



Establishing a Unit of English in Action

Basic Structure of EiA:

- * Meeting Space
 - * Targeting Students
 - * Recruiting Volunteers
 - * Volunteer Training
 - * Financing
-

Our Partners Have the Last Word

My tutor helped me understand so much— not only about English, but also about life in the U.S.

—a student from Japan

Each student is a looking glass into another world. Using their life and interests as a guide, I seek topics of conversation that will help the student to feel comfortable in speaking a language formerly limited to a classroom. . . . Isn't this bonding the reward that can bring us tolerance and understanding of one another?

—a tutor

I can now speak more fluently and I can understand better than before. The relaxed atmosphere and the one-to-one conversations have helped me greatly. I thank you for the opportunity you have given me to improve my English.

—a student from Russia

Not only have I met interesting and delightful people but I have found that through my work in teaching them about America and our culture, my own knowledge and appreciation of their cultures has been greatly broadened.

—a tutor

Stable Financing

This may or may not be relevant to your branch, depending on your community and the type and size of your EiA program. English in Action is not expensive to run, provided you have located a space free of charge, but it may involve some administrative costs (postage, copying, telephone, etc.). By charging a student registration fee, you can cover these costs and have funds available for group activities, resource materials and effective publicity. In addition, you may find that students will make more of an effort to attend regularly and will drop out less often if they have paid for the services.

You can best determine your own student registration fee by estimating the cost of the program, the number of newcomers you hope will participate and the ability of those in your community to pay.

Our Mission:

The ESU celebrates English as a shared language to foster global understanding and good will by providing educational and cultural opportunities for students, educators and members.

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In seeking volunteers, it is important to stress that EiA volunteers are not teachers in the formal sense of the word, but must be native speakers of English who are willing to commit themselves to two hours each week and who have an interest in helping a newcomer to our country and learning about the culture of another person.

A Central Meeting Place

Although the English in Action program is one-to-one, it is important that there be a central meeting place. By meeting together in pairs, you ensure that:

- Volunteers and students find a natural support group and have the chance to share ideas and experiences.
- The learning takes place in a neutral setting avoiding problems in social customs of home hospitality.
- The administration of the program—attendance, record keeping, matching and registration—is facilitated.

A central meeting place may be a church or community center, corporate space or a space donated by a university or other educational institution you are working with.

Second Language instruction are often very anxious for the contact with Americans that EiA affords since they often feel isolated from Americans in their daily routine.

A Pool of Volunteers

A survey of interest in your Branch will determine who among the membership wants to participate. You may find that it will be necessary to get volunteers from outside the membership, too. Please keep in mind that this recruitment process does not need to be exhaustive or far-reaching. An EiA program can begin with a couple of volunteers and a small group of students (you may want to try conversation circles conducted by one tutor in lieu of the one-to-one approach if you are short of volunteers). Over time, the program will expand as enthusiastic tutors talk to their families, friends and even total strangers about their rewarding and enjoyable volunteer work with EiA.

If you do need to find additional volunteers for your English in Action program, contact local groups dealing with retired people, colleges giving students credit for community service, or corporations with community outreach departments that promote volunteerism among their employees. The advantage of going outside the Branch to recruit volunteers is that you will develop a new source of potential ESU members.

What is English in Action ?

English in Action is designed for people who have already studied English but have not had the opportunity to practice speaking the language. EiA matches these non-native speakers with American volunteers for one-to-one conversation practice. Through two-hour, weekly sessions with EiA volunteer conversation partners, students have the opportunity to gain self-confidence and skill in understanding and speaking English. (In some cases, small conversation groups facilitated by one volunteer are also effective).

Who are the English in Action Students ?

EiA students represent over 50 countries around the world. They can be new immigrants or refugees, guest workers, undergrad and graduate students attending local universities and colleges, visiting academics and researchers and members of the international business and diplomatic community.

How to Establish an EiA Program in Your Branch

The Basic Structure of EiA

The basic structure of the English in Action program is the unit. It is a central location where the conversation practice take place. Usually it is a space provided by a library, church, synagogue, university, corporation or community center. Conversation partners meet one-to-one at the unit on a regular basis.

A Program Coordinator

This is someone willing to develop the program for the Branch who then oversees the day- to-day running of the unit. Duties include recruiting, registering and matching volunteers and students, taking attendance, passing out information about activities and distributing newsletters. The Coordinator is also responsible for contacting any members of the unit who have not been present at the recent session. The work is not difficult once your program is established, but does require a continuous commitment. An outgoing individual who gets satisfaction from working with others and who has good “people skills” would enjoy the work of the EiA Program Coordinator.

A Pool of Students

There are two categories of international participants you can solicit for your English in Action program.

- permanent residents, including newly- arrived immigrants, refugees and guest workers
- temporary visitors, such as students, business people, diplomats and other professionals and their families

You may decide to work with either one of the groups, or a combination of the two, which will make your group diverse and even more interesting. To ensure that EiA’s services are known, you should contact organizations dealing with immigrants and refugees, such as social welfare agencies, foreign-speaking churches and the local board of education. To reach international visitors to your area, you can begin by contacting a university or community college; you may also try international companies and consulates.

Experience has shown that the most accessible sources of participants are students in community colleges, adult education programs (run by the school district) and universities. These students tend to have a good background in written English, to be highly motivated for this type of conversation practice program and to be the most eager for contact with Americans. EiA is the perfect complement to classroom study. Students in these classes of 20-30 need the one-to-one opportunity to practice what they have learned. International students involved in intensive English as a