

Conversation Partners Program



Guidelines and Suggestions International Students Spring 2012

English as a Second Language (ESL) Program
Bagen Hall, Room 202

www.canisius.edu/english-as-a-second-language/

This handbook is indebted to materials posted at College of William and Mary, Kent State University, the University of Iowa, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute for some of the materials noted here. We appreciate the permission we have been given to use these wonderful resources. Please see:

College of William and Mary. (2011). Conversation partner program handbook. *College of William and Mary*. Retrieved from: www.wm.edu/as/graduate/graduatecenter/conversation/CPPhandbook.pdf

Kent State University. (n.d.). Retrieved from: <http://cphp.kent.edu/iss/currentstudents/conversation-partner.cfm>

University of Iowa. (n.d.). FAQ: Meeting with ESL students. *University of Iowa*. Retrieved from: <http://clas.uiowa.edu/files/esl/Tips%20for%20meeting%20with%20ESL%20students.pdf>

Worcester Polytechnic Institute. (2011). Conversation partner program handbook. *Worcester Polytechnic Institute*. Retrieved from: <http://www.wpi.edu/Images/CMS/InternationalHouse/CPHandbook.pdf>

Program Expectations and Goals

Program Expectations:

1. Meet with your partner once a week for at least an hour.
2. Be open minded.
3. Be both a teacher and a student.
4. Complete the program evaluation which will be provided at the end of the semester.
5. Enjoy each other's company and have fun!

Goals for English as a Second Language (ESL) students:

The goal of this program for ESL international students is to improve your English outside of the classroom in an informal environment. It is also the program's goal to help you build relationships with American students at Canisius College. You will also be either helping a language student with learning your native language or introducing an international relation major to your culture.

Goals for language students:

The goal of this program for language students is to practice your language abilities with native speakers of that language. It is also the program's goal to help you build relationships with the international students studying at Canisius College. As a participant in this program you will not only be conversing in the language that you are learning but also in English to assist international students with their English.

Goals for students in International Relations, Political Science, International Business and other majors:

The goal of this program for American students seeking careers involving global communication and for students with a deep interest in other cultures is to learn more about another culture and to build relationships with the international students studying at Canisius College. You will be assisting international students with their English by conversing in an informal environment.

Questions to help get a conversation going . . .

1. What did you do for fun last summer?
2. What has surprised you when you met American people in the USA?
3. What is your most difficult subject now?
4. Are you a member of any student groups?
5. What annoying habits does your best friend have?
6. Who is your favorite teacher of the subjects you are studying now?
7. What are the qualities you want in your professor?
8. How did you decide what college to attend?
9. What characteristic about yourself do you like/dislike the most?
10. What annoys you about living where you live now?
11. What annoys you about driving a car?
12. Is there anybody in the news whom you dislike intensely? Who and why?
13. Do you think a government should be allowed to execute prisoners? Explain.
14. If you/your wife were pregnant and you found out that the baby would have a serious birth defect that would cause it to have a painful and miserable life, what would you do?
15. What are your life goals for the next five years?
16. What are you most passionate about in your life? Why?
17. A close relative of yours is in an accident that leaves him/her in a coma. The doctor says that he/she is completely brain dead and the only thing keeping him/her alive is expensive respiratory equipment. If you had to decide whether to turn the equipment off or keep it running, what would you do?
18. Would you prefer to be a successful businessman/businesswoman or a successful father/mother? Why do you think you would choose one over the other?
19. If you found a briefcase filled with cash, what would you do? Would you try to return it to the owner or keep it for yourself?
20. If you saw three men attacking someone in an isolated place, what would you do?
21. If your conversation partner had only one day to spend in your city (province, country), where would you take him/her? Why there?
22. What is the most important lesson your parents taught you? Explain.
23. Where do you like to spend time alone?
24. Who is the greatest person of your nationality to live (in history)? Why?
25. Do you have any personal heroes? Who are they? (Name both living and dead)
26. What film have you seen recently that you liked? Explain why, how, etc.
27. What is a problem in your country that you'd like to see your government/people attack?
28. What charities would you donate to if you had the money and time?
29. Can you sing? What type of songs do you enjoy? Who sings these songs best?
30. Where would like to go on your honeymoon? Why?
31. If you were stuck on an island, what book would you want with you? Why?
32. What makes you optimistic/pessimistic about a recent story in the news? Explain.

Ideas of topics to discuss:

- Cultural traditions and customs
- Special holidays
- Traditional food
- Education Systems
- Political structures
- Favorite pastimes: films, outings and other social functions
- Art and/or artists
- Culture shock
- Current events
- Places to visit
- Family and social relations
- Values and assumptions.
- Watch a movie or t.v. show and then discuss it.

Suggestions for Meetings

Things to do during your first meeting:

- You may want to schedule a weekly meeting time and location and determine the best way to communicate with each other in case of cancelations or schedule changes.
- Generate a list of goals and expectations that you have for your time together.
- Brainstorm some activities you would like to do or event you would like to attend.

Below are suggestions for activities to do to make the conversation meetings more interesting and dynamic!

- Meet for coffee or other non-alcoholic drink.
- Eat lunch on campus together or go out to eat at an ethnic or American restaurant.
- Cook a meal together.
- Play a card or board game.
- Attend a sports game together (Canisius Athletics' events are free for students!)
- Share pictures.
- Talk about differences in US educational institutions, culture and communication styles.
- Volunteer together in the community. (Visit Campus Ministry)
- Attend a campus or community event together. (See below)
- Celebrate a holiday or tradition together.

Campus and Community Events and Activities

Canisius CPLD Campus Programs and Activities

www.canisius.edu/campus_leader/events.asp

Griffins After Dark

www.canisius.edu/campus_leader/griffinsafterdark.asp

Fun, late night (11am-1pm) on campus activities.

Canisius Cinema

www.canisius.edu/campus_leader/cinema.asp

Missed a movie on the big screen? Canisius Cinema has got you covered on select Friday nights at 10pm in Penfold Commons (unless otherwise noted). Come watch pre-released movies that have left the theater, but are not yet available on DVD and enjoy some FREE popcorn.

Canisius Athletics

www.gogriffs.com

Buffalo/ Niagara Events Calendar (Buffalo/ Niagara CVB)

www.visitbuffaloniagara.com/things-to-do/calendar-of-events/

Buffalo News' Events Calendar

<http://events.buffalonews.com/events/>

Look at your MyCanisius portal and at posters around campus for additional ideas. Also, check out the events hosted by the International Student Programs Office.

(www.canisius.edu/isp/).



"Seek first to understand, then to be understood."

— Stephen R. Covey
7 Habits of Highly Effective People