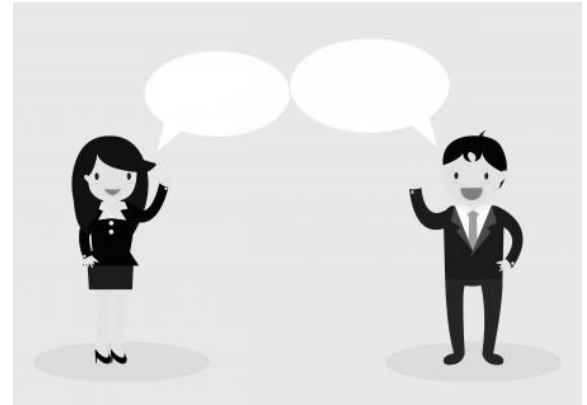


## Welcome to Conversation Partners – Fall 2019!

### Program Description

**Welcome to Conversation Partners!** Conversation Partners is a program in which international students and volunteers from the campus and community meet regularly throughout the semester to socialize. This is a great opportunity to learn about each other's cultures and make new friends. In addition, our international students get the chance to practice their English speaking and listening skills.

Throughout the semester, there will be opportunities for partners to meet as part of a large group. In addition, partners will be expected to meet individually, and may determine the time and location of their meetings.



### Expectations

- **Meet with your partner(s) approximately eight times (for a minimum of one hour per each meeting) during the semester**
- **Speak only English with your partner – if you want to arrange a language exchange with your partner, you may choose to do so separately from the Conversation Partners meetings.**
- **Exchange contact information with your partner at the first meeting in order to arrange individual meetings.**
- **Respect your partner's beliefs, values, and customs.**

### Tips for a Successful Partnership

- Your main responsibility is to offer your partner English conversation practice. At times you may have to explain English language points but we are not asking you to be an English teacher. The goal is for your conversation partner to have plenty of speaking and listening practice. Give your partner as many opportunities as possible to practice speaking in English.
- Speak at a natural pace. Slow your speech only when necessary. Your partner will probably not understand every word you say, which provides an opportunity to practice asking for clarification.
- Check for comprehension. Some students will nod as if they understand, even when they do not. If your student nods a lot, gets a blank look, or becomes silent, it is OK to directly ask whether he or she understands.
- Minimize error correction. Your partner will not speak English perfectly. He or she may ask you for error correction, and occasional error correction can be helpful for the student. However, frequent correction slows down conversation and hinders the development of fluency.
- Try to stay on one topic for as long as you can. This helps your partner learn to carry on a conversation in his/her second language.
- Bring objects to stimulate conversation. Try family or vacation photos, board games, books, etc.
- Be patient – try to imagine yourself as a language student in your partner's country. You may find that you need to give your partner a few extra seconds to put their thoughts into words.
- Be sensitive and open to differences in cultural perspectives. Don't be afraid to ask questions about your partner's culture. (If you are not sure if a question is culturally appropriate, you may begin by saying "I hope it is OK if I ask you..." Also, if your partner has a preconception about your culture that you think is incorrect, talk to your partner about it. Use yourself and your experiences as examples.)

- If you have more than one partner, be sure to include everyone in the conversation. If you have a talkative student who tends to dominate the conversation, try to find ways to limit speaking time and ask others for their opinions. If you have a shy student, be sure to specifically include him or her.
- Avoid carrying on private conversations with other friends, answering your phone, texting, or spacing out while in conversation. Your partner will notice these behaviors.
- Try to avoid stereotyping your student. Also avoid making snap judgments about a person's language skills or intelligence based only on speaking ability.
- The ELI can provide ideas for your individual meetings, as well as conversation starters.

**The following techniques are useful in matching speech patterns to the needs of those who are experiencing difficulty with oral skills:**

- Simple, active and present verb tense
- Speak slowly and enunciate clearly, repeat yourself, try using synonyms
- Use examples, models, drawings, photos, gestures, facial expressions to explain things. (You may also want to ask your partner to do these things for you when you are having trouble understanding.)
- Speak at a normal volume.
- Avoid use of slang and idioms
- If your partner has trouble understanding you, try writing down what you are saying. (And vice versa - if you have trouble understanding your partner, ask him/her to write down what he/she is saying.)
- Admit if there is a communication problem. (It's OK to tell your partner that you cannot understand what he/she is trying to communicate.)

**Suggested Activities**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go for coffee on or off campus</li> <li>• Play Frisbee</li> <li>• Attend a free class together at the gym</li> <li>• Go hiking or go for a walk</li> <li>• Enjoy the art gallery on campus</li> <li>• Participate in planned Conversation Partner activities (Sara will update you on these.)</li> <li>• Try rock climbing at the recreation center</li> <li>• Go bowling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go out for ice cream</li> <li>• Cook a meal together, or even just eat at the Food Zoo together</li> <li>• Go to a movie (Check the movie schedule at the Roxy theatre for independent and foreign films, as well as special showings of old movies and cult classics)</li> <li>• Go ice skating</li> </ul>
---	--

**Contact Information:**

If you have questions, comments, concerns, or suggestions throughout the course of the program, please contact Sarah:

<b>Sarah Bortis</b> (ELI and Special Programs Assistant)
Email: <a href="mailto:sarah.bortis@mso.umt.edu">sarah.bortis@mso.umt.edu</a>
Phone: (406) 243-5885
Office: International Center 106

Thank you for volunteering your time and energy to help make our international students feel welcomed in our community!