

Welcome to Potencia!

At Potencia, our mission is to **empower adult immigrants in the U.S. to build economic mobility and engage better with their communities** by improving access to low-cost, personalized English language tutoring. Thank you for being a part of our journey.

This Tutor Handbook is a resource for you during your time with Potencia. The Handbook's goal is to give you general information about being a tutor with Potencia, and help you navigate some challenges you might face. Please feel free to skim over the Handbook before your first lesson and use it for reference afterwards.

Working with Potencia is a great opportunity to not only positively impact the livelihood of your learner(s), such as improving their confidence or assisting their transition of moving to America, it is also an opportunity for you to **grow and improve your skills such as leadership or cultural understanding**. Enjoy!

We are always looking for feedback. Please do not hesitate to share your thoughts, comments or suggestions; we are here to support you and ensure your success as a tutor. We can be reached at team@potenciainc.org.

This handbook is made possible by our tutors and education research interns:

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Mindset

Start with the conviction that you have enough influence in your learners' lives to put them on a different trajectory toward greater opportunities and options in life.

Here are some helpful tips to maintain a positive and focused mindset while leading the classroom:

1. You are the guide of your classroom
 1. Enable your learner(s) to speak up and **build confidence**
 2. Focus more on **listening and demonstrating**, rather than lecturing
 3. Provide **immediate feedback** for quick recap of learning
 2. How you think about your relationship to your learners matters to how and what they learn from you
 3. Respectfully engage and align your actions with learners' background, community, and culture - "How can the experience, wisdom, knowledge, and skills of my learner further our progress toward our goals?"
 4. Successful teaching is an act of leadership in itself. After teaching successfully, we hope you develop an unshakable conviction about what is possible through education. We hope this understanding becomes the root of your career choices and professional decisions and the driving force behind your bold goals
 5. [Here](#) is a brief article on some techniques and mindsets that could be helpful in preparing yourself to teach
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Define Success

What does success look like? How do you see yourself successful at the end of the semester? How does your learner define success?

Recognize that the learning process is collaborative. Focusing on defining success for both you and your learner can help you create lessons and utilize other resources to help the learner reach their overall goals.

Set Big, Big Goals

Ambitious goal setting is a crucial element of transformative teaching that can motivate both teacher and learner

Goals can be established during your first meeting, but can be a **fluid process** throughout your time together as some goals may be completed and new goals may become a focus

Ensure your learners realize the **“bigger goal” of X**; convince that they can reach their big goals if they work hard enough, and that doing so will make a difference in their lives

Set **measurable** goals with **specific timelines and deadlines**

Build on learners’ **desires and motivation**: really ask why those learning goals are so important to them

Working with Adult Learners and Contextualization

Adult learning is problem-centered, rather than content-oriented. Outside of the classroom, adult learners are managing life, work, and a family. Inside the classroom, adult learners are more self-directed, have a multitude of experiences to draw from, and appreciate **contextualization**. Contextualization allows learners to understand how the lesson applies to their personal, professional, or academic goals. Therefore, it is important to be mindful of:

1. Do topics represent real-life contexts for language use (e.g., civics/current events, health, financial literacy, workforce preparation)?
2. Are they tailored to your learner’s current situation (student, workplace, etc)?
3. Are there opportunities for learners to apply the skills in meaningful real-life tasks, appropriate for adults?

Before the first class, a self-assessment will be sent to your learner to evaluate their English proficiency. More information on this self-assessment can be found on [this page](#).

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Much of the first class will involve getting to know your learner.

This is a great time to:

1. Set initial goals and explore **why** the learner is taking English classes and what they hope to accomplish through continued practice and work
2. Assess proficiency level in English. Some learners already have some experience while others may have none. You will be prepared with some context of their proficiency from the self-assessment results, but you can gauge in real-time where they are across the language spectrum.
3. Ask **open ended questions** to get to know your learner, such as:
 1. Why did you come to Potencia?
 2. What are some things you want to work on?
 3. Where do you use English in your daily life?
 4. Where/why do you want to improve your English?
4. Discuss your learner's hobbies, interest, family, jobs, etc, as this material can be incorporated into future lessons. </aside>

Atmosphere

Creating a **welcoming and safe environment** is crucial.

It is important that learners feel comfortable practicing and responding in English. As many learners have limited experience, creating this enjoyable and safe setting for learning to occur is important.

Meeting Online

You can choose a virtual meeting tool you are comfortable with. Most of our learners have access to Zoom or Google Meet.

Learners may not be fully comfortable with technology and face challenges.

Please note the following features:

1. Make sure your learners know how to perform tasks, such as type in the chat feature, enable their microphone etc.
2. Ensure that learners have a quiet place to work free from distractions. This is especially important in ensuring clear communication
3. In scheduling sessions, make sure to keep the link consistent: avoid confusion between 'New Meeting' and using 'Personal Meeting ID'
4. Utilize screen share, sharing audio or video, and chat features

Language Difficulty

Since most of our tutors are not fluent in the languages they teach, here are some tips to overcome the language barrier between you and your learner:

1. If you feel that learners are not able to understand the majority of what you are saying, make sure to check their understanding by asking them to repeat the last thing you said
2. Use Google Translate when necessary; prepare translations in the lessons
3. People learn best when they are relaxed, feel comfortable in the class, know it's OK to make mistakes
4. Begin each session with something the learners can do well - short games or practicing vocab
5. Speak slowly & repeat several times
6. Effective communications include using expressive body language, constant eye contact, purposefully repeating key ideas, and using visual aids

First Class Template

[Here](#) is a template for the layout of your first session. This is by no means the only way that the first session can be formatted, but provides guidelines on what information and activities it is important to include for the first time you meet with your learner.

Structure of a Tutoring Session

Sample Class Structure

WARM UP

ESTABLISH FOCUS FOR SESSION

PRESENT

PRACTICE

REVIEW & WRAP UP

Small talk (weather, last weekend, fun plans, etc)

- Review

homework

- Review any concepts from last week as needed

Take a few moments to introduce the focus of the lesson

- Be sure to emphasize why this is important to learn and where it can be used
- Present the material through multiple media, such as an initial explanation, visuals/video, and sentence examples (in- depth examples of these can be found in training handbook)

Practice should be done

throughout the lesson through repetition and asking questions After the initial presenting of content, be sure to incorporating writing reading role-play

activities, etc

- Ask for learner if they have any questions/need clarification Note your student's

strengths and weaknesses on

this content address these next class Assign

homework

1. Warm Up

This occurs at the beginning of the lesson to establish rapport through small talk and reviewing any homework or concepts from prior lessons

2. Establish Focus for Session

Establishing focus only takes a few moments but is very important to redirect focus toward and contextualize the current lesson

3. Present

This is the traditional teaching portion of the lesson where you can present new material through a variety of media

4. Practice

After presenting the new material, it is important to practice the content with your learner (in a collaborative then an independent manner once your learner is confident)

5. Review and Wrap Up

At the end of the lesson, it is important to reflect with your learner on if they have any questions and how they feel about that day's lesson, as this insight can be used to plan future topics. This is also the best time to assign homework.

Tutoring Session Policy

- Each learner pays \$5 for each tutoring session for commitment to learning. For learners who qualify for scholarships, they are taking the tutoring sessions for free.
- Most classes are online and 1-on-1. In-person classes are optional based on mutual consensus and should be conducted in a public venue (e.g. your local public library). Once matched, the paired group will be placed in a WhatsApp group chat for communication.
- Each session is one-hour long.
- Please make sure to log the tutoring sessions so we could keep track of your impact.
- Our goal is to make your tutoring experiences as enjoyable and meaningful as possible. If you want more learners or switch to a different learner, or have any issues and concerns regarding your class, please do not hesitate to reach out to the team.
- To ensure that you as a tutor feel supported, there will be **monthly check-ins, open drop-in hours**, and other events to interact with Potencia community members.
- Our learners are adults who juggle the demands of both work and family obligations. Please be aware that there can be occasional rescheduling and cancellation of classes. Learners are expected to give tutors an early notice in case of an emergency. The team will do its best to facilitate the rescheduling of classes.
- The main communication channel of the team is email (team@potenciainc.org).

Session Reflection

Both independent reflection and reflecting with your learner after class is essential to improving your teaching style to better match your learner's needs.

- **During “Review and Wrap Up”**

Always reflect on how the session went with your learner. For example, by asking:

- What did you learn today?
- Is there something you did not understand or that you want to go over again?
- What should we do differently next time? What did you like about this lesson?

- **After Class is Finished (Independent Reflection)**

This is where you can take a moment to assess your **learner's confidence level**, strengths and weaknesses, etc to plan for what to focus on in the next class. For example, if you are teaching tenses and your learner consistently forgot to add an “s” to third person verbs, make sure you highlight this next time.

This is also when you can determine what was strong or needs improvement in your **teaching style**:

- Did you allow your learner enough time to speak (should be at least 50/50)?
- Was there a good mix of presentation of material and practice? Along with real life examples?
- At what speed did your learner grasp content?

Moving Forward

Deciding What to Teach Next

Talking with learners to determine topics that they are most interested in and are most applicable to their goals is the most efficient way to decide what to teach next.

Focusing on the learner's goals and reflecting on previous sessions can involve:

- thinking about topics your learner has been struggling with
- thinking about topics your learner is confident in
- why your learner joined Potencia (think about your first class)

New lessons can focus on expanding previously learned information, reviewing difficult topics, or introducing a new relevant area of knowledge. Tips for reflecting on how class went can be found [on this page](#).

If you ever need extra ideas on topics to teach, you can view our archive of lesson plans [here](#)!

Semester Journey Visual

SEMESTER

TIMELINE

→ TRAINING

As a newly onboarded tutor, you will receive training before you jump into tutoring. You will go through the Potencia tutor training handbook to access tutoring principles and resources.

WEEK 1

WEEKS

2-3

MATCHING

During this 2 week period, we will assign you to a learner whose schedule works with yours. We will set up a WhatsApp group with you and your learner

to coordinate a time and place to meet. This may take longer than 2 weeks in certain instances.

BEGIN TUTORING

Once you and your learner coordinate a time and place to meet, you can begin tutoring. We typically recommend teaching 8-10 classes in one semester,

however this number is flexible. Potencia tutors usually meet once or twice per week with their learners.

WEEK 3

WEEKS

3-10

PROGRESS REPORTS

After each class, you will fill out a quick form to submit your class record, which track how many classes you taught so far and any feedback/resources you have.

WORKSHOPS

We typically hold tutoring workshops once a quarter, which highlight leadership in the

classroom.

WEEKS 3-10

WEEK

10

END OF SEMESTER

After 8-10 classes, the Potencia semester ends. At the end of the semester, we will send an end

of semester survey. You can choose to sign up for another semester, or remain in our tutor database to come back tutoring in the future.

Scaffolded Instruction

Scaffolded instruction, also known as the gradual release model, is an effective approach for transitioning from teacher-centered to student-centered learning. The model, often expressed as "I do it, we do it, you do it," involves stages of demonstration, collaboration, and independent practice. Initially, the teacher plays a central role in content delivery ("I do" phase), but as students acquire knowledge, responsibility shifts to them during collaborative and independent phases ("We do" and "You do"). This progression emphasizes student empowerment and self-reliance in the learning process.

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Resources for Presenting Materials: "I Do It"

1. [Link to google drive with lesson plans](#)
2. [Link to Demo videos](#)

Correcting Learners: Errors vs. Mistakes

Initial feedback is important, however learning also occurs when students struggle to recall or untangle what they have studied. Therefore, you should provide your learner time to self-correct by pointing them to **where** the error is or saying *what* kind of error was made.

1. **Mistakes** - If your learner can **identify their mistake** in this way, they've made a mistake. Mistakes are an accident or lapse in something that your learner has learned before.
2. **Errors** - On the other hand, if your learner **can not identify the error**, it is considered an error. An error indicates something that your learner has never learned, something they have mis-learned, or something they may have forgotten. This highlights an area where you can explain in more detail in the same or a separate lesson.

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Correction Tips

1. Modeling:

1. Repeat the learner's sentence, including the error, and reformulate it grammatically.
 2. Ask, "Is that what you meant to say?" to encourage self-correction.
2. Slightly Delayed Correction:
 1. Allow learners to complete their thought before correcting.
 2. Promotes self-correction and maintains confidence and fluency.
3. Clarification Questions:
 1. Use CCQs and ICQs to elicit self-correction or further explanation.
 2. For example, "Did you mean to say...?" or "Can you clarify what you meant by...?"
4. Positive Feedback:
 1. Balance error correction with positive feedback.
 2. Highlight what students did correctly while addressing errors.
5. Full Stop:
 1. If repeated errors occur, halt the activity and address misunderstandings.
 2. Consider re-explaining or planning a new lesson to clarify the key point.

Assessing Learner's Knowledge and Confidence

Informal assessments typically occur within the class through observing your learner's comfortability and reviewing their homework.

Formal assessments can include in-class quizzes, listening and speaking activities, and reading passages. There will also be a pre and post self-assessment to assess your learner's English proficiency at the beginning and end of the semester.

It is important to employ both formal and informal assessments of your learner's English knowledge and confidence. For more information on Potencia's learner self-assessment, please see [this page](#).

I do it

We do it

Tutor

Presents material

- Thinks aloud while

going through practice sentences and examples

Interactive instruction (tutor working with learner)

- Tutor prompts

questions and

provides clues to help

answer

Learner

- Actively listens

.

Takes notes

- Asks for clarification

- Responds to tutor's questions

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Continues to ask for clarification

- Completes process alongside tutor

You do it

Tutor evaluates learner's work and provides feedback

Tutor determines

learner's level of

understanding

- Works independently Utilizes notes to complete assignment