



The English-Speaking Union
English in Action

List of Resources

for Volunteer Tutors of English in Action

The lengths to which English in Action volunteers go to act as cultural and linguistic guides for their students inspire and delight us. For students, meeting each week with a tutor is a chance to practice their English skills in a welcoming environment; for many, it is their first opportunity to get to know an American.

To help our volunteers with this good work, we have put together this list of resources. Whether you are looking for a bit of inspiration for your lessons, or you are simply stumped by a difficult grammar question, we hope this guide will help you.

Resources are sorted first by media type (e.g. books, blogs and websites) and then by type (e.g. grammar, pronunciation). For each resource, we have included a brief description, and where possible, the publisher and website URL. For digital resources, you may also find hyperlinks to specific parts of webpages we found particularly helpful.

We intend this guide to be a “living document” that will grow and change over time. So, if you know of a particularly useful resource or have crafted your own conversation activity, let us know about it.

Blogs and Websites

Teacher and Learner Resource Sites

1. **LearnEnglish**, British Council (<http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/>)

Has hundreds of free, professional-quality learning materials, from videos and podcasts to grammar lessons and diagnostic tests. Tutors can find activities and conversation topics; students can find guidance on almost any English-learning topic. The site uses British English, so you might have to adapt materials to fit American conventions.

2. **TeachingEnglish**, British Council (<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/>)

Also from the British Council, contains collections of activities and lesson plans for kids, teens and adults. There are also articles, including [a series focused on improving learners' speaking](#). Full access to their materials requires that you create a free account using an e-mail address.

3. **Learning English**, BBC (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish>)

Has free courses grouped by level as well as mini-features that handle topics such as grammar and pronunciation. The [6 Minute English](#) feature provides especially good ideas for conversation topics and questions.

4. **American English**, United States Department of State (<https://americanenglish.state.gov/>)

Contains materials aimed at teachers of English worldwide. The [Speaking Resources](#) will help tutors looking for conversation activities.

5. **The Learning Network**, *The New York Times* (<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/>)

A great resource for finding thought-provoking and current resources. New materials are posted daily. Particularly useful features include: [192 Questions for Writing or Discussion](#), [Word of the Day](#) and [English Language Learners' Practice + Prompt](#). The [American History](#) and [Civics](#) sections will be interesting for students following American politics.

6. **Teach Like a Peace Corps Volunteer** (<https://teachlikeapcv.com/about/>)

Created by Peace Corps Volunteers in Romania, this blog features a wide variety of lesson materials and ideas. Many of the speaking lesson plans can be applied to the one-on-one format of English in Action.

7. **Film English** – Kieran Donaghy (<http://film-english.com/>)

This award-winning blog by University ESL teacher, Kieran Donaghy, contains free, video-based lessons for download. You can select lessons by topic and language proficiency level. Even if you don't use his lesson templates exactly, many of the video clips are great food for thoughtful discussion.

Grammar

1. **English Grammar Online**, (<https://www.ego4u.com/>)

Concise, accessible grammar overview. Also contains a wealth of practice problems and tests.

2. **Grammar Handbook**, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (<http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/writers/>)

Explains and illustrates the basic grammatical rules concerning parts of speech, phrases, clauses, sentences, and sentence elements as well as common problems of usage.

3. **The Internet Grammar of English**, University College London (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/internet-grammar/>)

Online course in English grammar. Does not assume prior knowledge.

4. **Guide to Grammar and Style** – Jack Lynch, Rutgers University (<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing/>)

This alphabetical collection of various grammar guidelines and style suggestions is suitable for advanced students who need help polishing their grammar for academic purposes.

Pronunciation

1. **Phonetics: The Sounds of American English**, University of Iowa (<http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/english/english.html>)

Presents all sounds found in General American English. Also has dynamic facial diagrams that demonstrate how to produce each sound. The site is a great place for students to become familiar with the phonetic alphabet, a helpful step in improving pronunciation.

Accents and Dialects

1. **International Dialects of English Archive** (<http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/english/english.html>)

A collection of audio samples from English speakers around the world. Samples are organized by region and are a great way to introduce students to the diversity of English dialects.

2. **The Speech Accent Archive**, George Mason University (<http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/english/english.html>)

This is a set of speech samples from English speakers, both native and non-native, worldwide. Site visitors can browse samples using a user-friendly map.

Games

1. **Free Rice** (<http://freerice.com/#/english-vocabulary/1474>)

Sharpen your English vocabulary while helping others! This free, online vocabulary game comes in sixty levels that will challenge beginners and native speakers alike.

2. **Guess Where My Accent is From** (<http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/english/english.html>)

Users match audio clips with the correct English accent.

Writing

1. **Purdue Online Writing Lab**, Purdue University (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>)

Contains articles and exercises on a variety of writing topics, from using grammar to formatting citations. [The English as a Second Language](#) page contains separate resources for [tutors](#) and [students](#). The [Job Search Writing](#) section will be of interest to tutors with students looking to enter the American workplace.

2. ***Common Errors in English Usage*** – Paul Brians, Washington State University (<http://public.wsu.edu/~brians/errors/>)

This alphabetical list of common writing errors is useful for students who are editing their cover letters and university application letters.

News

1. **NPR** (<http://www.npr.org/>)

Tutors and students interested in current events, culture and music will find a wealth of material for discussion on the NPR homepage. All audio segments contain transcripts you can download and then distribute to students. Unlike many other news media sites, NPR is free.

2. **The Times in Plain English** (<http://www.npr.org/>)

Has news articles written in simple English. If your student wants to follow American news but is intimidated by the advanced language of *The New York Times* or NPR, this site is a good place to find articles.

Books

Grammar

1. ***Grammar in Use*** (3rd edition) – Raymond Murphy with W. Smalzer (for basic & intermediate) Martin Hewings (advanced), Cambridge University Press (2009)

This favorite book for tutors and students comprises a flexible series that serves as a great reference for students' self-study. Structures are taught on one page, with an immediate practice page following. Accompanied by pictures that help to illustrate the grammar point being covered. Very useful for both tutors and students in pinpointing particular grammar issues without a lot of extraneous explanation.

2. ***Understanding and Using English Grammar*** (4th edition) – Betty Schramper Azar, Pearson Longman (2009)

The “bible” of all grammar books, and a classic text for intermediate to advanced students. Blue book is the highest level, the black book is for intermediate students and the red book is for basic beginners. Comes with audio CDs and listening script. Clear explanations, ranging from easy to understandable.

3. ***Fun with Grammar: Communicative Activities for the Azar Grammar Series, Teacher's Resource Book*** – Suzanne W. Woodward, Prentice-Hall Regents (1996)

Good resource for grammar teachers, geared to the Azar Grammar Series. Many communicative exercises and grammar games for students, and very teacher-friendly. Focuses on fun!

4. ***Grammar and Beyond – Randi Reppen for Level 1 & 2***; Laurie Blass, Susan Iannuzzi, Alice Savage, with Randi Reppen for Level 3; John D. Bunting, Luciana Diniz, with Randi Reppen for Level 4, Cambridge University Press (2013)

Four-level series that has an emphasis on written forms, so it is useful for college students or professionals who need to use written English. Focuses a good deal on the difference between spoken and written English, and includes notes on real world grammar so students can understand common usage as well as form and meaning. Level 4 is especially geared for academic use and introduces a lot of vocabulary.

5. ***More Grammar Practice*** (2nd edition), Heinle/Cengage Learning (NGL.Cengage.com/mpr) (2010)

Useful 3 level series, good for accompanying any other grammar book. Supplies many clear charts with real-world usage of the target grammar structures. User-friendly.

6. ***The Advanced Grammar Book*** (2nd edition) – Jocelyn Steer, Karen Carlisi, Dawn Schmid, Cengage Learning (NGL.Cengage.com/ELT) (1999)

This is a great book for the high-level learner who has a good handle on the fundamentals of English grammar. Goes deeper into the usage of the language and has excellent grammatical analysis of structures. Many challenging exercises that include reading and conversation, and begins each topic with theme-based readings that introduce the structure that is to be explored.

Vocabulary & Idioms

1. ***Vocabulary in Use*** (2nd edition) – Michael McCarthy & Felicity O’Dell (with others), Cambridge University Press (2010)

Great books for learning vocabulary, idioms, uses of phrasal verbs, etc. One high-beginner (red book) and upper intermediate (green book) are offered. The two-page format is quite appealing – vocabulary lessons on the left and immediate practice of the words on the right.

2. ***Townsend Press Vocabulary Series*** – Advanced Word Power (a variety of different authors for each level), Townsend Press (2014)

This is a series of vocabulary-building books, starting from beginning and moving up to quite advanced levels. Uses an inductive method for learners to see how the words are used in context and has a very appealing design. Gives learners a lot of practice with new vocabulary; has accompanying online resources and exercises.

3. ***Walk, Amble, Stroll*** – Kathryn Trump, Sherry Trechter, Dee Ann Holisky, Heinle & Heinle (1995)

This is an “oldie but a goodie” in vocabulary building texts. Two different levels – high beginners (1) and high intermediate (2). Vocabulary presented through use of domains – groups of words that are connected in some way. Large variety of exercises is provided.

4. ***All Clear!*** – Helen Kalkstein Fragiadakis, Cengage (2007)

This is a three level series from high beginner to advanced. Excellent resource for high-frequency idioms and contemporary expressions necessary for conversational ability and comprehension. Idioms presented in dialogues that are fun to read with learners, and there are ample exercises in writing and pronunciation practice. Fun to use.

5. ***In the Know*** – Cindy Leany, Cambridge University Press (2005)

This is a really user-friendly book, chock full of 800 most high-frequency idioms. Works on form, meaning, and use, and divided into units based on concepts, context, and key words. Clear explanations of how the idiom can be used, and in which situation it is appropriate. Intermediate to high intermediate.

6. ***Idioms for Everyday Use*** – Milada Broukal, McGraw Hill (2001)

More of a basic text for mastering 230 high-frequency idioms, which are introduced in short readings and dialogues. It is upbeat and effective for intermediate learners.

7. ***Focus on Vocabulary 1 & 2*** – Diane Schmitt, Norbert Schmitt, David Mann, Pearson Longman (2012)

Good books for learning vocabulary; many varied activities for practice. Suitable for intermediate levels.

Pronunciation

1. ***Focus on Pronunciation*** (3rd edition) – Linda Lane, Pearson Longman (2013)

This is a series of three books, from high beginning (1), to intermediate (2) to high-intermediate/advanced students (3). Offers tools, tips, and techniques that help students understand and practice pronunciation features. Covers all aspects of pronunciation—sounds, stress, rhythm and intonation. Well-organized and easy to navigate, so you can skip around and focus on any feature in any order you wish.

2. ***Pronunciation – Tips for Teaching*** – Linda Lane, Pearson Longman (2010)

This is an excellent teacher resource for teaching the North American sound system. Practical and clear, with good exercises and examples. Covers all the major areas of pronunciation, and includes worksheets for photocopying.

3. ***Clear Speech*** (4th edition) – Judy Gilbert, Cambridge University Press (2012)

Judy Gilbert is the doyenne of pronunciation teaching. Text focuses on the suprasegmentals of the language: stress, intonation, and rhythm. Strong emphasis on the melodic features of English that help listeners become understandable quickly. Has audio available online, as well as the Clear Speech app for iPhone and iPad.

4. **Well Said** (3rd edition) – Linda Grant, Cengage (2010)

Clear explanations and focus on the high-priority features of more advanced learners. There is a “Well Said Intro” for lower-level learners. Incorporates kinesthetic, auditory, and visual approaches to pronunciation improvement.

5. **Targeting Pronunciation** (2nd edition) – Sue F. Miller, Cengage (2006)

Some interesting activities to practice pronunciation – songs, poems, chants, etc. Emphasis on getting practice in real-world situations.

6. **Mastering the American Accent** – Lisa Mojsin, Barrons (2009)

User-friendly book that is meant for self-study. Very clear explanations with 4 CDs included. Easy to order from Amazon.

Conversation, Listening & Speaking

1. **Jazz Chants** – Carolyn Graham, Oxford (1979)

2. **Small Talk** – Carolyn Graham, Oxford (1986)

Carolyn Graham puts chants and poems into jazz rhythms that demonstrate the intonation pattern of American English. Both these books are useful for teaching conversational English, focusing on the rhythm and stress patterns.

3. **1000 Conversation Questions** – Larry Pitts, ECQ Publishing (2012)

Great collection of questions that are useful for tutors to keep conversations going. Good for intermediate–advanced students, and is divided into topics for easy access.

4. **Keep Talking** – Friederike Klippel, Cambridge University Press (1985)

Good guide to communicative activities in tutoring sessions.

5. **Talk Your Head Off (... and Write, Too!)** – Brana Rish West, Prentice Hall Regents (1997)

Filled with interesting questions on interesting topics; lessons progress in complexity of topic. Really good for small groups, but can be used with just tutor and learner. Excellent springboard for conversation.

6. **Business Communication Strategies** – Scott Smith, Pro Lingua (2010)

Excellent book for intermediate to advanced—good for oral communication and challenges of speaking and listening skills they will face in the working world. Includes a lot of idiomatic expressions and functional English expressions used in interpersonal relationships.

7. ***Conversation Inspirations for ESL*** (3rd edition) – Nancy Ellen Zelman, Pro Lingua (2005)

Eight conversation activities, from talks to role-plays to discussions on a variety of interesting topics. Role-play ideas simulate real situations that students may face in day-to-day social situations.

8. ***Conversation Strategies*** – David Kehe & Peggy Dustin Kehe, Pro Lingua (2014)

Useful for learners in helping them to keep a conversation going. Teaches words, phrases, conversational conventions; also focuses on grammar, vocabulary and usage.

Games & Activities

1. ***Games for Grammar Practice*** – Maria Lucia Zaorob & Elizabeth Chin, Cambridge University Press (2001)

Teacher's resource book that offers 40 games and various activities for grammar practice.

2. ***Games for Vocabulary Practice*** – Felicity O'Dell & Katie Head, Cambridge University Press (2003)

Although written for British English, the games and activities are enjoyable and can easily be adapted to American English. Organized around topics, so it can easily be inserted into any lesson. For all levels.

Dictionaries

1. ***Longman Advanced Dictionary***, Pearson Longman (2005)

Very comprehensive learner dictionary; includes grammar and pronunciation. Includes downloadable free exercises and activities from website.

2. ***Longman American Idioms Dictionary***, Pearson Longman (1999)

More than 4,000 idioms, with clear definitions. Groups idioms into easy-to-remember units and easy for tutor to access a group of idioms around one word.

Magazines and Newspapers:

For Intermediate Learners

1. ***The New York Times Upfront***, The New York Times Company

A newsmagazine from *The New York Times* directed at high school students. The articles are written in a simple, accessible style. While some subject matter caters to teenagers, most of the content will not be patronizing for adult ESL learners. Scholastic offers subscriptions. The New York Public Library has digital and print issues.

2. ***Cicada***, Carus Publishing Company

This is a young adult literary magazine. Although pieces in the magazine handle themes relevant for young adults, the simpler prose and definitions of difficult words make this a good resource for tutors whose students have an interest in literature. The New York Public Library has digital and print issues.

3. ***Mental Floss***, Dennis Publishing

Trivia magazine with short, fun articles on a variety of topics. The concise informal writing can serve as a springboard for conversation without taking too much session time for silent reading. The New York Public Library has print issues.

4. ***The Reader's Digest***, Reader's Digest Association

This is a general-interest family magazine with lifestyle articles written in plain English. Provides good discussion material for students with domestic interests. The New York Public Library has digital and print issues.

For Advanced Learners

1. ***The New York Times***, The New York Times Company

With "all the news that's fit to print," New York City's hometown newspaper is a great resource to turn to for materials covering almost any topic imaginable. The New York Public Library has digital and print issues. The ESU receives daily print editions.

2. ***The Week***, The New York Times Company

This news magazine presents multiple viewpoints from experts on all most-discussed topics of the week. Great if you want to practice debate and discussion skills with students. The New York Public Library has print issues.

3. ***Time***, Time Inc.

Weekly news magazine written in a direct, yet serious style. Great if you are looking for a news source that also contains vivid photographs, which could serve well on their own as discussion starters. The New York Public Library has digital and print issues.

Games and Activities:

For Pairs and Groups

1. **Street Savvy Roleplay** – William Roth, English in Action Tutor

This activity, which has students simulate asking a stranger for directions, helps train body-language and eye-contact skills. Students roleplay people searching for directions, while tutors pretend to be strangers on the street.

To start, the student should compose a direction question in his or her mind (e.g., “Which way to Penn Station?”).

The student should stand still, while the tutor walks quickly for five or ten yards in his or her direction. Once the tutor is close to the student, the student should attempt to ask the tutor the question. The twist is that the tutor should act as a typical New York pedestrian would. Only when the student’s body language and eye contact are “New York appropriate” should the tutor stop and provide the necessary information. Once the student has been able to elicit the information, he or she should thank the stranger, and the roleplay can end.

There are a few issues that tutors should pay attention to when evaluating if the student’s behavior is “New York appropriate”:

1. Position: The student should place herself appropriately, taking care not to completely block the teacher.
2. Eye-contact: The student should maintain appropriate eye-contact, neither too short nor too long.
3. Directness: The student should get to the question immediately. Delaying conversation with needless courtesies (e.g., “Thank you for taking the time to speak with me”) or introductions (e.g., “I am a foreigner, I don’t know my way around) could lead the stranger to move on without answering.
4. Volume: The student should speak at a volume that can be comprehended on the New York Streets (or at an English in Action session).
5. Comprehension: The stranger should be able to understand the response.

Repeating the exercise until the student correctly handles all aspects is encouraged. The time between rounds is an opportunity to give feedback and cultural differences in body language.

2. **Twenty Questions**

This is a good activity for larger groups. Everyone should first agree on a category (e.g. cities, destinations in New York City, famous politicians). Next, one group member, the “answerer,” should write an example from the category on a piece of paper, keeping it concealed (e.g. Barack Obama for famous politicians).

After that, group members should take turns asking the “answerer” yes or no questions about the example he or she selected. Continue until someone feels confident to ask a yes or no question asking what the example is (e.g. is it Barack Obama?) or until the group asks twenty questions. At the close of twenty questions, group members should submit a final yes or no question asking what example the answerer chose.