



# Volunteer Manual

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**Washington English Center**  
2200 California Street NW  
Washington, DC 20008-3902  
202-387-2222 (Main Office)  
202-387-0023 (Volunteer Coordinators' Office)  
[www.washingtonenglish.org](http://www.washingtonenglish.org)

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*"Improving the Lives of Immigrants through Education"*

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## ***Welcome!***

We are pleased that you have chosen to volunteer at Washington English Center. We hope that this is a rewarding and enriching experience for you. WEC could not exist without the support of our volunteers who bring a diversity of interests, knowledge, expertise and caring to our organization.

We have a small salaried staff and a tremendous corps of volunteers (approximately 300 each term). Your ideas and suggestions are important to us. If you have any problems, suggestions, ideas or concerns that you would like to discuss regarding the organization or your role in it, please feel free to talk with the Volunteer Coordinators (the first line of inquiry and assistance for you), office assistants, the Program Director and the Executive Director.

If you are interested in participating in other WEC activities or committees (developing teacher/student resources, office support, public relations, fundraising, other areas), please let us know. We can always use your help!

This manual is designed to give you a brief overview of our program, our students, resources available to you at WEC, and general guidelines for volunteers. Please read it carefully and keep it for future reference.

Thank you for joining us. We cannot do our work without you. We look forward to a long and productive relationship.

Mercedes Lemp  
Executive Director

Washington English Center (formerly Language Education Technology Center) was founded in 1993 by Our Lady Queen of the Americas Church as its Education Center to meet the growing demand for English and literacy courses within the immigrant community in the Washington metropolitan area. Washington English Center was incorporated in the District of Columbia as an independent nonprofit organization in January 1998.

## **Our Mission**

Our mission is to provide affordable, high quality English language instruction and other basic educational programs to foreign-born adults in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area through the involvement of community volunteer teachers and tutors.

## **Our Staff**

### **Full Time**

Executive Director, Mercedes Lemp

Deputy Director, Lee Griffith

Program Director, Emily Naber

Manager, Partnerships, Weekday Programs, Volunteers, Alyssa Jacobsen

Manager, Weekend Programs and Technology Education, Denis Illige-Saucier

Office Manager, Weekends Claudia Belloso

Office Manager, Weekdays Clodoaldo Lopez

### **Part Time**

Program Associate, Erin Ross

IT Coordinator, Antonio Ricci

## WASHINGTON ENGLISH CENTER PROGRAMS

There are three regular terms each year, each lasting 11-12 weeks and a 6-week summer session.

<b>Fall</b>	September (after Labor Day) – early December
<b>Winter</b>	January – early-April
<b>Spring</b>	April – end of June
<b>Summer</b>	mid-July – end of August (6 week period)

### ENGLISH (ESL) **Beginning — Advanced Levels (Sequence of 13 courses)**

Monday & Wednesday	10 am - 1 pm
Monday-Thursday	7 - 9 pm
Tuesday & Thursday	10 am - 1 pm
Saturday & Sunday	2 - 5 pm
Sunday	9 am – 12 pm

### PREPARATION FOR THE CITIZENSHIP EXAM

Saturdays	12 pm – 2 pm
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### COMPUTERS (IN SPANISH) – For **Beginners and Intermediate**

Mondays & Wednesdays	6-7 pm
Saturday	9 am – 11 am, 11:30 am – 1:30 pm

### COMPUTERS (IN ENGLISH) – For **Beginners**

Tuesdays & Thursdays	6-7 pm
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### CUSTOMER SERVICE ENGLISH – **Level 1 and 2**

Level 1—Tuesday & Thursday	7-9pm
Level 2—Saturdays	10am-1pm

### Free Programs for Registered Students

<b>Tutoring</b>	Monday-Thursday 6 - 7 pm or by appointment Mondays and Wednesdays 1-2 pm or by appointment Tuesday and Thursdays 1-2 pm or by appointment Saturdays 1-2 pm or by appointment
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<b>Conversation Clubs</b>	6-7 pm Monday-Thursday (starting the second week of class) 1-2 pm Tuesdays & Thursdays 12-1 pm and 1-2 pm Saturdays 12-1 pm Sundays
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<b>Writing Clubs</b>	1-3 pm Wednesdays (starting the second week of class) 1-2 pm Sundays
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### Open Language Lab

Monday & Wednesday	2 - 7 pm
Tuesday & Thursday	9 - 10 am and 1 - 7 pm
Friday	Closed
Saturday	11 am - 2 pm
Sunday	12 - 2 pm

### WEC Office Hours

Monday & Wednesday:	1:30-8 pm
Tuesday & Thursday:	9:30 am - 8 pm
Friday:	Closed
Saturday- Sunday:	9 am - 4 pm

## GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS

**Please arrive on time** for class. Ideally, it is best to arrive 30 minutes early so you have time to review any notes in the class binder, read announcements, and get set for teaching. If you are running late, please call your Volunteer Coordinator and/or your co-teacher as soon as possible to let them know.

**Submit a class log** to your team through the class log submission form (accessible on the class iPad or online via the link provided to you by your volunteer coordinator).

**Take attendance** every class! We are required to submit attendance records as part of our report to our funders.

Please be thoughtful about how you **dress** for class. We have a wide variety of students and physical appearance can be meaningful in different ways. While jeans, tennis shoes, and t-shirts are fine, please avoid any clothing that might be seen as provocative, as well as tight athletic wear.

**Cell phones** should be turned off in the classroom. We ask the same from our students, as phones can be distracting and disruptive.

Please be aware that many activities take place in the **church building**. There may be other meetings or classes, church services, and other activities going on in rooms adjacent to, above or below your classroom. If you are planning a class activity that may be disruptive to others, please close your door.

**It is best not to rearrange the furniture.** If you must move anything, return the room to its original configuration before you leaves so it is ready for the next activity. Most rooms are used for other activities between your classes and the small church staff is not able to change room setups daily.

**Please do not tape** anything to the classroom walls, as removal of the tape will mar the paint and plaster. (Resources to repaint are scarce.) You may tape maps or other materials to the blackboard.  
**When you leave be sure to:**

- Leave the room as you found it
- Close all windows
- Turn off the lights
- Turn off the air conditioning and close the blinds (in summer)

## ABSENCES

**Planned Absences:** For a planned absence, please inform your Volunteer Coordinator of the date and duration of the absence as soon as possible, but no less than a week in advance. In the event of a planned absence, teachers should do as follows:

Email all the members of your team requesting a substitute (with a copy of the email sent to your Volunteer Coordinator). If one of your team members cannot substitute, ask your co-teacher if s/he can manage the class solo. If neither of the above options works, contact you Volunteer Coordinator directly to arrange a substitute.

Unplanned Absences: In the event of an unexpected absence, please inform the Volunteer Coordinator and your co-teacher as soon as possible by email and phone. Efforts will be made to find a substitute within your team first and then from our larger group of volunteers.

Please understand that ANY absence causes a disruption to students, teachers, and staff. If your schedule becomes such that you need to miss more than two classes in one term, we request that you speak to the Volunteer Coordinator about other arrangements.

## **DISMISSAL**

If an issue or problem pertaining to a volunteer is brought to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator or any WEC staff member, the Volunteer Coordinator will discuss the issue directly with the volunteer and other concerned parties. The first time the volunteer will receive a warning. The second time the volunteer will be asked to reevaluate his/her commitment, to change placement, or to leave. Some examples of issues or problems are repeatedly arriving to class late or unprepared, and being rude to students and/or co-teachers.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY**

In the event of inclement weather there are a few ways to check if classes are still scheduled. When in doubt, Washington English Center follows DC Public Schools—if they are closed, so are we. Please note however, that a two hour delay for DCPS does not change our schedule.

**Website:** we will update the homepage of our website announcing the status of all classes and programs ([www.washingtonenglishcenter.org](http://www.washingtonenglishcenter.org)). Updates will also be posted to the WEC page on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonEnglish>)

**Telephone:** Call the Main Office and listen to the updated voicemail announcing the status of all programs: (202) 387-0023

## TEACHING INFORMATION

### TEACHING TEAMS

WEC uses a unique team teaching model in which a course is taught by a team of teachers and every class meeting is led by two teachers from the team. It is important to work out with your team teacher how you will present the lesson as a team (role playing or “modeling” dialogues, having one teacher present a lesson while the other helps individual students, etc.).

Every class will have two teachers assigned per day or evening. Our volunteer teachers make a commitment of one day per week, but our students come 2-4 times per week for class (except for Sunday morning students). This means our students have 4-8 teachers working with them on a weekly basis. To maintain a cohesive and consistent learning environment for our students, communication, responsibility, and reliability are very important within each team. WEC uses this approach for several reasons:

- It exposes our students to a variety of teaching styles
- It allows us to pair experienced teachers with new teachers to foster a mentoring relationship
- It ensures that there is always a teacher present who knows the students

### DAILY CLASS LOG

After each class, one of the team teachers must use the WEC online class log form to submit a brief description of the class to all the other team members. For PM teachers, the deadline is by noon of the next day, for Weekend teachers by 10 pm of that day, and for weekday AM teachers by 5 pm. This task can be rotated or one co-teacher can assume responsibility for doing this for the entire term. You can access previous class logs from the Volunteer Resources page of the WEC website.

The Class Log has three purposes- to provide the next team of teachers with an idea of what went on in your class so that they can prepare the next lesson, to inform all the team members of any issues or problems in the class, and to keep WEC staff informed so that they can provide support if needed. A good Class Log entry is brief and covers key areas. It will cover the following:

<b>Topic/ Lesson</b>	Identify topic/lesson very briefly
<b>Attendance</b>	Provide attendance numbers so the team has an idea of attendance patterns. Some teachers prefer to list each student by name, but that is not required.
<b>Class Overview</b>	Provide the topics you dealt with and the specific pages in the text book and student work book that you used. If you used other handouts/worksheets, describe them. If you did not cover all of the material in the syllabus, or you moved ahead, be sure to mention this.
<b>Evaluation</b>	Let the next group know if you think the students got the material and can move on after a brief review. If you think many/most struggled with the material and need a more extensive review, say this.
<b>Follow Up</b>	Any issues/observations that you see in the students and their learning, things that the team should know or be aware of, ask the next teacher to go over homework if you assigned homework, tutoring support, and etc.

## **STUDENTS AT WASHINGTON ENGLISH CENTER**

Our students range in age from 17 to 86. In the classroom, that means that you have students with very different life experiences and knowledge bases. This can be a great source of conversation topics as students share their thoughts at different stages of their lives.

They come from over 82 different countries on five continents. While the majority is Latino, our student population is increasingly diverse. Both our presence near many of the embassies and changes in immigration patterns have brought us students from Central and Eastern Europe, China, Southeast Asia, and Africa. This can lead to truly mixed classes. This makes teaching a very rich experience as you have lots of different traditions and experiences to draw on. As a teacher, you are likely to learn something new in every class.

Despite this diversity, Spanish is still the predominant first language of our students. This can present a challenge in terms of keeping the students speaking English not Spanish. The teachers have to establish early on that English is the classroom language and that is what the students are expected to use.

They have various levels of education. Almost half our students have less than 7 years of education. Some grew up in counties where there was no public school system while others had their education interrupted by war or civil unrest. These students may be only barely literate in their native tongue. Other students were able to attend middle or high school. They generally have basic literacy skills that are transferable to English. However, some are fluent in languages that use a different alphabet (e.g., Chinese, Amharic). This makes learning English even more complicated for them. In addition, there are students who have attended or even finished college. Many of these students studied English in their native countries and have the ability to read and write English. However, they may struggle with listening/speaking. WEC classes focus on reading, writing, speaking and listening. However, you may want to emphasize one aspect if that is more important to your students. It is also very important to remember the range of levels in your classroom when you are preparing a lesson plan (and keep it as simple as needed).

Our students are very hard working and they also have the kinds of jobs in which hours may change suddenly or where unexpected overtime may be required. This affects attendance. There are always a few students on your class roster who never appear. Some students will attend irregularly. Others will drop out. Most classes are smaller at the end of the term than at the beginning. Don't take this personally. The students appreciate your efforts and they may have to drop out for work-related reasons beyond their control. If you are concerned about a particular student's attendance, you can ask one of the staff in the front office to contact that student to see what the problem is, or you can give them a call. Sometimes a student will experience a change of hours and need to transfer to the day program from evenings or from evenings to weekends and vice versa: the student may not realize he/she can do this, and the staff can help him/her make the change..

Many students are also parents. Sick children or responsibilities for elders can interfere with class attendance. A teacher might be able to help by reminding the student that he/she can use their workbook/ CD at home to keep up with the class when they can't be here. Welcome people back when they can make it again. If you create a warm environment in which the students feel they are learning, they will be there as much as possible.



## **STUDENT ATTENDANCE**

Student attendance must be tracked as part of our funding requirements. **Volunteers must record attendance DAILY.**

Occasionally a student informs staff when they register that s/he might not be able to attend class on a regular basis due to her/his life situation. WEC will try to inform the teachers so that some extra support can be arranged for the student.

## **STUDENT CLASS CHANGE POLICY**

During the first week of the term, teachers are responsible for identifying and communicating with students who might be misplaced in their level (higher or lower). Teachers should discuss the student with other teachers on their team to come to a consensus. However, the change is optional for the student. Please discuss any level changes with the Volunteer Coordinator. Students may not change levels or classes without the change being processed through and approved by the WEC front office.

## **GRADUATION**

Graduation parties are held in the church auditorium on the last day of classes each term (except summer term). There are four parties, one for daytime classes, one for weeknight, one for weekend afternoons, and one for Sunday mornings. Graduation is very meaningful to our students and is a rewarding experience for volunteers; all students and volunteers are encouraged to attend. WEC provides beverages and paper products for a buffet lunch or dinner; students bring food to share with other students and classes. Your Volunteer Coordinator will include information about graduation in a weekly email near the end of the semester.