

# Duke Language Partners Handbook



YOUR NAME:

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PARTNER'S NAME:

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PHONE #:

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EMAIL:

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## PREFACE

Welcome to the Duke Language Partners program! I am glad that you have made the decision to further your education by practicing or learning a foreign language. I am sure that you will be pleased with the results of this decision. This handbook is designed to assist you and your partner in having a fruitful and successful language as well as cultural exchange.

The purpose of this program is for two native speakers of two different languages to come together to help each other learn their native languages. Through the program, one can practice a foreign language, learn about another culture, and/or gain English as a Second Language (or other language) tutoring experience. The DLP program aims to create an effective learning environment where each person gets an equal share of learning/practice time and benefits from the exchange while establishing an opportunity for cultural exchange and friendship.

International House believes that this is a great opportunity for you to improve your cultural sensitivity as well as your communication skills. We encourage you to learn about the culture of your language partner in addition to your language exchange. It is important for you to know how to express yourself as well as behave accordingly when you are in another country or culture.

In closing, this program is what you and your partner make of it. Please use this handbook to assist you throughout your partnership and always feel free to contact me if you have questions or concerns. I can be reached at [john.m.stokes@duke.edu](mailto:john.m.stokes@duke.edu) or (919) 684-3585.

Sincerely,

John Stokes  
Program Assistant

## INTRODUCTION

### **DLP IS MORE THAN JUST LANGUAGE EXCHANGE!**

Language partners should not only be a language exchange, but also a cultural exchange. Partners should share information and ideas about their native countries and cultures in either language. This provides a better understanding of the language and its origins.

### **DLP IS NOT...**

- Academic or tutorial, therefore your partner is NOT your teacher. It is NOT for you to get help with your homework or highly structured lessons, books, handouts, etc.
- A dating service. Partners are matched based on language requests first and foremost and then personal interests and background are taken into account. Unless someone has specifically stated that they prefer a same-sex partner, gender is rarely a factor in matching. In countries outside the U.S., language exchange sometimes has this reputation.
- One-sided or unequal – unless both partners want it that way. Each person should get time to practice and learn. If your partner is dominating things too much you should politely let them know. It should be an exchange!



## HOW TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP...

1. **Arrange a regular time to meet.** Whether it is every week, every other week, or once a month, you should have a set, regular time to meet. This will help you stay focused and you can plan your schedule accordingly.
2. **Meet at comfortable and convenient locations for both of you.** Keep in mind that you, your partner, or both of you may not have transportation. Be flexible and choose a place where you can hear one another. Try a few different places to see what works best.
3. **Be prepared.** You should meet your partner with topics of discussion in mind and/or questions you would like to ask. Sometimes partners become good friends and never need to search for something to talk about. This does not always happen nor should it. Some learn better with a language partner because they are not friends and do not get distracted as easily.
4. **Be flexible!** Most of the DLP participants are students and scholars – busy people. Sometimes people will need to change times, place, or frequency of the meetings due to work and personal schedules. Try to be understanding and flexible with change. If it becomes a serious problem then talk to your partner about it or contact the International House for assistance.
5. **Stay in touch with International House.** If you find that you and your partner are not meeting with the regularity that you had hoped for. Of course life can get hectic during exams, but if you have found that you are only meeting every few months, please contact John Stokes at [john.m.stokes@duke.edu](mailto:john.m.stokes@duke.edu) in order for us to follow-up with your partner and/or make a new match if necessary.



## GIVING FLAVOR TO CONVERSATIONS

The topics listed below are great general topics to start conversation. Teach/practice the vocabulary for the topic and then discuss it.

**FOOD** – Always a great topic with so much variety! Cooking techniques? What is/ is not popular? What is your favorite type of food or dish? Who does the cooking in your family?

**SHOPPING** – There can be big differences between shopping in one culture and another. What are the differences? What is the same? Where do you like to shop at home? Where is a good place to shop near Duke or in Durham?

**COMMUNICATION STYLES** – Talk about gestures in your home culture that might have different meanings in other cultures. Share some uses of silence, nods, pause, eye contact, and other body languages in conversations.

**FAMILY** – Every culture has different ideas and family structures. Within one culture there may also be many differences from region to region. What is important to you about family? What kind of family do you come from? Are you close? How do people in your country think about “families” and what does that word mean in your language?

**THE ARTS** – Music, painting, dance, and sculpture are only a few examples of different kinds of art. What is the art from your country like? What kind of art forms do you enjoy? Who is your favorite artist? Are there any famous artists from your country?

**SPORTS** – What sports do you like to play or watch? What is popular in your country? Are there any famous athletes from your country? Can you find your favorite sport being played or watched here in the U.S. or in your partner’s country?

**HOLIDAYS/FESTIVITIES** – What holidays do you and your families celebrate? What is a national holiday in your country? What are the rites and rituals? What is your favorite holiday?

## PLACES TO GO

Here are a few suggestions of places to go with your partner to add a hands-on feel to your interaction.

- Go to a museum and discuss the exhibit(s).
- Go to the grocery store together and exchange vocabulary, ideas about shopping, variety of foods available, etc.
- A concert can be fun to go to together and then chat about afterward.
- Cafes are great places to talk as well as people-watch (look at other people and discuss them – Where they are from? What do they do for a living?)
- Go visit a park or sports field. Teach each other some kind of game or sport!
- Visit the Sarah Duke Gardens and exchange vocabulary on the plants, flowers, and other evaluations.
- Go to the movies and then discuss afterwards. You could also borrow movies from Lilly Library on East to watch and discuss.
- Read the newspaper together and help each other with translation.
- Watch a TV show or sitcom and discuss it.
- Cook together and discuss recipes, foods, etc.

**Jot down ideas of places where you and your partner can go...**

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## USEFUL RESOURCES AVAILABLE AT I-HOUSE LIBRARY

International House has a variety of books including travel guidebooks, textbooks, and videos about intercultural communication and diverse cultures in the world. There are also many books about teaching/learning English. You are welcome to borrow them for a couple of days or make a photocopy.

Here is a list of some examples of the resources available:

- Althen, Gary (1988) American Ways. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc.
- Avery, Peter & Ehrlich, Susan (1996) Teaching American English Pronunciation. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Carver, Tine & Fotinos, Sandra (1998) A Conversation Book I English in Everyday Life. NY: Prentice Hall regents.
- Fieg, John & Blair, John (1975) There is a difference. Meridian House International.
- Freedman, Daniel (1982) Speaking of Survival. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hall, Edward (1990) The Silent Language. New York: Anchor Books.
- Hellman, Judith (1994) Mexican Lives. New York: The New Press.
- Kodansha International (1994) Japan: Profile of a Nation. Tokyo, Japan.
- Kohls, Robert (2001) Learning to Think Korean. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Lanier, Alison (1996) Living in the USA. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc.
- Lorrain, Smith & Mare, Nancy (1990) Issues for Today: An Effective Reading Skills Text. New York: Newbury House Publishers.
- New International Publications Ltd (1999) The World Guide. Oxford, UK.
- Tolley, D., Barbara & McDougal, Marianne (1982) Business concepts for English practice. Newbury House Publishers.
- Wenzhong, Hu & Grove, Cornelius (1999) Encountering the Chinese. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc.
- Wolfgang, Aaron (1995) Everybody's Guide to People Watching. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press, Inc.