

**EDUCATION & TRAINING
FOUNDATION**

ESOL FOR REFUGEES: RESOURCES FOR NEW ARRIVALS



GUIDANCE FOR TEACHERS

Project background

In 2019/20, Learning and Work Institute and Learning Unlimited were commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation and the Home Office to develop new resources to help ESOL practitioners better meet the early integration needs of refugees who are New to ESOL (i.e. working below Entry Level 1). The resources developed consist of:

- 12 units of teaching and learning materials, based around a simple dialogue in a relevant early integration scenario, each intended to support around six hours of delivery
- Guidance to support practitioners with the approaches underpinning the resources, linking to earlier practitioner resources and guidance on working with New to ESOL learners
- A screening tool, to help identify learners who are New to ESOL, and who may benefit from additional early integration language support
- Learner profiles, illustrating the early integration needs and longer-term learning and work aspirations of refugees.

Development of the materials was informed by extensive sector engagement, including:

- telephone interviews and informal engagement (e.g. at relevant sector events) with ESOL providers, refugee resettlement agencies, stakeholders and practitioners
- face-to-face interviews with refugee ESOL learners and consultation with the Yorkshire and the Humber Refugee Advisory Group
- sector testing and piloting of draft materials by ESOL practitioners working with refugee learners New to ESOL and at Entry Level 1.

All of these 'ESOL for refugees' resources are free to download from the [Excellence Gateway: https://esol.excellencegateway.org.uk/esol-refugees](https://esol.excellencegateway.org.uk/esol-refugees).

Course content and approaches

ESOL for refugees – resources for new arrivals comprises 12 topic-based units – each reflecting up to 6 hours of learning. The resources are designed for use with newly arrived refugees who have very limited, or no skills or knowledge, of English (speaking, listening and literacy), i.e. 'pre-Entry'/Entry 1 emerging, and possibly no or minimal digital skills. Key language learning needs and priorities of a wide range of refugees were identified through the consultation process, this included consideration for different cultures and countries of origin, different experiences of the refugee journey, and whether refugees received support through any national programmes or schemes.

The resources aim is to enable refugees to gain some essential speaking, listening and literacy skills, and develop a simple repertoire of transferable English which they can use independently in a variety of situations prior to them joining other English language (ESOL) programmes, e.g. those funded through the Adult Education Budget (AEB) typically at local colleges, or provided through third sector organisations.

The underpinning approaches are learner-centred, strengths-based and functional, with the emphasis on lexical chunks, fixed and semi-fixed phrases. At this level, new language is presented in meaningful and relevant contexts and situations. It is not necessary to explicitly teach grammar. Practitioners are encouraged to use participatory approaches to actively engage learners as much as possible in shaping their learning. Also, to localise the learning and resources to maximise their immediate use and relevance for refugees in their everyday lives, while being mindful of age appropriate and culturally appropriate content.

Each unit is topic-based and focuses on important exchanges which refugees may well have to manage independently, particularly after any initial support provided by case workers has stopped. They can mostly be used in any order, but it is recommended that you start with Unit 1 'Hello' and that Unit 5 'Health and Safety' is covered before Unit 6 '999'.

The units are closely aligned to the [New to ESOL](#) resources launched in 2019 and you will find links to relevant images, guidance, top tips, activities and templates throughout this resource, as well as links to other helpful resources such as the [Learning Circles](#) videos.

Resources overview

Unit	Topic/title	Context for recorded dialogues	Language skills development and practice	Additional materials needed
1	Hello	A small group of 3 people in the street or at a centre. Two friends greet each other, and one introduces another friend. They talk about where they are from, then one leaves.	Greet a friend, introduce another friend, say goodbye. Ask and respond to simple questions. Use contractions. Say days of the week. Key words and phrases.	Recorded dialogues; images of local places; colour board pens; name card for each learner; map of the world; country name cards; alarm; calendar or diary.
2	A community class	Two people outside/ in the entrance to a community centre asking about courses, and inside talking about refreshments.	Talk about where someone is going. Respond appropriately. Offer refreshments and respond politely. Key words and phrases.	Recorded dialogues; image of a local community centre; mini whiteboards; realia (tea, coffee, spoon, etc.).
3	Family and friends	Two people looking at each other's photos on phones in a class/ centre. They ask and respond to a few simple questions about the photos.	Talk about family and friends. Ask and answer questions about family and friends. Use contractions. Key words and phrases.	Recorded dialogues; photos of (your) family/ friends; a bag of your/ learners' personal items.
4	Public transport	Someone outside a shop/in the street/ by a bus stop asks for information about a journey. They talk about bus numbers and cost.	Talk about travel and transport. Ask for and give information about travel, including numbers and money. Key words and phrases.	Recorded dialogues; images of local buses; local train and bus tickets, travel cards.

5	Health and safety	Two or three people, one a new arrival, talking about the emergency services in England. One person explains the emergency numbers and that the police can help with hate crimes.	Ask for and give information about the emergency services. State a problem. Say numbers and phone numbers. Key words and phrases.	Recorded dialogues; images of injuries and accidents; audio of emergency sirens.
6	999	Two people at home/a centre make emergency calls. In the first the woman asks for an interpreter, and in the second the man gives his personal details.	Understand and respond appropriately to simple questions. Ask for an interpreter. Give basic information: name, address, postcode, phone number. Key words and phrases.	Recorded dialogues; image of centre where learners are studying; address of centre on envelope /paper/ screen; copies of learners' addresses or alternative addresses.
7	Dentist	In the first, listen to a dental surgery recorded message and select the correct option. In the second, make an appointment over the phone, saying time and day.	Listen to a recorded message. Answer questions give personal information and spell name out loud. Say times and days. Key words and phrases.	Recorded dialogues; images of local healthcare providers; images of different local places; mini whiteboards.
8	Shopping	A customer asks three market stallholders for information about items and prices (3 short dialogues)	Ask and respond to simple questions. Say quantities and money. Key words and phrases.	Recorded dialogues; images and realia of food and shopping items, packaging and money.
9	Schools	In a school or children's centre. In the first, a parent phones the school to report their child's absence. In the second, they ask for help in understanding a letter from school.	Understand simple questions and give information, spelling out names. Ask for help. Use contractions. Say phone numbers. Key words and phrases.	Recorded dialogues; image of local school/ children's centre; realia: collection of flyers, messages, notes, letters from local schools; mini whiteboards.

10	Library	A library setting with a librarian and a customer. In the first, the customer asks to join the library and has to show his documents. In the second, he asks for help filling in a form and gives personal information.	Ask and respond to simple questions. Ask for clarification. Give personal information – name, address, postcode, phone number, date of birth. Key words and phrases.	Recorded dialogues; image of local library; realia: selection of DVDs, CD, talking books, books and newspapers in a variety of languages; pre-prepared names and local addresses.
11	Applying for a course	A local college/ community education setting. In the first, someone asks a member of staff about enrolling on a course. The second is a conversation between the prospective student and the member of staff about basic ID/ documents.	Ask and respond to simple questions. Make requests. Ask for clarification/ repetition. Express likes and dislikes. Ask for permission. Use contractions. Say days and times. Key words and phrases.	Recorded dialogues; images of local college/ community education centre; simplified enrolment forms (name/ address/phone number/ email).
12	Giving information about yourself	In an education/careers setting, a woman responds to a few questions about her qualifications and work experience in the first. In the second, a man talks about his skills and future plans.	Ask and answer questions about qualifications and work experience. Describe own and other's experiences. Talk about skills. Express hopes using 'want to'. Key words and phrases	Recorded dialogues; images of job roles relevant to learners; dice and counters; colour pens.

N.B. The table above includes any materials needed additional to those provided within each unit. This includes locally recorded dialogues.

Unit format

Each unit has the same format:

Unit section	Contents
Overview	The main language functions and a suggested context for the unit content, which practitioners are encouraged to localise as much as possible.
Skills	Skills are divided into three sections: Speaking and listening; Literacy and phonics; Language points.
Before you start	<p>The materials needed for the activities in each unit are listed. These included short example dialogues to be adapted, localised and recorded. Images and worksheets/ handouts are provided for each unit. The list includes any additional materials which could enrich the learning, e.g. local leaflets and flyers, realia etc.</p> <p>As units are designed to be used very flexibly, and mostly in any sequence, a note for practitioners flags up the importance of including some time for general chatting, a warm up activity and recapping/reviewing the main learning from the previous session or most recent topic.</p>
Speaking and listening activities	Each unit includes several activities based on the example dialogues. Each dialogue is broken into 2 or 3 parts and kept extremely short to make it as accessible as possible for learners at this level.
Literacy and phonics	Each unit contains suggestions for developing reading and writing skills based around the dialogues and unit content, e.g. creating flash cards, word-picture matching activities, gap-fill, reading the transcript aloud and phonics practice. Some use New to ESOL resources and templates: New to ESOL templates . Literacy and phonics activities can be covered after the speaking and listening work or used, as appropriate, at key points after related speaking and listening practice.
Digital opportunities	Some learners at this level may have very few digital skills. Some may not have access to a smart phone or other device and/or access to the internet/data can be problematic. However, opportunities are suggested for embedding digital literacy within topic-based language learning, if access to digital devices is possible.
Learning to learn	Some refugees may have had little or no previous experience of formal education, so 'Learning to learn' opportunities and suggestions are included.
Differentiation and extension ideas	This section includes ideas to enable learners within a group working at slightly different levels, or with different skills or confidence, to get further practice, if needed, or the opportunity to extend their learning if they are ready.
Home learning	Each unit includes a few simple suggestions for further practice at home for learners who have the time and opportunity to do this.

Out and about	Newly arrived refugees may have little understanding of some common cultural norms, practices and expectations in the UK. Ideas for helping to support intercultural understanding are included, where relevant.
Intercultural understanding	Newly arrived refugees may have little understanding of some common cultural norms, practices and expectations in the UK. Ideas for helping to support intercultural understanding are included, where relevant.
TIPS	Tips are included throughout the units specifically to support practitioners who are new to teaching ESOL and/or working with this target group.
Unit review	Each unit ends with some suggestions to for reviewing a topic and to include at the beginning of the following session to help recap language learning.
Useful links for further practice	This final box includes links to any resources referred to in the unit guidance, along with additional resources relevant for the topic and level.

Practitioners are encouraged to supplement the ideas and resources provided to best meet the needs and interests of their learners. This could include providing additional practice activities such as inviting guests to the classroom for the learners to practise speaking to, asking questions, going on local visits, using local news, realia or other resources, and creating activities which best suit some learners, such as additional copying or writing practice such as gap fills.

In addition, practitioners are encouraged to work with learners in identifying social activities that can support classroom learning and extend this learning outside the classroom. This could include, for example, community events, coffee mornings, workshops at the local library and other visits to local places of interest.

Using the units

Each unit is based around two or three short dialogues, with supporting speaking, listening and basic literacy activities. It is expected that the content for each unit will be used and spread over two or three sessions, i.e. typically up to 6 hours' learning, plus any independent work away from class undertaken by learners. It is important to use the units as the basis for plenty of listening, speaking and pronunciation practice, e.g. through drilling and role plays.

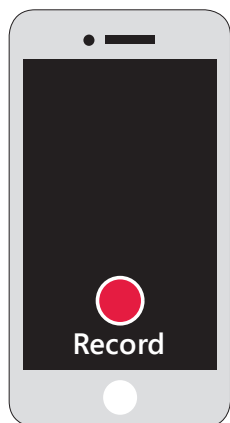
It is not necessary to work through the units in order, but we recommend starting with Unit 1 Hello! which will give you an opportunity to assess learners' strengths and areas for development. It is a good idea to start any new course with icebreaker activities to help learners feel welcome and comfortable. Then, begin each session with a warm-up activity to help build confidence in participation. You can find ideas for ice-breakers and warm-up activities in [New to ESOL](#).

It is also important to include a recap of the previous session and encourage learners to talk about what they have done relating to the most recent topics.

Some units and activities will naturally take more time than others, depending on the learners, their language levels and practice needs, and the local opportunities for extending and reinforcing the learning. At this level, a lot of time is needed for plenty of speaking and listening, repetition, reinforcement and recycling of language, such as finding opportunities to practise using lexical chunks with substitution practice or in different contexts. This drilling down into each activity will help to maximise the learning from the resources and help to build learners' confidence in using the language independently.

The model dialogues and activities provided are easily adaptable for other topics, contexts and settings in response to locally identified needs. They can be used for further language skills development and pronunciation practice based on learner's personal priorities and needs, as well as being contextualised to the local area and building knowledge of life in the UK. Ideas for social activities to practise the target language are also suggested within each unit.

Recording the dialogues



Although a few example recordings have been provided, recordings are not provided with this resource as a key priority is to expose learners to typical local and regional voices and accents. So, before starting each unit, you can quickly record the mini dialogues with friends or colleagues. You can use your phone and then play the recording through a speaker or, if you have access to ICT equipment, upload and play.

Speak naturally but not too quickly. Also, try to make sure you use people with typical local accents and adapt and record the short model dialogues in order to maximise 'localisation'. For example, change 'Hi' to the most common greeting used in your area, and include words like *love*, *duck* or *hen*, if these are typical. You can also change names of people and places to make sure they reflect your group and your setting. You can listen to some example recordings of a dialogue [here](https://esol.excellencegateway.org.uk/esol-refugees): <https://esol.excellencegateway.org.uk/esol-refugees>.

Working with learners at this level

The transcripts of the dialogues should not be shown or given to learners until after they have done the listening and speaking activities. If you provide the script, learners will try to read, rather than listen and 'read aloud' rather than speak naturally. If you wish, write up some of the key words as prompts to support learners at the practice stage.

For learners at this level, intensive listening practice is essential as they become familiar with the rhythm of English and develop the ability to identify words in the stream of speech. Learners need to focus first on what they are hearing, identify and understand key words and phrases, and not be distracted by reading a transcript (if they are literate). Play each audio several times to help learners listen in order to extract meaning. Once learners have understood the dialogue, move on to speaking. Plenty of modelling is essential and drilling is a fundamental feature of each unit as this helps learners to memorise key lexical chunks and develop their pronunciation.

Choral repetition builds confidence and helps with pronunciation and rhythm, and short role plays provide practice opportunities. Encouraging learners to memorise short dialogues can help with automaticity. Once learners are confident with saying a dialogue, they can vary and/or extend it if they wish. The transcript can then be used to develop literacy skills and there are suggested basic reading and writing activities in each unit, including phonics.

It is advisable to find out about learners' main languages as features of their own language will influence their ability to pronounce English sounds, and some may need specific help in this area.

Some key principles:

- make learning enjoyable and create a safe/comfortable learning environment
- focus on pronunciation and developing intelligibility – stress, rhythm, intonation, individual sounds
- support learners to develop ‘learning to learn’ skills
- negotiate topics, and contextualise according to learners’ priorities, interests and needs
- localise content as much as possible and use videos/images/pictures to support learning
- ‘chunk’ learning into very small steps, with plenty of repetition and practice
- regularly recap and review previous learning
- use differentiation techniques to meet individual learner’s needs, e.g. adapting texts, specific pronunciation difficulties, providing handwriting or spelling practice sheets, etc.
- extend learning by encouraging home learning
- use age-appropriate content
- use culturally appropriate content
- use technology to support learning, particularly with learners who have good digital skills
- use strengths-based and participatory approaches
- bring ‘the outside in’, e.g. use realia and invite visitors into the class.
- take the learning outside the classroom, e.g. visit local shops, the library, post office, etc.

N.B. Key principles and top tips for working with learners at this level are detailed more fully in [New to ESOL](#)

Working with refugees

If you are an ESOL practitioner who is new to working with refugees, it is important to get some up-to-date information on entitlements and support as well as issues your learners may be facing. This is in order to ensure you can be responsive and sensitive to these in your session and signpost effectively.

- When talking to learners, be sensitive and aware of possible mental health issues such as PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) and depression.
- Be aware that learners may be on medication which may affect their ability to concentrate.
- Learners attendance may be erratic, e.g. they may have appointments with lawyers or medical professionals.
- Learners may have complex issues such as housing, finance, health, etc.

Sensitivity when talking to refugees

People get very worried about what they can and can't talk about with refugees, but actually very few subjects are taboo if approached in the right way. Use your common sense and be sensitive like you would in any conversation – and if you see that the person is uncomfortable, change the subject. Make sure that it is a two-way conversation, if you are asking lots of questions then make sure you are happy to share the same information about your life ...

- **Reasons for leaving home country:** You may be fascinated to understand more about this, but don't ask. People may well tell you though, and feel free to ask questions and get into a conversation about it if they do. If you want to find out more, read the news. Also offering your lengthy opinion on, e.g. the war in Syria is probably inappropriate
- **Journey to the UK:** These journeys are very often arduous and distressing. People may tell you about them, but again don't ask.
- **Immigration status:** Whether a person is an asylum seeker, refugee, refused asylum seeker or anything else has nothing to do with you, and they will not value you asking. Much of their lives here will be, or will have been, dominated by their status.
- **War:** Many refugees have experienced war, so generally offering your own (intellectual rather than experiential) opinions about a current war is probably inappropriate.
- **Family:** Generally, even if there has been a tragedy, people tend to like to talk about their families but be sensitive and if the person seems uncomfortable, change the subject! In activities give learners a choice to talk about a family member or a friend as some refugees might find it difficult to talk about their family.
- **Home countries:** It's absolutely fine to ask where someone is from, ask which part of the country and whether they're from a town/city or the countryside/a village, too. Although you shouldn't ask why they left, generally people love to talk about where have come from and to compare their country with this one.
- **Politics and religion:** Many people love a good conversation about politics or religion – but not everyone. So just use your common sense and move on if people appear uncomfortable or if it gets too heated. Big group discussions are best avoided unless you know the group very well. And remember that this is not the place for anyone to try to convert anyone else to their point of view or religion (including you).

Thanks to Student Action for Refugees <http://www.star-network.org.uk/> for letting us share this.

Useful links

Guidance for commissioners and practitioners

- ESOL for refugees: A guide for commissioners and practitioners
www.migrationyorkshire.org.uk

Teaching ESOL to refugees:

- For volunteer teachers of refugees: a basic introduction to teaching English
https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php?title=For_volunteer_teachers_of_refugees
- Tips for teaching English to migrants and refugees in the UK
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/tips-teaching-english-migrants-and-refugees-uk>

Organisations that provide information and support for refugees:

- British Red Cross
<https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/how-we-support-refugees>
- Financial aid for refugees
<https://www.billhelp.uk/refugee-council-assistance-programmes/>
- Improving mental health support for refugee communities – an advocacy approach
https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4396/refugee_report_1.pdf
- Mental health services for adult vulnerable migrants
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/about/equality/equality-hub/migrants/>
- Mental health support for refugees/asylum seekers
<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/our-work/mental-health-support-for-refugees-and-asylum-seekers/>
- Refugee Action
<https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/our-services/>
- Refugee Council
<https://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/>

- Refugee Roots
<https://www.refugeeroots.org.uk/>
- Refugee study (scholarships, grants and free courses)
<http://refugee-study.co.uk/>
- Refugee Support Network
<https://www.refugeesupportnetwork.org/>
- Seek – job platform for refugees
<https://www.seekuk.org/>
- Student Action for Refugees:
<http://www.star-network.org.uk/>
- Student finance for refugees and asylum seekers
<https://www.ucas.com/finance/additional-funding/student-finance-refugees-and-asylum-seekers>

Government websites:

- Asylum support
<https://www.gov.uk/asylum-support/what-youll-get>
- Claim asylum in the UK
<https://www.gov.uk/claim-asylum>
- Find an immigration adviser
<https://www.gov.uk/find-an-immigration-adviser>
- Refugee integration loan
<https://www.gov.uk/refugee-integration-loan>
- Seek asylum or protection
<https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/asylum>
- Settlement: refugee or humanitarian protection
<https://www.gov.uk/settlement-refugee-or-humanitarian-protection>
- Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement (VPR) Programme
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/syrian-vulnerable-person-resettlement-programme-fact-sheet>

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