



VOLUNTEER INDUCTION

Once you or your organisation's coordinator have found a suitable volunteer, it's important to have some kind of induction with them. Even if you are supported by a coordinator for volunteers you as the teacher should always take responsibility for certain parts of the induction. In any case we recommend that you meet the volunteer before they introduce them to students.

The preparation that teachers do with their volunteer before that volunteer enters the classroom serves several functions:

- **Relationship building**
The induction process should be a chance to build rapport with someone you'll potentially be working with regularly and to begin to establish a dynamic in terms of your roles.
- **Information gathering**
If this hasn't been achieved through the recruitment process, induction allows institutions and teachers to gather information about volunteers. This may fulfil legal obligations relating to safeguarding, insurance or other record keeping. From the teacher's point of view, recruitment and induction should give you an understanding of the skills, experience and knowledge that volunteers can bring to the classroom. It should also help clarify what the volunteer wants from the volunteering experience so that you can support them, where possible, to get the most out of their placement.
- **Good communication between teacher and volunteer**
The induction process is also an opportunity to communicate your needs, expectations and boundaries regarding how the volunteer's role and how they can best support your teaching. This could include some training, which we'll also briefly cover below. The induction could also be an opportunity to ensure that volunteers understand the organisational context in which your classes are taking place and your teaching approach – both in terms of values and methods. It can also provide a space for the volunteer to ask questions and get reassurance about how volunteering will work and what difference they're going to make.
- **Shared contact / agreement**
Finally, the induction process is about reaching a clear and mutually acceptable agreement between teacher and volunteer about how you're going to work together. This can be supported by a verbal or written contract.

Face to face meeting

Most of the induction process will happen via face to face

conversation – probably a one-to-one chat, ideally between teacher and volunteer.

The one-to-one meeting: what to cover

Below are some suggestions for what you could cover with a volunteer in the induction process. Not all points will be relevant to your context – pick and choose what is helpful. Whilst all of this could be covered in conversation, it could also be communicated via documents for the volunteer to read, before or after the meeting. Beneath the headings we have also included some explanations, information and suggestions about the induction area.

It's also worth saying that whilst this section includes a long list of points for consideration this should not be a replacement for human warmth and there should be space and license for you to use your gut instinct as well! Getting a sense of someone and building a relationship is not an exact science. It could also be very off putting if you approach the one-to-one meeting with too much formality and reliance on a check-list for guiding conversation!

Getting to know each other

1. **Finding out about the volunteer: their skills, experience, motivation, needs and expectations**

Questions you could ask the volunteer:

- What's drawn you to volunteering?

"If I do something wrong, I have confidence in the teacher to tell me how I should do things differently. That confidence and trust is important to make the corporation work."

Volunteer, Denmark



- What do you hope to get out of it?
- What do you know about our field of work / organisation?
- What is your background?
- What volunteering or teaching have you done in the past?
- What aspects of volunteering do you think you'll enjoy the most?
- How can I / we support you to get the most out of your time volunteering?
- Do you have any needs or particular requirements that we need to know about to support you to volunteer? e.g. accessibility

2. Explanation of teacher's approach and methods

This could include:

- what you think is important in language learning
- how you conceptualise the role of the teacher
- how you create a safe and welcoming learning space for students
- your attitude to the use of other languages in class
- how you like to lay out your classroom
- the kind of activities you like to do your attitude toward error correction

3. Information about the student group: level, needs etc

This is where you can outline the classes' language and literacy level, their general character and give a sense of their particular needs e.g. any disabilities which should be taken into account.

4. Information about the organisation: history, values, how it works

If you're teaching in an organisation it can be useful to outline the organisation's story and any relevant information about its culture. You can also give the volunteer a sense of how your language class fits in with the wider operations of the organisation.

5. Explanation of volunteer's and teacher's role and responsibilities

Establishing what is and what isn't the role of the volunteer is very important to avoid misunderstanding. This can be further delineated by outlining what the teacher's role and responsibilities will be – and the role of any paid teaching assistants, where relevant. It can be useful to explain who will be responsible for and involved in:

- Planning lessons
- Deciding lesson content
- Error correcting
- Participating in activities

BASICS *about language learning for all volunteers*

Confidence building and creating a warm, welcoming space

It can be useful to underline the important role the volunteer will play in making students feel welcome and safe, building their confidence and making their learning more enjoyable.

Authentic dialogue

Emphasise that the role of the volunteer is to speak in authentic language with the students so that the student is able to:

- Try out authentic dialogues
- Practise rehearsed dialogues
- Get to know the volunteer and benefit from their skills and knowledge

Error correction

Many teachers prefer volunteers to avoid error correcting unless specifically asked for correction by the students or teachers. You could encourage the volunteer to give (genuine) positive feedback instead. However you handle it, talk about this topic with your volunteer.

Listening

It can be useful to tell the volunteer about the importance of listening and leaving space for students to speak. Language learners often need time to formulate what they want to say, so holding silence is very important.

Grading speech

Explain to the volunteer that it's helpful for them to speak authentic/naturally and pronounce words as they would in their daily life. However, it's also useful, where possible, to speak simply – especially with lower level students. This means using short sentences and less complex vocabulary. In some languages, it can mean using international vocabulary that learners are more likely to recognise instead of more colloquial and country specific lexis.

Consistency

If the volunteers' consistent attendance will enable you to do more in your lessons (or conversely, if inconsistent attendance will disrupt your lesson plans and cause problems) then it's useful to let them know this impact now.



6. Teacher's perspective on how a volunteer can best help them

Each teacher will have their own preferences about how they want the volunteer to support their teaching. In the box below are a few areas which you may want to mention. These could be read out to volunteers, articulated in your own words or printed out. You can also refer volunteers to any training your organisation offers and to our toolkit for volunteers (or specific parts of it), which contains more information for volunteers about how best to support language acquisition.

7. Agreement about ongoing check ins / evaluation: when and how will this take place

You may want to briefly talk to the volunteer after the first lesson to see how they found it. You may want to have another meeting with them after a term has passed. It's up to you (and your organisational procedure) how and when you evaluate how the volunteering is going, but it can be useful to make this clear at this early stage. You'll find some tools for evaluation with the volunteer at the back of this toolkit, beginning on page 59.

8. Agreement between volunteer and teacher about time commitment

Clarify when and for how long they'll be able to give their time.

9. Summary of ground rules / agreement

Summarise what you've covered and check that it's all understood and agreed.

Logistics:

- 10. Logistical information about the class: time, place, access to the building etc**
- 11. Guided tour of the building or facilities**
- 12. How to claim expenses / stipend**

Safeguarding:

- 13. Insurance / criminal or police record checks.**
- 14. Other legal obligations: volunteer must read safeguarding procedure etc**

15. Confidentiality agreement around students' disclosure

16. Who the volunteer should refer to in case of:

- absence
- doubts regarding the scope of the volunteer work
- a need to discuss "sensitive" information about students
- disagreements between teacher and the volunteer

Volunteer welcome and support:

17. What training and support they'll be offered

18. How the teacher and/or organisation can support them to get the most out of their placement

19. An expression of appreciation for the volunteers' time commitment and the difference the volunteer will make

20. An opportunity for the volunteer to ask any other questions

Induction resources

You may want to point your volunteer to additional resources that they can read in their own time to support their development. Your organisation may have its own teaching resources or documentation that you'd like your volunteer to look at. There are also additional resources available that are aimed at volunteers:

- Our Toolkit for Volunteers

www.volunteersinlanguagelearning.eu

This is aimed at volunteers supporting teachers in classroom (formal) settings and leading activities beyond the classroom in informal or non formal learning environments.

- Language Support for Adult Refugees Council of Europe Toolkit:

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees/guidelines>

Aimed at volunteers providing language support so not all sections will be relevant to volunteers working in formal settings.

A note on **VOLUNTEER RETENTION**

High volunteer turnover can be disconcerting and frustrating for teachers. If this keeps happening, and it's disruptive to your lessons, you may want to speak to your volunteer co-ordinator or review your recruitment and induction process. Although the turnover may be inevitable, it's worth asking if volunteers have a clear picture of what the role will involve before they start. Are they clear about the time commitment involved? Asking outgoing volunteers directly why they're leaving could

also provide clues as to why they're not sticking around. Making volunteers feel appreciated and valued for their contribution also increases the likelihood that they'll want to stay. It's worth thinking about how you can make them feel included in the organisation (if they want to be). Small gestures like cards at Christmas, special mentions at end of term celebration or invites to the organisation's internal end of year celebrations can all contribute to making volunteers feel valued.