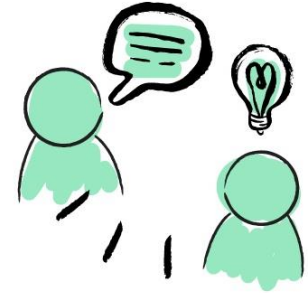


# Supporting EAL students in your OSHLSP

## EAL students in your OSHLSP

Homework clubs are often a crucial source of support for the roughly 6,000 students who arrive in Victoria every year with English as an Additional Language. These students often enrol in a specialised English language school before transitioning into mainstream schooling. Learn more about refugee journeys into Victorian schools [here](#).



EAL students are often dealing with multiple challenges at once, such as settling into a new country, helping parents and caregivers to adapt to life in Australia, perhaps dealing with trauma and health problems, as well as trying to learn a new language and understand a new education system. This means that in your OSHLSP, you can focus on holistic support of students, such as social, emotional, and physical wellbeing, as well as academic support.

Creating a welcoming and accessible environment for EAL students might include having forms and information available in community languages, or represented visually and using simple English, or working with interpreters. You might also think about ways to encourage social activities between EAL students and other students, to help them make friends with their peers.

Tutors do not need to have a background in EAL teaching to be effective tutors. Language learning often requires a lot of practice and consolidation, which tutors are well-placed to do. This could mean encouraging students to bring in their schoolwork so that tutors could go over what students had learned that week.

### Informal language needs assessment

Conducting an informal language needs assessment is a useful first step when working with EAL students. This includes assessing their needs, skills, and learning preferences.

You can assess students' language needs in various ways:

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- ❧ Start with an informal chat. While talking, note down any problems the student might be having, as well as any strengths. You might like to use pictures as prompts. Assess student's listening skills in this conversation by asking specific questions and giving instructions to see how the students respond.
- ❧ Read a simple book or text together to assess students' reading skills and gauge their level. You can also use this as an opportunity to understand their learning strategies, such as sounding out words, or looking up unfamiliar words.
- ❧ Check their writing skills by asking them to write a short paragraph on topics such as their family or their home. You could also ask them to write about the book you read together, to further check their comprehension skills.
- ❧ In your discussion, it's good to get a sense of what their interests are, and their learning capacity outside of the classroom. This will help you to set expectations of your sessions together.



## Tutoring EAL students

There are three key areas that you can focus on developing with your EAL students. These include:

### Developing language skills

A few focus areas of language to work on with your students include:

- ❧ **Vocabulary**  
Try focusing on different categories, such as food, weather, animals, or jobs. Don't try to cover too many new words in one session, and spend the first section of each session revising vocabulary from previous sessions. There are many vocabulary games you can play, including flashcards, hangman, Scrabble or Pictionary.

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## **Grammar**

This can include practicing verb tenses, sentence formation (subject-verb-object), articles, pronouns, and many other features of language. These often require a lot of practice before students are confident with these concepts, so again, it can often be best to focus on consolidating the student's learning rather than trying to introduce new topics.



## **Macro skills**

A good way to shape each session is to focus on each of the four macro skills of language: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. These last two can often be combined in a conversation, while you might combine reading and writing through reading a text and then writing on the same topic, or in the same style.



### Developing learning strategies

As well as working on content, you can help EAL students to adjust to a new learning environment and style by helping them to develop learning strategies. You can do this by:

-  Encouraging them to ask questions and ask for support. Instead of asking, 'do you understand?' ask them to explain something back to you, or check their comprehension by asking directed questions.
-  Encouraging them to seek answers from other sources of information, such as a dictionary app or their school books before asking you. This will support them to become more independent learners.

### Developing confidence and social skills

Encouraging students to build friendships with their peers will make their settlement process easier. Creating a social environment will also help students to feel more comfortable making mistakes and asking questions, crucial skills in language learning. You can help with this by:

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- ✦ Including EAL students in activities with mainstream students. Kids and young people can pick up a lot by observing and joining in, and many activities can transgress language barriers.
- ✦ Supporting students to share their culture and language with their tutor or the group. This will help them to feel empowered and value their background, and flips the dynamic of tutor and student, allowing the student to feel like the expert in an environment where they don't get this opportunity a lot.
- ✦ Developing a good rapport with students by getting to know them, and understanding what interests them. This will help you to develop sessions and content that they are engaged with and help to develop a trusting and productive relationship.
- ✦ Allowing time at the beginning or the end of your sessions for students to get to know each other. Ending the session with a group game or discussion can consolidate learning while also fostering social skills and emotional wellbeing.



## General tips

- ✦ Set small, achievable tasks, and make sure to tick them off as they're completed.
- ✦ Alternatively, if the student only has one big task to work on, try setting an amount of time to work, and break up the time with regular breaks to help the student maintain focus.
- ✦ Use charts, graphic organisers, and learning plans so that students feel confident to continue their work at home.
- ✦ Work with students through a variety of fun and engaging games and activities as well as more traditional exercises. This will help them to be more relaxed, and see learning as a more cooperative and exploratory exercise, which is sometimes different from the learning systems they are used to.
- ✦ Encourage students to focus on non-academic activities as well. There are learning opportunities in every activity, and settling into Australia requires much more than learning grammar, so encourage them to value it.