

# CULTURE



**TUTOR TRAINING**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS:

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Background Information.....	2
What is Culture?.....	2
Tutoring Strategies.....	8
Critical Incidents.....	8
Venn Diagram.....	9
Story Map (Word Bug).....	9
Language Experience Activity Variations.....	10
Dialogues.....	11
Role Plays.....	11
Teaching with One Picture/Picture Role Play.....	12
Using Pictures In Conversation.....	14
More Picture Activities.....	15
Conversation Questions about Pictures.....	16
Resources and Materials.....	17

**Background Information** - This is content that will be useful in understanding the topic. You will want to read this element before attending the presentation.

**Tutoring Strategies** - These are activities you might do with a learner during a session. They are research and evidence-based strategies for tutoring adults.

**Resources and Materials** - Recommended for use directly with the learner during your sessions.

**Further Study** - Recommended resources for additional independent study of this topic.

**Handouts** - Items you need during this presentation; keep this element open during the module.

Any section can include the following call-out items to draw your attention to certain recurring themes. These include:

### Putting Theory into Practice

This will highlight how theory you have learned informs your tutoring practice.

### Tutor Tips

This will highlight tips from experienced tutors on using this strategy or information.

### Reflect and Grow

This is a time for you to stop and spend time in thoughtful reflection about a topic.

### Definitions and Keywords

This will call attention to and define key words and concepts.

The key to working with those in different cultures is finding commonalities. It's about having interest, curiosity, and humility. Cultural sensitivity is knowing and respecting cultural norms, not necessarily liking them. The goal of cross-cultural interaction is to increase understanding to successfully engage with others from different cultures.

## What is Culture?

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Culture is the elements common to a group of people. The group can be large (all Americans) or small (my family). The elements include symbols, language, values, behaviors, traditions, holidays, lifestyle, communication, ethics, etc.

## Understanding Culture

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Culture in abstract: the underlying values and assumptions of a society

Culture in the flesh: the specific behaviors that derive from those values

- Actions aren't arbitrary and spontaneous; they are consistent with what people in that culture value and believe in
- Once you accept that people behave the way they do for a reason (whatever you think of the reason), you can get beyond reacting to their behavior and figure out how to work with it
- When we look at behavior, we interpret what is happening through the filter of what OUR culture informs.

## Culture is like an iceberg

- The visible section (observable behavior) is only a small part of a much bigger whole. These are the aspects of culture that learners notice first.
- Surface behaviors are influenced by below-the-surface values and assumptions. These less visible aspects of culture are outstanding topics for tutoring. They are things like:

### **Attitude toward age**

- Emphasize physical beauty and youth
- Judge a worker's worth based on production, not seniority

### **Concept of fate and destiny**

- Lack of success is an individual's own fault

### **View of human nature**

- If left alone, people will do the right thing
- People should be given the benefit of the doubt, willing to accept strangers

### **Attitude toward change**

- New is better; change is positive
- Just because we've always done it that way doesn't make it right

### **Attitude toward taking risk**

- Low level of personal savings, high bankruptcies
- Taking risks involves no real danger, always more opportunities

### **Concept of suffering and misfortune**

- Be happy; if you're unhappy, see a shrink or take a pill
- Because we're in control of our lives, we have no excuse for unhappiness or misfortune

### **Concept of face**

- Confrontation is sometimes necessary to clear the air
- Honesty is the best policy

### **Source of self esteem/self worth**

- Material possessions are a measure of success
- People judge you by how much \$ you make

### **Concept of equality**

- We are not all the same, but we are all of equal value

### **Attitude toward formality**

- Casual in social and professional interactions

### **Degree of realism**

- Generally optimistic
- Bad things happen for a reason

### **Attitude toward doing**

- Doing is preferred over talking
- Practical and pragmatic favored over inspiring

### **View of natural world**

- Not to be feared (building dams to control rivers)
- Workings can be studied, predicted, and manipulated

## **Universal, Cultural, or Personal**

While understanding the role of culture in behavior is important, personal differences can have an even bigger impact (age, gender, experiences).

- Universal=ways in which all people in all groups are the same
- Cultural=what a particular group of people have in common with each other and how they are different from every other group
- Personal=the ways in which each one of us is different from everyone else, including those in our group

Because of universal behavior, some of what you know about humans in general will apply to all cultures. Because of personal behavior, not everything you learn about a culture will apply to every individual in that culture.

## **Styles of Communication**

Much of culture *is* communication; it's hard to tell where one ends and the other takes over and almost impossible to send a message that doesn't have some cultural content (verbal or nonverbal).

## **Reflect and Grow**

When presenting American culture to a learner, will you present the real or the ideal? Will you talk about American culture as your demographic see it or someone younger or older or less financially secure or more? [Click here](#) to watch The Top 10 Aspects of American culture. What surprised you in the video? If you made a Top 10 list, what would be on it?

Communication problems—misunderstanding and misinterpretation—are a major frustration when dealing with those from other cultures. One major distinction between communication styles is indirect vs direct communication.

#### Indirect/High Context

- Homogenous, collectivist cultures (e.g. Thailand) rely on indirect communication—more nonverbal, less literal
- Communication goal is maintaining harmony and saving face
- Actual meaning of words may be a poor guide to what an indirect communicator is saying

#### Direct/Low Context

- Heterogeneous, individualist cultures (e.g. U.S.) are more direct; less assumed—rely more on words, literal meanings
- Communication goal is giving or getting information
- Direct way of saying things might strike some listeners as too harsh

Communication styles matter. Language matters. The language we use tells a story. It may be a story of our culture, our religion, our age, our income or something else. [Watch this video](#) to learn more about language differences from around the world and what it reveals about those cultures.

## Culture in the Workplace

### 1. Concepts of power and power distance

- High power distance—cultures that accept inequalities in power and status, consider them natural
  - Those with power hold it close, don't share or delegate
  - Have responsibility to look after those beneath them
- Low power distance—see inequalities as artificial
  - Those with power minimize the differences between themselves and subordinates
  - Subordinates are rewarded for taking initiative; don't like close supervision

### 2. Attitudes toward uncertainty and the unknown

- Inherent uncertainty of life creates anxiety in all cultures
- High uncertainty avoidance
  - especially anxious about uncertainty; try to limit and control it
  - more laws, regulations; greater emphasis on obeying them
  - strong tendency toward conformity
- Low uncertainty avoidance
  - not as threatened by uncertainty; not a strong need to control
  - legislate fewer areas of interaction; tolerate differences better
  - curious about the unknown; comfortable leaving things to chance

### 3. Concepts of status

- How people come by their status in their company and society
- Achieved status

- in *doing* cultures; people respected because of their personal/professional accomplishments
- status earned—not a function of birth, age, connections
- status not automatic; can be forfeited if achievement stops
- Ascribed status
  - in *being* cultures; a certain amount of status is built into a person
  - respected because of family, social class you're born into
  - titles important; should always be used
  - status is automatic; difficult to lose (but you can lose respect)

#### 4. Concept of work

- Work as part of identity
  - people live to work; getting things done is inherently satisfying
- Work as functional necessity
  - work is the means to paying bills and meeting obligations
  - life too short to revolve around work; it is what I do, not who I am

### The Concept of Self

Concept of personal identity differs greatly from culture to culture. No culture is exclusively individualist or collective, but most tend to be more of one than the other.

Individualist=needs of individual satisfied before those of the group (common in the West)

- independence and self-reliance are stressed and valued
- people distance themselves from others
- often associated with urban settings

Collectivist=identity is a function of membership in a group (common in the East)

- harmony and interdependence of group members stressed and valued
- group members close emotionally but distant toward nongroup members
- often associated with rural settings

### Personal vs. Societal Obligations

All people struggle with how to balance obligation to family/friends vs. wider society. The relationship between individual and social ethics is influenced by culture. Just like Concept of Self, no culture is exclusively universalist or particularist, but most tend to be more of one than the other.

Universalism=Certain absolutes apply across the board, regardless of circumstances (more common in highly religious cultures)

- apply the same rules to everyone in like situations
- lay personal feelings aside to view objectively

Particularism=Treat your in-group the best you can and let the rest of the world take care of itself (more common in highly humanistic cultures)

- no absolutes; everything depends on whom you're dealing with
- exceptions will always be made for certain people

## The Concept of Time

Cultures differ in how people handle time, and how their concept of time affects interactions with others.

Monochronic=Time is the given and people are the variable (more common in North America)

- needs of people are adjusted to suit the demands of time
- people do one thing at a time and finish it before starting something else

Polychronic=Time is the tool of and adjusted to suit the needs of people (more common in Central and South America)

- more time is always available; you're never too busy
- people should do things simultaneously; not necessary to finish one thing before starting another

## The Locus of Control

Cultures differ greatly in their view of a person's place in the external world, especially how humans can control outside forces and thus their own destiny. Culture influences how much control people believe they have over their lives; activists and fatalists live in very different worlds.

Internal=locus of control within individual; very few givens in life that can't be changed (more common in wealthy cultures)

- life is what I do; there are no limits to what I can become if I set my mind to it and make the necessary effort

External=locus of control is external; some aspects of life are predetermined (more common in resource-scarce cultures)

- life is what happens to me; there are givens that must be accepted

## Social Relationships

- We all obey numerous rules for interacting with people in close quarters, most of which we aren't aware of.
- People from other cultures may have different expectations of friendships/relationships.

## Adjusting to a New Culture

All learners experience an adjustment period when arriving in the US. Here are some common adjustment phases and their impact.

- Honeymoon – first 1-6 weeks, depending on exposure and supports. Everything is new, fun, exciting.
- Initial Culture Shock – up to 2 months. Tired of relying on others, missing routines and family.
- Initial Adjustment – up to 6 months. Building enough confidence to strike out and do basic everyday tasks such as grocery shopping or going to post office.
- Culture Shock – rotates with adjustment. Finds relationships lacking intimacy, misses friends and expressing opinions, feelings, etc.
- Adjustment – rotates with culture shock. Moves deeper into new culture and experiences and succeeds.



- Going home again – learners often don't anticipate experiencing culture shock when they return home and yet most do. There is a new cycle of shock-adjust-shock-adjust that happens when folks return to their home country.

## Levels of Cultural Awareness

As a learner adjusts to a new culture and experiences the above phases, their awareness of the new culture increases. This awareness tends to progress through a series of level described below. It is common for each level to correspond with each phase of adjustment.

### Unconscious Incompetence

This has also been called the state of blissful ignorance. At this stage, the learner is unaware of cultural differences. It does not occur to them that they may be making cultural mistakes or that they may be misinterpreting much of the behavior going on around them. They have no reason not to trust their instincts or understanding.

### Conscious Incompetence

They now realize that differences exist between the way they and the people around them behave, though they understand very little about what these differences are, how numerous they might be, or how deep they might go. The learner knows there's a problem here, but they're not sure about the size of it. They're not so sure of their instincts anymore, and they realize that some things they don't understand. They may start to worry about how hard it's going to be to figure these people out.

### Conscious Competence

The learner knows cultural differences exist, they know what some of these differences are, and they try to adjust their own behavior accordingly. It doesn't come naturally yet—it's a conscious effort to behave in culturally appropriate ways and it's exhausting—but you are much more aware of how their behavior is coming across to Americans. The learner is in the process of replacing old instincts with new ones.

### Unconscious Competence

The learner no longer has to think about what they're doing in order to do the right thing. Culturally appropriate behavior is now second nature to them; they can trust their instincts because they have been reconditioned by the new culture.

*Peace Corps, Field Orientation Manual, 2017. Peace Corps, Cultural-Exchange Workbook, 2022.*

## Reflect and Grow

Think about the phases of adjustment. How will you see these reflected in the learners you tutor? How can observation or discussion of these steps help you and the learner? How can these phases be helpful topics to use when approaching more academic tasks or skills in a session? How can these topics help you prepare for the needs of the learner?

## Critical Incidents

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**Purpose:** Enabling learners to engage in a discussion about a specific incident to better understand American culture. It is not about a “right” or “wrong” answer, it’s about understanding culture in context.

**Method:**

1. Select a social situation in which you have noticed that people from other cultures often feel insecure in responding—a situation in which the person new to the culture and the American may be surprised or confused by each other’s behavior. Example: situations related to time.
2. Write a critical incident—a 1-2 sentence scenario related to this situation. Create three or four possible choices for how a person might respond.
3. If possible, make one of the choices a response that would be appropriate in the learner’s own culture.

Example of a critical incident related to time: Betty asked Maria to dinner and told her to come around 6:00 p.m. When should Maria arrive?

- anytime convenient
  - 10 minutes before
  - 60 minutes after 6
  - precisely at 6
4. Give each learner a copy of the critical incident.
  5. Ask each learner to read the incident and choose the answer he or she thinks is most appropriate.
  6. Review each response one at a time. Invite participants to discuss the consequences of each and why they chose the one they did. To enrich discussion, add context. Example; “if Betty were Maria’s mother-in-law, would it change your answer?” or “What if Maria and Betty have been best friends since they were 5 years old?”
  7. Invite the learners to discuss their own attitudes toward time and what they have learned about American attitudes toward time. Your goal will be to help them understand what might be the most appropriate course of action in American culture and how to use context to make the best decision.

**Suggestions:**

- Learners from different cultural backgrounds may come up with a variety of reasons for arriving at a particular time. Your main job will be to allow the discussion to flow and enable people to share many different ideas. Then you can work on helping learners understand appropriate behavior in American culture.
- It is important to discuss each choice rather than just ask, “What is the correct choice?” You want to have learners consider the consequences of each possibility within U.S. culture.
- Be aware of the following before you try the critical incident about when to arrive for dinner. In the United States, the safest choice is probably c, but not all Americans would agree to this. A lack of consensus could be a reflection of the fact that we are all independent culture learners— and that there are many subcultures within any culture. Cultures are always changing, so there is room for debate and divergent answers.



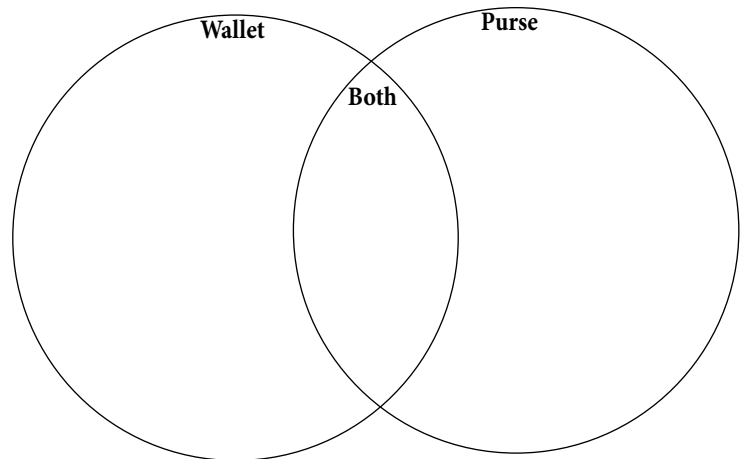
## Venn Diagram

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A Venn diagram is a graphic organizer used to compare and contrast two items or two sets of information. For instance: A wallet and a purse.

Here are some other suggestions:

- grocery shopping in the United States vs. home country
- women vs. men
- writing vs. speaking
- two articles on the same topic
- New Year's in the United States vs. home country
- tutor vs. teacher
- pop vs. orange juice
- shopping in the mall vs. on-line



What are your ideas?

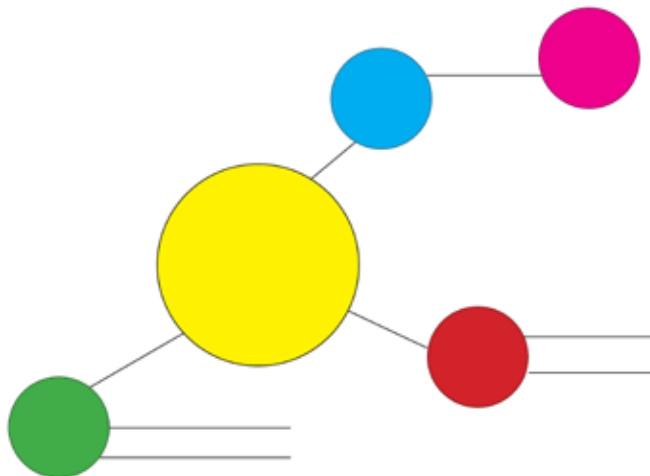
## Story Map (Word Bug)

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**Purpose:** To make a visual outline of a story or article to help the learner understand what they have read.

**Method:** Use a graphic organizer to help the learner write about the story and arrange their thoughts in a meaningful way.

1. Start by drawing a circle in the middle of the page. Have the learner write the main idea or even in the circle (provide assistance if the learner has difficulty writing).
2. Help the learner map the ideas or events that spring from the center using lines and more circles. Cluster related ideas together.
3. Encourage the learner to look back at the reading selection to see if any important ideas were missed.



## Tutor Tips

[Click here](#) to read a summary of Yosso's Cultural Wealth Model. Yosso's model validates the wealth of non-academic knowledge that exists within every person.

Similarly, "funds of knowledge" is an asset-based, rather than deficit-based, approach to education. [Click here](#) to watch a video on Funds of Knowledge.

How can you capitalize on the learner's knowledge? How can you be inclusive by inviting the learner to share? How can you encourage them to share and value their own cultural wealth?

Tutors can also empower learners to "study" culture outside of tutoring sessions. Learners can be cultural observers either of a specific aspect of culture or in general. Learners can also be cultural researchers. And, learners can act as a focus group to compare and contrast experiences and cultures. In other words, as the tutor, don't feel this is all on you! Encourage active participation and active learning.

## Language Experience Activity Variations

1. After working on a particular Language Experience Activity, rewrite the story in vertical columns:

"I go to the store yesterday. I bought eggs. I not find the bus to go home."  
Becomes:

I	yesterday.	I	bus
go	I	not	to
to	bought	find	go
the	eggs.	the	home.
store			

2. Read the columns aloud to remind the learner of the story. Then ask your learner to read the story to you (reading down the columns).
3. Point to the horizontal rows and ask your learner to read aloud across the rows. This will help you identify words that need further repetition. Go back to the columns as necessary to help them figure out the words.

### Other Uses for LEAs

Skill	Activity
Word study	Use for phonics/phonemic awareness; have learners identify the initial letter sounds and/or have the learners find words with specific sounds
Vocabulary	Use for vocabulary expansion; identify antonyms, synonyms, word parts
Editing	Use more complex vocabulary words to make the passage more powerful or interesting. Tell learners there are X number of errors and have them try to find and fix.
Grammar	Identify the various parts of speech, punctuation and/or have learners rewrite the story in past or future tense.
Sequencing	Practice putting the words and/or sentences in different orders to see how the meaning changes. Put individual words from a sentence on flashcards and have learners recreate (a great tactile-kinesthetic activity).

Be creative with your topics! LEAs can be narratives, letters, personal stories, memories of their best birthday presents, favorite recipes, biographies of a family member, story prompts from *101 LEA Ideas* on the WL website... You can also bring in random photos to prompt fictional stories.



## Dialogues

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Dialogues are scripted roleplays and allow the learner to read the conversation. They are very comfortable for beginning and intermediate learners because they provide a model for “correct” English conversations in real-life situations.

### 1. Ideas for dialogue topics

- Saying hello to a neighbor
- Checking out at the grocery store
- Asking about the price of something in a store
- Asking for/giving directions
- Talking to a child’s/grandchild’s teacher
- Calling a repair-person on the phone
- Answering a phone call from an English speaker

### 2. How to build a dialogue (see next page “Role Plays” for an example dialogue)

- What level is your learner (beginning, intermediate, advanced)?
- Where will the dialogue take place?
- Who are the characters?
- How long do you want it to be?
- Do you want to review vocabulary or introduce new vocabulary?
- What phrases or idioms do you commonly find in this situation?
- Type up the lines well-separated in big print, labeling the two characters clearly.

### 3. How to get a dialogue going

- Go over vocabulary that will be in the dialogue, make sure everyone understands where and when it will take place.

## Role Plays

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Role plays are a fun way to build on dialogues or to practice speaking in specific real-life situations. Role plays are not scripted, therefore more challenging.

### 1. Role Play topics

Same as dialogues!

### 2. Ways to get role plays off the ground

- Start with a dialogue, then say “what if...” and change the situation a little

Example:

*Customer: Excuse me, sir.*

*Clerk: Yes, can I help you?*

## Tutor Tips

The most common reason an ESL learner contacts staff is thinking their tutor is mad at them and they don’t know why. This is almost always a communication problem and almost always the result of a cultural assumption.

For instance, the learner is late several times and sometimes leaves early. The tutor talks with the learner about it and they agree that they will be *on time* and work together for a full 2 hours at each meeting. The very next week, the learner shows up at 2:15 for a 2 p.m. session. The tutor is frustrated and it shows.

When staff talks with the learner, it is clear that in the learner’s culture, any time within a 30-minute window is considered “on time”. [Watch this video](#) for some humorous inspiration. How can you guard against assumptions and promote open communication?

The only invisible culture is your own. A fish doesn’t know he is wet. It’s hard to recognize your Midwest accent, even though people from Boston will hear it. If you are open, if you are humble, you will learn as much from tutoring as the learner does. Imagine activities where the learner is the tutor!

*Customer: How much does this milk cost?*

*Clerk: It costs \$2.69.*

*Customer: Is there any other milk on sale?*

*Clerk: Yes, the Springdale 2% milk is \$1.99 per gallon this week.*

*Customer: Thank you.*

*Clerk: You're welcome. Have a good day.*

What if the customer was trying to buy onions?

Have a conversation about what happens in a certain life situation, then ask learners to play roles. You may participate, but learners will get the most conversation practice if you're just a helper.

Example:

*What happens at the grocery store when you get the wrong change?* Hand out role-play cards telling each person the role-play situation and what they are supposed to do.

Example:

*Card #1: You are at the bus station. Go to the window and find out how to get to Ypsilanti.*

*Card #2: You work at the information desk at the bus station. Answer people's questions. (Make up information if you don't know the answer.)*

Look at a picture, talk about the story behind the picture, then act out a scene in the lives of the people in the picture.

Example:

*See the picture on p. 9. Suppose that as a group, you have decided that this couple is married and has a 7-year-old girl. She is sick and has to go to the doctor. Have two people role play the doctor and one parent. You can make it more elaborate by adding the other parent, a receptionist, a nurse, etc.*

## Teaching with One Picture/Picture Role Play

**Purpose:** To provide a stimulus for a variety of conversational exercises. Using a single picture, this series of exercises begins with controlled responses and concludes with an open-ended role play.

**Method:**

1. Choose a picture or photograph that depicts one or more people.
2. Prepare and write out beforehand all commands and questions for each step in the activity.
3. Display the picture or photograph in full view of the learners.

Physical response only

4. Call on three or four learners in turn. Tell each person to point to various items in the picture. Some sample commands: "Point to a cup." "Point to the woman's hand." "Point to the young man's tie." This is a relatively simple exercise which requires no verbal response from learners. This type of Total Physical Response (TPR) activity is useful with beginning level learners.

Yes-or-no answers

5. Call on two or three learners to answer questions that require a yes-or-no answer. For example: "Is the woman standing?" "Are there two men in the picture?" "Is the young man wearing glasses?" This exercise requires the simplest oral response. It can be done with learners at all levels.

### Short answers

6. Call on two or three learners to answer questions that require a one-word or short-phrase answer. Examples: “What is in the woman’s hand?” “How many people are in the picture?” “Who is wearing the white shirt?” Now you are encouraging the learners to use language of their own to respond to your questions. This is a first step toward active participation in a conversation.

### Open-ended questions

7. Call on learners to answer some open-ended questions that build a story. Encourage them to be creative and have fun. Some possible questions and answers:
  - “How is the woman feeling?” (“She is not happy.”)
  - “Why isn’t she happy?” (“She’s having a problem with her husband.”)
  - “Who is the older man?” (“the woman’s father”)
  - “What is his name?” (“Frank”)
  - “What is her name?” (“Betty”)
  - “What is her husband’s name?” (“Peter”)

### Role Play

8. Use the answers to the open-ended questions to build a role play. Encourage learners to relax and enjoy the role play. Throughout the activity, do not correct the learners’ errors. Let them experience their roles and express themselves in the ways that come naturally. The spirit of fun should prevail.
  - a. Place a chair for each person in the role play at the front of the room. (The number of chairs needed will vary according to the number of characters generated in step 7.)
  - b. Ask for a volunteer to play the part of one of the characters.
  - c. Invite that character to take a seat.
  - d. Ask the person a few questions that are consistent with answers given during the open-ended questions. Examples: “Are you mad at your husband?” “Why or why not?”
  - e. Ask for another volunteer to play the role of a second character.
  - f. Invite the new character to take a seat.
  - g. Ask this person a question or two to involve him or her in the role play.
  - h. Continue with this activity for two or three minutes. Add each new character one at a time.
  - i. Encourage the characters to speak to each other in their roles.
  - j. After the role play has progressed for a while and the characters have had a chance to express themselves, stop the activity and thank the learners for their help.

### Suggestions

- In a one-to-one situation, lead the learner through the above process. Use a picture with only two characters. You will take one role while the learner takes the other role.
- During the role play, you may find it necessary to do something to keep the exchange going. If so, ask leading questions or make suggestions of your own about the people or events in the picture.

For example, you have a picture of two men seated at a lunch counter. You have just set up the role play. You might say, “Sam, you look surprised. Did Michael say something that surprised you?”

- A role play does not always develop as planned. It can be difficult for some learners to speak in a second language about things that are not actually true for them. ESL learners who are not very fluent in English may find it quite difficult to come up with English expressions and make up a story at the same time. If learners have difficulty giving an answer to any of your questions, rephrase the question to require a simpler answer. Example: “Is this man your friend?” instead of “How well do you know this man?” Go slowly and give the learners plenty of time to think and formulate their responses.
- Do not correct errors during the role play. The purpose of a role play is to encourage free use of English under moderately challenging circumstances. Its value lies in allowing learners to communicate freely in English without having to worry about precision.
- You may find that the learners cannot do all the steps in this activity because they do not yet have the necessary English ability. Their ability levels will determine how far they can go. Open-ended questions and role plays may be too advanced for some learners.

(This teaching technique for using a single picture is adapted from *Teacher to Teacher*, © 1988 by City University of New York, published by New Reader Press. Used by permission.)

## Using Pictures In Conversation

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Pictures may be your best ESL resource. They are flexible, fun, and non-intimidating.

Pictures are good for...

- Stimulating conversation
- Teaching/practicing vocabulary
- Teaching/practicing sentence patterns
- Talking about American cultural practices

How to choose pictures

- People doing something
- Interesting background scene
- Lots of objects and colors
- Scenes/items from everyday life

Basic picture activities

- Identify objects
- Describe objects/people/places
- List people’s actions
- Imagine relationships between people
- Elaborate the above into a story
- Relate things in the picture to each of your own lives
- Talk about the American beliefs/customs demonstrated in a picture



**Set up for success.** The volunteer can ask questions. You can give a script of questions to learners to ask each other in pairs or triads. You can have two groups make up the “story” a picture tells and then share their stories with each other. You can start by identifying objects, then enter a conversation about American culture(s) when a learner seems interested in a particular object or concept. When the conversation ends, you can come back to the picture.

## More Picture Activities

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There are many different ways to use pictures. The suggestions below are just a small sampling.

### 1. Picture sequencing

- Choose pictures that could make a story.
- Pick out the same model in different clothes.
- White-out the words in newspaper cartoons and cut the frames apart.

### 2. Picture grouping

- Use simple pictures of objects.
- Encourage learners to group by color, size, use, type, etc.

### 3. 20 questions

- Lay out several similar pictures on the table.
- Choose one.
- Have learners ask you questions to guess which picture you chose.

### 4. Picture BINGO

- Make BINGO cards with pictures, possibly clipart from a computer.
- Make word cards associated with each picture.
- You or learners pick a card at random and read the word.
- Everyone with the associated picture on their BINGO card puts a disk on it. (Poker chips work well for 1” x 1” pictures.)

### 5. Describe and Draw

- Select a picture that is stimulating but not too complicated
- Have one learner be the designated “drawer” (provide them with a white board or paper)
- Have the other learners select a picture to describe
- Learners take turns describing aspects of the picture as the designated drawer does their best to recreate it
- The drawer compares their work to the original picture
- Switch roles if time

## Tutor Tips

**What makes a good picture? Consider these attributes:**

- Will this be interesting and motivating to the learner (is it associated with their goals, hobbies, and interests)?
- Is it relevant to their everyday life (realia like junk mail, a cereal box, or a form from a MDs office is best) vs. a random news article or detached Dr. Seuss book (unless the learner is a parent)?
- Is the item culturally sensitive and reflective of diversity? Is it free from bias?
- Is it at a level that is comfortable, stretch, or impossible for the learners? (note: this is the last and least important question because part of tutoring is helping learners find strategies to manage hard materials)
- Can it be used for more than one purpose (noun identification, color, culture discussion, roleplay, story telling, etc.)?

## Tutor Tips

Culture is about groups. Groups form culture.

- It is impossible to talk about groups without generalizing, over-simplifying and categorizing.
- We (Americans) instinctively feel uncomfortable making generalization or being subject to them...We (Americans) don't like stereotyping.
- Culture is just one of many influences on behavior

Tutor quote-“Tutoring isn't about me being comfortable, it's about me helping someone else succeed.”

What do you guess is the number one request from our ESL learners? Help with understanding American culture. So tutors must be brave and even uncomfortable at times, so they can answer learner questions about culture in a way that helps the learner succeed and feel more confident.

Apply what you've learned about Universal, Cultural, Personal. Answer questions directly and boldly but honestly.

A few sample phrases that may help!

- In the U.S., it's common to...
- In Ann Arbor many people...
- It's important to know that...

## Conversation Questions about Pictures

### Choosing pictures for conversation:

- Find pictures with **people doing things**
- Find pictures **large enough** for your learners to see details
- Find pictures with an **interesting background**
- Find pictures that promote conversation about **American Culture**

### Sample questions about pictures:

#### Identification questions (very specific, good for beginners)

- What is that (in the middle of the picture)?
- What color is the sky?
- What is on the end of the piano?
- Is this picture inside or outside?
- How many people are in the picture?
- What is next to the piano?

#### Description/narration questions (intermediate questions)

- What is the man doing?
- What is the woman doing?
- Where is the piano?
- What are the other people doing?
- How is the weather?
- What time of day is it?

#### Conjecture/imagination/opinion questions (these can stretch advanced students)

- How does the man feel?
- What is his name?
- What is the relationship between the man and the woman?
- Why is the piano outside?
- What is the woman thinking?
- Why are all those people standing around?
- How much does the T-shirt cost?
- What is the brick building behind them?
- What does it look like inside?
- What is going on to the right of the piano, outside the picture?
- Do you play any instruments?
- What kinds of music do you like?



## Resources

Consider using any and all of the activities from the training module in sessions with the learner(s). How do they complete the iceberg? What do they think of the cultural etiquette list?

Here are some activities from our website you might want to do with the learner(s): [Ten American Values](#), [13 Things You Should Know About Americans](#), [The Values That Shape US Culture](#), [101 Characteristics of American Culture](#).

Additionally, below is a list from UM World Languages Department. Consider printing this list and cutting it into strips. Place the strips in an envelope and pass it around, each person taking one strip and reading it aloud. Take some time after each strip is read to discuss it. Is this true? Is it also true of the learner's home country? What does it mean for the learners experience or understanding of culture?

1. America is enormous: the third largest country in the world with a population of more than 300 million people.
2. Americans come in all colors, have all types of religions, and speak many languages from all over the world.
3. Americans are extremely independent, individualistic, and like to be different from each other.
4. 66% of Americans are overweight; 37% of those are obese.
5. Americans believe in freedom of choice.
6. Americans need a lot of "elbow room"; they like personal space around them.
7. Approximately 1% of Americans are homeless (3.5 million people).
8. Americans talk easily to the homeless but use good judgment and are careful with whom they talk.
9. Sadly, the streets of major cities are often dirty.
10. Many people, especially teenagers, wear strange clothes, and many have tattoos and body piercings.
11. Americans follow the rule of law.
12. Littering (throwing garbage on the street), graffiti and tagging (writing on the walls), and loitering (standing around and doing nothing) are against the law and are punishable by a fine or jail.
13. Discriminating against or making any insulting statement about someone else's religion or ethnicity is against the law and could be punishable as a *hate crime*.
14. You must be over the age of 21 and you must have an identification card with a photo to buy or drink alcohol.

## Putting Theory into Practice

As you learned in the Foundations module, literacy tutoring at Washtenaw Literacy follows the concepts put forth by Freire and Knowles. We believe in personal growth that is learner-directed, dialogic, and relevant to adult life. As we get to know people, we begin to understand their universal, cultural, and personal traits. We get to know their goals, their needs, their assets. Tutoring is about the whole person. It's about honoring differences and learning from each other. It's about giving information so the learner can succeed. [Watch this video](#) to learn more about the danger of a single story or one-sided view of culture.

15. In most states, it is illegal to buy cigarettes if you are under the age of 18 and often you can only smoke in certain places.
16. Americans are extremely informal and call most people by their first name or nickname.
17. Americans smile a lot and talk easily to strangers, sharing personal stories.
18. Asking “How are you?” is simply a greeting and is not a question about your health.
19. When Americans put their hands on their hips, they are usually relaxed; when they fold their arms tightly across their chests, they are angry or very serious (or cold).
20. Americans don’t push or stand too close to anyone in line. They always wait their turn.
21. In a restaurant, the server is usually very friendly and helpful and often will tell you his or her name.
22. When the service is good, tipping is expected to be 15–20% of the bill.
23. Polite Americans eat with one hand while the other one is under the table on their laps.
24. Usually, when friends meet at a restaurant they each pay their share of the bill or split the bill in half. It’s called *going Dutch*.
25. If you have guests over to your house, turn off the television, make sure your music isn’t too loud.
26. Americans have parties for many reasons. Sometimes they are held for friends to get together and to meet new people. There is rarely music or dancing at a typical American party.
27. When you meet Americans, be sure to look them in the eye, smile, and shake hands.
28. Make small talk at the beginning of a conversation. After a few questions, you will be asked, “What do you do?” (This means what is your job?)
29. For weddings and showers, people register for gifts at a specific place.
30. Americans open presents and cards in front of people.
31. Be sure you include a card with your gift. The person given the gift will send you a thank you card.
32. At an American funeral, it is not normal to make loud sad sounds. Americans try to keep strong emotions inside.
33. There is no traditional color or flower that symbolizes death. Any and all flowers can be used at funerals.
34. We do not give money at a funeral. Sometimes, we send flowers or plants to the ceremony.
35. After the funeral, there is usually a reception at the home of the family. There is usually a lot of food and sometimes alcohol.
36. Never ask Americans a direct question about their religion, age, money, salary, weight, or dress/suit size.
37. Do not make any racist or negative remarks about someone’s religion, family background, or sexual preferences.
38. Men should not make any “sexist” remarks to or about women—anything that would make women unequal to men.
39. Americans say that they don’t want to talk about politics, but sometimes they do. It’s best to just listen first to see the other person’s point of view before you let them know your thoughts.
40. Never go to someone’s house without calling first to see if it is convenient.



41. If you are invited to an American party, do not bring your children, friends, or family members without first asking the permission of the host.
42. Time is money. Never be late to classes, employment interviews, appointments, parties (especially your wedding!), etc.
43. Some Americans hug a lot. It is okay for women and men to hug even if they are not close friends.
44. It is normal for American women to have male friends who are just friends (and vice versa).
45. It is not uncommon for American men and women to share an apartment as roommates and not have a sexual relationship with each other.
46. Most American women do not like possessive or jealous men.
47. Most American women do not feel comfortable having the man pay for everything all of the time.
48. Be careful: Meet new friends in a public place many times before you get into a car or give out your address.
49. American parents speak to their children as adults and teach them how to be responsible for their actions.
50. American parents encourage their children to question and always ask “Why?”
51. It is normal for American children to have very messy rooms.
52. It is common for young Americans to carry *security blankets* or a stuffed toy.
53. Americans do not hit their children but discipline them by taking things away.
54. American men try to share equally with their wives in parenting and housework.
55. Americans hire “babysitters” to take care of their children when they go out or are at work.
56. Americans love their pets, sometimes more than they love people.
57. Homosexuality is protected by law in the United States.
58. The majority of older Americans prefer to live in *retirement homes* for independent living rather than to live with their grown children.
59. Americans admire youth and often work past age 65 and/or go back to school.
60. Domestic violence is against the law. It is illegal to hit anyone: a spouse, a parent, a child, and even a pet.
61. There are special seats in the front of buses reserved for disabled people or senior citizens.
62. Be careful when you offer your seat on the bus to an older or a disabled person. Most older people do not want to be thought of as someone needing help.
63. Most buses require the exact amount of money and cannot make change.
64. Because of pick-pockets, Americans carry credit cards and checks, instead of a lot of cash.
65. Pedestrians always have the right of way.
66. Pedestrians must cross at a cross walk or unmarked intersection. Crossing in the middle of the road is against the law.
67. If it is not a life or death emergency, do not call 911.
68. Rent must be paid on time or there is usually a late fee.
69. If you pay your rent by cash, be sure to get a receipt.

70. Americans love to hunt for bargains and often buy used things.
71. If the police put the lights on to tell you to stop your car, move to the side of the road right away. Stay in your car.
72. Look directly at the officer. Smile and say, “What seems to be the problem, Officer?”
73. When you drive, be sure to always have your license, registration, and proof of insurance with you.
74. Never, for any reason, argue with or give money to a police officer.
75. Always be on time to the job interview and to your job.
76. Dress appropriately for the job interview.
77. Smile, look the interviewer in the eye, and shake hands firmly when you meet.
78. At the interview, be positive and describe your good qualities.
79. Sexual harassment is against the law.
80. Students are expected to ask questions.
81. Never use a cell phone in class.
82. It is normal for an American teacher to sit on the desk.
83. Always call your teacher by his or her name.
84. It is never too late to go back to school and you can almost always find free adult education classes.
85. It is permitted to visit most college and university campuses to see what they are like.
86. Children from the ages of 6 to 16 must attend school in the United States.
87. Do your own work. Copying from a book, a friend, or the Internet is called *plagiarism*.
88. Cheating is serious, and the punishment is strong.
89. Americans try to take care of a medical problem early.
90. When you have a serious medical problem, it’s a good idea to get a second opinion.
91. You can always ask the receptionist how much a doctor’s appointment will cost.
92. When you need to make an appointment with a doctor, list all of your symptoms in English before you call.
93. Most states have free or low-cost clinics.
94. Never go to a hospital emergency room unless it is a matter of life or death.
95. Americans are really careful about not bothering anyone else with their body odor or bad breath.
96. Most Americans take at least one bath or shower each day.
97. Most Americans put on a good underarm deodorant after bathing.
98. Throw all toilet paper and seat covers in the toilet to be flushed away.
99. If you can’t understand the sign on the restroom door, ask someone or check to see who goes in or comes out.
100. Americans often talk to each other or even use a cell phone while in the bathroom.
101. There are very few “public” bathrooms available in U.S. cities and towns.