



Volunteer Manual

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

"Improving the Lives of Immigrants through Education"

Welcome!

We are so grateful you have chosen to volunteer at Washington English Center. We hope that this is a rewarding and enriching experience for you. WEC could not serve the hundreds of students we serve without the support of our amazing volunteers.

Our volunteers are what make WEC unique and special. Many organizations and schools provide English as a Second language classes, our volunteer model means our classes are led by teachers who are devoted to our mission. The dedication and commitment of our volunteer teachers provides a welcoming and supportive environment that is truly appreciated by our students.

WEC has a small salaried staff and a tremendous corps of volunteers (approximately 300 each term). Your feedback is as important to us as is your service. If you have any problems, suggestions, ideas or concerns regarding the organization or your role as a volunteer, please let us know.

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 volunteering. Please read it carefully and keep it for future reference.

Thank you for becoming a part of Washington English Center. We know there are many places to volunteer and many activities to fill your day, we are honored you have chosen to give us your time and support. It will be as valuable to you as your service will be to our students and to us.

Mercedes Lemp
Executive Director

About Washington English Center

Washington English Center (WEC), formerly Language ETC, was founded in 1993 to provide English and literacy training to low-income adult immigrants. Since 1993 our volunteer teachers and tutors have provided students with the education and support they need to build a better future for themselves and their children. Our commitment is to provide high-quality educational services to all low-income immigrants in the Washington area, regardless of ability to pay. With over 2800 annual enrollments and over 1500 individual students, Washington English Center, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, is one of the largest non-profit ESL providers in the Washington D.C. area.

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide excellent and affordable English classes and other workforce programs to immigrants using volunteer teachers.

Our Staff

Full Time

Executive Director, Mercedes Lemp

Deputy Director, Claire Kevill

Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Mary Spanarkel

Director of Volunteer Programs, Odetta King

Director of Employment Services, Charmell Slaughter

Weekend Volunteer Coordinator/Curriculum and Instruction Associate, Kelly Fitzgerald

Office Manager, Weekends Claudia Belloso

Office Manager, Weekdays Clodoaldo Lopez

Part Time

IT Coordinator, Antonio Ricci

Office Manager, Flor Argueta

WASHINGTON ENGLISH CENTER PROGRAMS

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

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

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

Monday-Thursday	10 am – 1 pm (Intensive ESL Classes)
Monday-Thursday	7 - 9 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**

Saturday	9 am – 11 am, 11:30 am – 1:30 pm
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COMPUTERS (IN ENGLISH) – For **Beginners**

Tuesdays & Thursdays	6-7 pm
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Free Programs for Registered Students

Employment Services Thursday 1:00 pm Drop-in Orientation
By appointment

Tutoring 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

Conversation Clubs 6-7 pm Monday-Thursday (starting the second week of class)
1-2 pm Tuesdays & Thursdays
1-2 pm Saturdays
12-1 pm Sundays

Writing Clubs 6 – 7 pm Wednesdays (starting the second week of class)
1-2 pm Sundays

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 before class so you have time to review any notes in the class binder, read announcements, and prepare 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 via email (reply all to your introduction email)

Take attendance every class! We are required to submit attendance records as part of our reporting to funders. You will do this through our *ProActive* online database. You will create a username and login at the start of the term. You will receive an email from *ProActive* with instructions to create a log in. Please be on the lookout for this email (it may go to your trash/spam folder.)

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 - Cell phones should be silenced during class time. However, when appropriate, we do encourage both students and teachers to use cell phones for educational purposes.

Please be aware that many activities take place in a **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.

If you rearrange the furniture – Please leave the rooms the way you found them. Often, classroom furniture must be rearranged to accommodate various class activities; however, since other groups use our classrooms, the rooms must be returned to the place it was found at the end of class.

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.) To display maps or other materials, you may either tape them to the black/whiteboard or hang them on the cork board strips on the wall. 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/heaters 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. Depending on the issue and the outcome of the incident, a volunteer may be asked to take specific actions to address the issue. **WEC reserves the right to dismiss any volunteer.** Some examples of issues or problems are

- Cultural insensitivity
- Repeatedly arriving to class late or unprepared
- Not showing up at all without warning,
- Being rude to students and/or co-teachers
- Refusing to follow the assigned curriculum, lesson plans and/or [ACCESS standards](#)
- Refusing to use the schools' database for attendance

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event of inclement weather there are a few ways to check if classes are still scheduled. When in doubt please call our main number and/or check our website. Washington English Center generally follows DC Public Schools for AM classes—if they are closed, it is likely we will not have daytime classes. Depending on the weather, we may also cancel evening classes. 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). 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) 387-2222

TEACHING INFORMATION

TEACHING TEAMS

WEC uses a team teaching model. Each course is taught by a team of teachers and every class is led by two teachers from the team. It is important to work with your co-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.). For more information about co-teaching, please see [WEC's Co-Teaching Lesson Plan Template](#) and Ashley Lipp's [blog entry](#) on co-teaching.

Every class will have two assigned teachers. Volunteer teachers make a commitment of one day per week; students attend class 2-4 times per week (Sunday morning students attend once a week.) Students will have 4-8 teachers working with them on a weekly basis (2 per class/day.) To maintain a cohesive and consistent learning environment, communication, responsibility, and reliability are very important within each team. WEC uses a team-teaching 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 or at the end of the class, one of the co-teachers must use the WEC class-log format to submit a brief description of what was covered in class to all the other teacher team members. PM teachers must submit the class-log by noon of the next day, Weekend teachers by 9 pm on the same day of class, 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.

The Class-Log has three purposes- 1) 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, 2) to inform all the team members of any issues or problems in the class, and 3) to keep WEC staff informed so that they can provide support if needed. Please use the template below to structure your class logs. For a sample class log, [click here](#).

Topic/ Lesson	Identify topic/lesson very briefly
Attendance	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.
Class Overview	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.
Evaluation	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, note this.
Follow Up	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. You will have students with very different life experiences and knowledge. This can be a great source of conversation topics as students share their thoughts at different stages of their lives.

Students come from over 90 different countries and speak a variety of languages. While the majority are 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 and 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.

Students 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. Students may be barely literate in their native tongue; some may have basic literacy skills that are transferable to English. Some students are fluent in languages that use a different alphabet (Chinese, Amharic), that makes learning English even more complicated. Some students have 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. It is 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).

Students may have the type of jobs in which hours may change suddenly or where unexpected overtime is required. This may affect attendance. There may be students on your class roster who never appear or who attend irregularly. Some students drop out before the end of the term. **Most classes are smaller at the end of the term than at the beginning.** Don't take this personally. Students appreciate your efforts and may have to drop out for work-related reasons beyond their control. We encourage teaching-teams to designate one or two teachers to call any students missing more than 2 classes in a row. If your team is not able to do this, please let the Volunteer Coordinator know. If you are concerned about a particular student's attendance, you can also 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. Student may transfer from one level to another or from one time (i.e. day program to evenings) to another. Please be sure that students know of this option if needed. Staff will also try to alert teachers of transfers as much as possible.

Students may be parents and have sick children or responsibilities for elders that can interfere with class attendance. A teacher can help by reminding students that he/she can use their workbook/ CD at home to keep up with the class if they can't be here. Welcome students back when they return. **A welcoming and warm environment in which students feel they are learning ensures they will attend class 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

Class changes are allowed after a student has been attending class for at least 2 weeks and all teachers agree that a class change is warranted. To begin the class change process, teachers must talk to a student first. If a student agrees to a class change, teachers must bring the student to the front office where the Director of Curriculum and Instruction will discuss the change with the student and administer a placement exam if necessary. Class changes are not final until approved and processed by a WEC staff member.

GRADUATION

Graduation ceremonies are held in the church auditorium or in individual classrooms (depending on availability) on the last day of classes each term. There are four ceremonies, 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 teachers. Your Volunteer Coordinator will include information about graduation in a weekly email near the end of the semester. Many students regard the meals they bring to graduation ceremonies as their way of thanking their teachers. Your attendance allows them to thank you for your service and the impact you have made in their lives.

Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the Washington English Center Volunteer manual and agree to abide by the policies and procedures described in the Manual.

Please initial each statement:

_____ I agree to take attendance in the ProActive database for every class I teach

_____ ProActive Username

_____ ProActive Password

_____ I agree to send a class log to my teaching team by the time specified in the "Class Logs" section and agree to follow the format laid out in the same section.

_____ I agree to follow the course syllabus I was given and the lesson plans provided in the teacher's version of the textbook for my class.

_____ I agree to follow the ACCESS Teaching Standards.

_____ I agree to be observed by staff on a regular basis and am receptive to any feedback they may provide.

_____ I agree to a volunteer commitment of 12 weeks without exceeding 2 absences.

_____ Volunteer Name

_____ Volunteer Signature

_____ Date

*Please print this, initial and sign it and return it to the Director of Volunteer Programs, Alyssa Jacobsen or Weekend Volunteer Coordinator/Curriculum and Instruction Associate, Mary Spanarkel before the first day of class.