



Entry Program for Older Adult Immigrants English Conversation Circles (ECC)

Guidelines for Volunteer Facilitators

GOAL: To facilitate an English Conversation Circle (ECC) between A & O participants, encouraging them to practise English in a welcoming and friendly learning environment.

After conducting the Needs Assessment provided, facilitators are encouraged to choose any of the following topics: Canada, Healthy Living, Doctor, Recreation and Leisure, Shopping, Family and Friends, Housing, Money, Law (particularly Elder Abuse) etc.

During each 90 minute session, facilitators will create a friendly, comfortable, positive, and warm learning environment. Avoid controversial topics, including religious or cultural views, sexual orientation and political issues.

ROLE: As an A&O English Conversation Circle (ECC) facilitator, your role is to facilitate conversations, guiding the participants and empowering their English speaking skills. This is not 'teaching' in the traditional sense, so 'lecturing' should be avoided. You should strive for "70/30", i.e. Participants should speak for 70% of the session and, the balance of 30% gives you time to provide the tools that will allow them to improve their English.

A typical ECC session will comprise:

1. Warm-Up Activities: (approx 15 min) These activities can include: practicing greetings; "small talk" such as the weather, participant activities of the past week, family, or discussion of news items; going over today's agenda; review of last week's topics for those who didn't attend (and even for those who did); or an icebreaker activity.

2. Work-Out / Task based activities: (approx 60 min) Facilitators introduce the topic of the day to get the group started.

2.1 Pre-teach vocabulary/usage (5-7 new words) and key sentences that are relevant to the topic of the day. This is accomplished through building / practicing, and using the words and usages in a conversational setting.

2.2 Activities:

Lower Levels: Leading, modeling, demonstrating, and repeating are highly recommended. Participants can be assigned to work in pairs, in smaller groups, or in a whole group as needed.

High beginner / low intermediate levels: utilize drills, dialogues, role plays and pair work.

Intermediate and advanced groups: utilize group activities such as discussion, mini presentations, debating, mini projects.

2.3. Your Role: Circulate and listen to the groups, providing guidance and correction as needed. If you hear errors occurring in a majority of the small groups, take some time to correct with the entire group as a whole.

Keep in mind the simple pattern: *think, pair and share*. Give the participants time to **think** about the topic (about 10-15 seconds), **pair** the learners so they can **share** their ideas with each other. Then later call on some individuals to **share** their results with the whole group.

A note about pairing: Try to pair different cultures/first languages (L1s) i.e. avoid putting two Chinese, or two Ukrainian individuals etc together.

If your group is comprised of mostly the same L1s, then try pairing different levels or avoid putting 'friends' together. This helps them avoid falling back to their L1 to communicate, resulting in improved English. It also helps them make new friends!

- 3. Cool Down Activities (15 mins):** At the end of each session, do a quick review.
- Ask participants to recap the session's learning or summarize opinions
 - Give next week's topic (if you have decided what to do for the following week)
 - Play a game if you have enough time.

RECAP Suggested Timeframe:

To manage each 90 minute session effectively, the suggested time allocation is

Warm Up	15 min
Task-Based activities	60 min
Cool Down	15 min

To accomplish the "70/30" Goal, participants should be speaking **at least** 60 minutes out of the 90 minute session (i.e. speaking English during the Warm Up, Activity and Cool Down phases).

The great thing about the 70/30 Goal is that it takes the pressure off the facilitator and provides participants much more time to speak.