

Frequently Asked Questions About Volunteering with LVGH

1. Do I need teaching experience?

No! We happily provide an extensive training workshop that prepares you for the classroom. We feel that classroom exposure is the best way to learn the in and outs of teaching, so we make sure that you get lots of it. You will have the opportunity to observe classes and then jump right in with some student teaching. When you start tutoring your own class, we'll pair you with a seasoned tutor to show you the ropes.

If you have experience teaching/tutoring already, we welcome you as well. You will be a resource to new teachers as you move through the training. And because our diverse, adult population is unique, we are sure you will learn a few new things, too!

2. I thought this was one-on-one tutoring. Why do I keep hearing about classes?

LVGH uses a small-group teaching model. As a tutor here, you will work with groups of 3-6 students, teaching weekly 2-hour class sessions. Occasionally, you may decide to meet one-on-one with a student to provide some extra help.

3. What's the time commitment?

Continuity is important for our students, so we ask that volunteers commit to at least one full semester of tutoring (ideally one full year). You will dedicate one morning, afternoon or evening per week for a two-hour block, plus a couple of hours per week of preparation time.

4. Do I need to speak another language?

Nope! The only language requirement for our tutors is that they can read, write, and speak clear and fluent English. In fact, even in our English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes, we ask that English is spoken almost exclusively. In an ESOL class, you might have students who speak six different languages, and we wouldn't want to exclude anyone from the conversation. Plus, we firmly believe that English immersion is the absolute best way to learn the language.

5. Is there a curriculum, or do I have to make it up as I go along?

There is a standard curriculum for each of our classes. Whether you're tutoring in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), Basic Literacy for native English-speakers, or one of our elective courses (see About Classes), we will provide you with a curriculum and textbook. Not only does this act as a guide for your teaching, it ensures that you are teaching what the students actually need to know to be successful.

The curricula are correlated with the state-based Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) test, with a strong emphasis on life skills for adults. CASAS is the most widely used assessment system in the US and is used to measure the English language and

literacy skills that adults need to function effectively in work and in life. You will find that the curriculum is practical, tangible, and easily applicable to adults' daily lives.

While adherence to the curriculum is important, we also encourage a healthy dose of creativity. Our goal is to foster critical thinking and to engage our students in learning what is important to them, not to teach to a test. Many of our tutors choose to supplement the curriculum with other educational materials as appropriate for their particular students' needs and interests. You can check out the Resources section of this website for some ideas.

6. I have teaching/tutoring experience already. Is the Tutor Training Workshop required for everyone?

Yes. Whether you have been teaching for thirty years or you've never taught a day in your life, we require all new tutors to participate in our entire training process, from classroom observations to the training workshops to student teaching. This is true even if you have tutored with another Literacy Volunteers group in another city or state.

Our tutor training process will give you important background information about the unique culture and community here at LVGH, prepare you to work with our student body of adult learners, familiarize you with the specific curriculum we use, and, most importantly, ensures a consistent educational experience for our students and a consistent service experience for our tutors!

If you are already an experienced teacher/tutor, we value your experience and look forward to having you as a resource for your students and fellow tutors.

7. Is there anyone to help me if I have a problem?

Always. Support is critical to the LVGH experience. Whether it's a question about the curriculum, providing assistance to a student, how to find out if there's a snow day, or you are having trouble with the copier, our program staff is here to help (see staff listing).

In addition to the staff, you have a built in support system of over 180 other tutors, many of whom will have the same questions and challenges that you may face. You will be part of a cohort of tutors during the Tutor Training Workshop, and you will meet many other tutors as you go.

8. I'd love to volunteer, but not in a classroom. Is there anything for me?

We try our best to find something for everyone, and our staff is here to help match you with the right position. Depending on the time of year, you may be able to volunteer to help students in the computer lab, help out with special events and fundraising, or assist on a committee (see position descriptions). It just depends on what our needs, and your interests and skills, are at any given time. Please note your interests on your volunteer application, and we'll let you know what we have available!

9. I don't live or work in Hartford. Can I still volunteer with LVGH?

Yes! Many of our volunteers – and even our students! – come from towns across the Greater Hartford region. In addition to our Hartford Literacy Center, we have another location in East Hartford, which may be more convenient for you. We will discuss these options at your Welcome Meeting.

10. Are there any eligibility requirements to become a LVGH volunteer?

You must be 18 or older. A minimum of a high school diploma (or equivalent) and the ability to read, write, and speak clear and fluent English is required for this position.

11. Can I volunteer at LVGH to fulfill a community service obligation for probation or for school?

Because of the intensive amount of training time we invest in our new volunteers, and the level of commitment we ask for, LVGH is usually not the best option for those who are required to complete community service hours for legal or education purposes (such as to fulfill the terms of probation, or as a course requirement). Often, people seeking that type of community service would find it easier to volunteer with organizations who offer more one-time or short-term volunteer opportunities (i.e., soup kitchens, food pantries).

If you are interested in volunteering with LVGH and you are in this type of situation, please call us to discuss your options and your particular circumstances. We consider cases like this on an individual basis.

12. I am planning to move abroad to teach English and/or I am currently enrolled in a TESOL certification course or degree program. Can I attend LVGH's tutor training and tutor for a few sessions to get the extra experience?

We have worked with many volunteers who aspire to teach ESOL professionally and would like to gain experience first. However, the Tutor Training Workshop is reserved for incoming LVGH volunteers who are committed to tutoring with LVGH for at least one full term (a typical term is 12 weeks long). If you can commit to that, you are welcome to join us while studying for your certification!