



VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT

How do you find suitable volunteers (or let them find you)? Some teachers may have a volunteer coordinator in their organisation to take care of this. For those teachers undertaking volunteer recruitment themselves, below are some points to consider.

Before you start

If you're a teacher working in an organisational context, it can be useful to have clarity about the organisational norms and procedures for working with volunteers. This can include establishing who the teacher should refer to:

- To ask for a volunteer
- To discuss best practice around using volunteers in their teaching
- To discuss the challenges regarding their volunteer
- To stop working with a particular volunteer

The role that a teacher plays in their volunteers' recruitment, induction and training will depend on institutional context. Even if all three of these aspects are the responsibility of a volunteer coordinator, we would highly recommend that teachers request access to information about their incoming volunteer and have a chance to meet with them before they introduce them to students.

Recruitment

Recruitment usually involves advertising your need for a volunteer, receiving applications and then choosing (a) volunteer(s) from the applications. Obviously, volunteers are giving up their time and it can seem harsh to subject them to a lengthy or grueling application process. However, it may turn out that there are many more people interested in helping out than you're able to accommodate and some selection process is therefore necessary. And even if this isn't the case, recruitment is a chance to get a sense of your volunteer before they enter your classroom. This is highly recommended! You have a

right to be discerning about who comes into your classroom - for the sake of you, the students and the volunteer themselves!

Application process

It's useful to consider how would-be volunteers are going to find you. And once you're in touch, how are you going to learn about them and whether they're right for the role?

This of course depends on your context and the number of would-be volunteers available, but a typical recruitment process might involve:

1. Advertising the role, responsibilities involved and essential and desirable qualities
2. An application process that involves filling out an application form or writing a cover letter that addresses a number of questions and/or
3. An initial screening, meeting or interview

An alternative to stages 2 and/or 3 would be to hold an open meeting for all would-be volunteers. This meeting could be used to provide applicants with more information about the role, and double up as a training that will help volunteers work well with you. It could also be a chance for you to meet would-be volunteers and get a sense of them. If applicants are still interested after attending this meeting, they could then fill out an application form or just get started.

“Volunteers often come out of working in schools, many from teaching at primary school level, then do things with the refugees as if they're 6 year old children, which doesn't fit for 18 year old 19 year old young people, and I think this is a problem of attitude: How do I approach refugees, do I see them as poor protectable beings to be cared for, mothered or fathered, or do I see them as equal partners?”

Language teacher in Austria

Who do you want to attract?

This will affect where you advertise for a volunteer. If you want to work with

volunteers with a connection to the local area, for example, then advertise through local institutions.

This will also affect your advert wording and your application process. You could list certain criteria or desirable qualities in your advert. For example, you may want to state that you need a female volunteer for a women-only group, or suggest that this is a role for friendly, flexible, reliable people.

If certain qualities or skills are important to you, be sure to check for them during your application process through the questions you ask.

Where to advertise

To find a volunteer, you could approach someone you think would be suitable directly or advertise more broadly. How and where you publicise your need for a volunteer will determine what kind of volunteers you attract and how many applications you receive.

Here are some suggestions of places you could put the word out:

- Via social media – either to your followers or by posting in relevant groups or pages
- By putting up adverts locally or in specific relevant places e.g. at the place you teach
- Advertising on relevant websites
- In relevant digital or physical newsletters
- By approaching relevant institutions or groups to ask them if anyone involved would like to volunteer.

Example for ads

VOLUNTEERS PLAY A FUNDAMENTAL ROLE IN OUR CLASSES

Whether helping to set up the classroom, supporting participants during group work or offering support and advice on local services, the contribution made by volunteers in our classrooms is vital.

In return, volunteers will have the opportunity to:

- gain experience of English language teaching in a community setting
- attend our regular training sessions on teaching methods
- gain support and advice on professional development for those looking to become an ESOL teacher

Our classes are held at various times and locations across London. Classes usually last two hours with a short break for refreshments about half-way through.

HOW TO APPLY?

Most of our volunteers come from our local partner organisations. However, occasionally there are opportunities, so if you are interested please write an email to volunteering@efalondon.org and our volunteers coordinator will advise you accordingly. Please let us know your relevant experience, availability, location in London and motivations.

Application numbers

The number of applications you get will depend on the context in which you're working and how you advertise. Having high numbers of applications can be a problem if it then requires serious work to process them. If you think that high application numbers are a risk, it's worth considering how to reach the right people whilst avoiding being overwhelmed. Some ways to reduce application numbers include:

- List specific criteria on the advert
- Target your adverts to only a limited number of specific relevant groups or areas
- Include an application form or cover letter in the application process which involves some time and thought to attract only the most dedicated applicants.

Application form

If you have decided to have an application form of some kind as part of your recruitment purpose, here are some things to consider:

What questions to ask?

This depends on the specific skills and qualities you're looking for. You could ask why the applicant wants to volunteer and what relevant experience they have. Don't neglect the practical considerations either – it's useful to check availability, for example. If you want a volunteer with particular values or a particular attitude, more open questions or questions that require specific examples of their previous experience may help to give you an indication of their qualities in this regard.

Any other data?

The application form could be a chance to collect information for safeguarding, insurance or legal purposes where relevant to your organisation.

A sense of the volunteer's previous experience will help you plan how you could train or induct this person further.

A demanding application form that reminds people of a job application form may be off putting – after all, would-be volunteers are offering their time for free. Explain at the beginning of your form why you are including it as part of the application process and how you will use the information.

Information about the organisation or group that is advertising for volunteers

It may be useful to be explicit about your approach and ethos in order to attract people with similar values – although this could also be communicated at other times, such as in an initial advert.

The exact wording of your advertisement will be a deciding factor for the number of applications that you receive.