such a bad thing. The woman with whom I work had a pretty good idea of how she wanted to go about learning English, and she even referred me to the resources and exercise books with which she wanted to begin. At first, neither of us knew what to expect from our tutoring situation but it did not take us long to figure out a sort of informal lesson routine that suited us both.

Lara Okihiro

I started tutoring at CCVT in 2000 as part of my college practicum in a Teaching English as a Second Language program. A year and a half later I am still tutoring weekly. The experience has been good, and I have learnt a lot about the specific tutoring environment of CCVT. Some of the learners have been meeting with me for the whole year and a half, others have met with me for a few months. Some of these learners moved on to other evening programs when they have found something suitable for their needs. At first, as a new tutor I was worried when the learner stopped coming for tutoring sessions. I asked myself if I was tutoring the learner satisfactorily. Over time I began to understand the process of refugee settlement, realising that when a learner moved on to another English learning institute, they were finding the learning path that they needed to settle into a new city and a new life. One of the learners I taught was able to move on from a one-to-one session with me to a large classroom experience, something she thought she would not have had the confidence to do when I first met her. This change was a time for celebration for us both. From what was primarily a tutoring experience we have now moved on to be good friends.

Jean Hackney

A TEACHING APPROACH

If you are new to tutoring you might be thinking back to how you first learnt a language. Do you think about the hours you spent memorizing lists and lists of vocabulary? The production of language was guided and controlled by the teacher, usually in some kind of drill. Teaching has changed a lot since the days of this type of classroom practice.

At CCVT, as in classrooms across Canada, a currently recognized teaching approach is the “communicative language teaching” (CLT) approach. The principle behind this term is that the teacher provides the opportunity for the learner to *use* the language they are learning. The role of the teacher is to encourage learners to put what they are learning into action. The learner develops linguistic fluency through “real-life” communication.

David Nunan¹ (1991) offers five features to characterize CLT:

1. An emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. The introduction of authentic (everyday materials) texts into the learning situation.
3. The provision of opportunities for learners to focus, not only on language but also on the learning process itself.
4. An enhancement of the learner’s own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.
5. An attempt to link classroom language learning with language activation outside the classroom.

As a CCVT ESL tutor you also need to be aware of some of the additional learning needs of it’s clients. Part of CCVT’s mandate is to respond to the continuing needs unique to survivors of torture. Some of the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder such as memory loss, lack of concentration, distrust of strangers and fear of groups and authority figures, for instance, are barriers to learning a new language. Consider these needs when tutoring the learner. For example, to create a positive learning experience the tutoring environment needs to be comfortable, informal, in familiar surroundings, calm and non-threatening.

For more information about second language acquisition in the CCVT environment, please click on our website at www.icomm.ca/ccvt. Also, ask Michele Millard, the volunteer coordinator, for a copy of “English Language Instruction for Survivors of Torture and Organized Violence: How to Adapt Your Curriculum and Create a Positive Environment in the Classroom” compiled by Lawrence Hrubes.

¹ Brown, H.D. Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy

WHERE CAN I TUTOR THE LEARNER?

Ask the learner where s/he would prefer to have the tutoring session. As with all CCVT clients, listen to their specific needs about safety and comfort. A CCVT learner might not want to have a lesson in a room with no windows, or in a basement since this could trigger traumatic memories for them. Some tutoring location suggestions are listed below:

- ❖ CCVT (speak to Michele Millard, volunteer coordinator)
- ❖ Coffee shops
- ❖ Local libraries (some have private tutoring rooms)
- ❖ Community Centres
- ❖ Large bookstores (e.g. Chapters, Indigo)
- ❖ The Bickford Centre (large cafeteria)
- ❖ The downtown financial district mall food halls (empty at the weekend)
- ❖ Colleges, Universities

Call the learner before the day you meet to confirm the date, time and meeting place location.

WHERE CAN I FIND TUTORING RESOURCE MATERIALS?

The best tutoring materials are authentic. That is, material that the learner will see, hear about, speak about and read in their everyday life (e.g. menu cards, transit information, documents they need to fill in, newspapers, magazines, signs, etc.). Pick these materials up when you are out shopping, working or socializing. Take a trip to a government office to pick the materials up, or make it a field trip and go with your learner. Alternatively, CCVT has teaching materials that you can use. Ask the LINC coordinator, Dasantila about the resources they have available on site.

An excellent ESL resource centre in Toronto is the Centre Alphaplus Centre at 2040 Yonge Street, 3rd Floor, Toronto ON M4S 1Z9, Tel. no. 416-322-1012. The website address is <http://alphaplus.ca>. Also, visit the Toronto Reference library at 789 Yonge Street, or your local library branch for ESL resources.