

Tips: The First Lesson

Keep in mind that you probably don't want any single lesson to last more than two hours, since that is about the limit for both students and tutors. Be sure to take one or two breaks during that time as well.

Also, be sure to learn about your student's home country, culture, religion, geography, etc before your first meeting. This will help you make a connection, and better understand the context from which your student is relating to you. Contact RT if you need resources on these topics.

It will be important for you to spend some time helping your student relax and feel comfortable at the first lesson. There are many good ideas out there on what to do at the first meeting, but feel free to adapt these and use your own ideas, incorporating activities that make you feel comfortable, too. The following suggestions are good ice-breakers for the first 10-15 minutes of any new lesson.

- Bring photographs of your family, friends or your favorite subject to show and discuss with your student.
- Bring pictures or a map of your student's country. (National Geographic is a great source for these items!) Ask her to show you where she's from, or to describe his/her home, depending on her ability level.
- Play a popular American song. Give your student a copy of the lyrics to read along with the music. If she already knows the song, you will have a great place to start teaching vocabulary! Use children's songs for low beginners.
- Bring food to share with your student and his/her family—particularly food you love from your culture! You can talk about the ingredients, food customs, how it tastes, whatever you like! (Be prepared for your student not to like it, however, and don't take this personally.) Also research any dietary restrictions your student may have before bringing food with you.)
- Bring a series of tangible objects. Ask your student to pick up each item and describe it, or what he/she likes about it, how it relates to other objects you have brought.
- Have a discussion about the U.S. or the student's new home city. What does your student like about living here? What doesn't he/she like? How is it different from his/her homeland? There are many comparisons you can make between the two countries over the months you will be tutoring. Start small, but keep the discussions going over the next few months. This helps students feel a connection between their "old" life and their new life. What food do you eat/grow back home? What are the different sounds you hear here? What are the differences in schedules? Are Americans always busy?