

International Learner FAQs

Whether you are thinking about joining or have already signed up, we're glad you're here. This guide will help you decide if this program is right for you and help you get started.

In this program, you'll be paired with a local volunteer for weekly English conversation practice. This is a chance to build confidence in speaking, improve your everyday communication skills, and feel more comfortable in your daily life in Davis. We also hope you'll enjoy learning about a new culture and building a meaningful connection. Sometimes pairings may feel unexpected—but that's part of the experience!

1. Is there a requirement of my English level to participate?

You don't need very fluent English. As long as you can hold a simple conversation and are willing to participate, you are welcome to join. This program is not a class. It offers a personalized and relaxed space to practice everyday English.

2. How long am I expected to participate?

There is no required length of participation, as we understand that international visitors may travel or return to their home countries.

However, we ask that you stay in communication with your partner and the program coordinator. Please let them know if you plan to be away for an extended period or if you are no longer able to continue meeting regularly in person.

This helps us support both you and your partner, and allows us to make volunteers available for new participants when needed.

3. How does the pairing process work?

After you submit your application, the program coordinator, Susan, will review it and match you with a volunteer. If volunteers are available, you may be paired within about a week. At certain times of the year, when fewer volunteers are available, the wait time may be longer.

Once a match is made, you will receive an email from Susan with your partner's information. Your partner will then reach out to you to arrange your first meeting.

If you do not hear from your partner within about two weeks, please contact Susan. She will follow up and help make any necessary adjustments to your pairing.

4. How often will I meet with my partner, and where?

Partners meet in person once a week for about one hour. This program is designed for participants in Davis who are available for in-person meetups. You will decide together on a time and place that works for both of you.

Meetings should take place in a public space, such as a café, library, or I-House (please check space availability with us in advance). The schedule can be adjusted if both of you agree.

5. What should we talk about?

You can talk about everyday topics such as your daily life, hobbies, culture, work, or school, anything that interests you or that you'd like help expressing in English. The goal is to practice real-life communication, so there's no need to prepare in advance unless you'd like to.

Since our volunteers are not trained teachers or tutors, it's helpful if you come with specific questions or topics you'd like to talk about. This can make your conversations more engaging and effective.

6. How should I communicate with my partner?

Your first contact will be by email. After that, you can choose how to stay in touch—text, messaging apps, or phone—whatever works best for both of you.

7. What if I feel nervous or don't understand everything?

That's completely okay. This is a safe and supportive space. You can ask your partner to speak more slowly, repeat, or explain. Making mistakes is part of learning.

8. What if the partnership is not working well?

If you have concerns or feel uncomfortable, please reach out to the program coordinator. We're here to support you and can help find a solution.