

Volunteer FAQs

Whether you are thinking about joining or have already signed up, we're glad you found this page. This guide is designed to help you decide if this program is right for you or to smooth your start as a volunteer.

As a volunteer, you'll help learners build confidence in English conversation, develop practical language skills, and feel welcomed in their new life here in Davis. We hope this journey will be enjoyable and rewarding for you as well, giving you the chance to learn about a different culture and form a genuine friendship. Pairings may sometimes feel a little random—but that's part of the fun and the beauty of the experience!

1. Do I need to have teaching experience?

No. It's wonderful if you have experience in ESL or intercultural exchange, but it's not required. All you need is an open mind, a willingness to listen, and a desire to help an international friend improve their English while building a meaningful connection.

2. How long am I expected to commit?

We don't require a strict minimum time commitment, but building meaningful connections and supporting language development takes time. We kindly ask that you commit for at least a quarter. Many partnerships have grown into friendships lasting years, or even across borders when international partners return home.

If your availability allows, a partnership can continue as long as both sides wish. If you need to pause or end your participation, please inform your partner and the program coordinator, sharing your reason. We will respect your decision and support a smooth transition.

3. How does the pairing process work?

Once you submit your volunteer application, the program coordinator, Susan, will review it. If there are international learners waiting, you will typically be paired within a week. You'll receive an email from Susan with your partner's contact information and some basic details about them. And then you can email or text your partner to schedule your first meet-up.

Pairing may take longer if there are no learners on the waitlist, during holiday periods, or between academic quarters. Please note that Susan is also a volunteer who contributes a limited number of hours each week to this process. If you haven't heard back after three weeks, please contact Yun at yun@ihousedavis.org for assistance.

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

Partners typically meet once a week for an hour. Meetings should take place in a public space agreed upon by both partners. You are welcome to meet at I-House. Just email or give us a call to check space availability beforehand. The length and frequency of meetings can be adjusted based on mutual availability and preference. Just be sure to communicate openly and promptly with your partner if you need to make any changes.

5. How should I communicate with my partner?

The initial connection will be through email. We encourage partners to connect via email, messaging apps, or phone, whichever works best for both of you.

6. Do I need to worry about privacy or safety?

Your personal information will not be shared for any other purpose without your consent. You may receive emails from I-House staff with announcements or EPP program updates and end-of-year surveys. Once paired, we ask that you take the first step to reach out to your partner.

At the same time, please respect your partner's privacy in the same way. Do not share their personal information unless they have explicitly agreed.