

Week 1 Individual Session: Introduction to Education

Session Goals

- ❖ Discuss and compare educational experiences across countries.
- ❖ Discuss the purpose of education.

Pre-Session Instructions for Learner

- ❖ Watch the video at the [link](#). In the session, we will discuss the differences between education systems in different countries.
- ❖ Read [this short article](#) about American classroom etiquette.
- ❖ **CHALLENGE:** Read this [article](#). During the session, you will talk about the importance of reading in school.

Pre-Session Instructions for Volunteer

- ❖ Watch this [video](#) and read this [article](#) and be prepared to discuss the differences between your country's education system and that of the learner.
- ❖ Skim this [article](#).

During the Session:

- ❖ **[5 min]** Check in with your learner (i.e. ask about their week). Introduce the new unit - explain that you will be focusing on education for the next few weeks.
- ❖ **[15 min]** Lead-in to your discussion of education. Note: Questions are organized from basic to advanced - choose the ones that are most appropriate for your learner.
 - Do you go to school? What grade are you in?
 - What classes do you take? Which class is your favorite? Do you study English in school? How long have you been studying it?
 - Do you like school? Why? Why not?
 - What is the best/[worst] part of school?
 - Do you have a lot of school work? Do you have a lot of homework? How many hours do you spend in school every day? How long does your homework take?
 - How many students attend (go to) your school?
 - Describe your school. How big is it? Does it have a particular academic focus? Is there an application process to attend the school?
 - How many years of schooling is normal in your country?
 - Do you plan on going to college? (If the learner is in high school) What do you plan to study in college and why?

- Do you have snow days at your school in the winter? Is school ever canceled for a day for other reasons?
- How many vacations do you get per year? What do you do on those school vacations?
- Describe your favorite teacher. What are they like? What do they teach? Why are they your favorite?
- What questions do you have about school in [Volunteer's country]?

❖ **[20 min]** Discussion of education in the US and abroad.

- Review the content of the [video](#) from the prework. You can ask questions like:
 - What was in the video?
 - What countries did you see in the video? Was your country in the video?
 - What did the video say about education in those countries?
- Does the education system in your country prepare students for the “real world” outside of education? Why or why not?
- Do you think that the public school system in your country prepares students to become “active citizens” (citizens who participate in government, are active in the community, etc)? Why or why not? Is this an important goal of education?
- How difficult are the classes in the public education system in your country?
- What is the grading scheme/system at your school? What is the average grade that students receive?
- What country from the video do you think has the best education system? Why or why not? (The learner may need to re-watch or skip through the video for this question.)
- In the US, a lot of pressure is put on students to get good grades. Do you think grades are really important? Or are other things more important?
- There is a saying in English: “Those who can’t do, teach.” This means that if someone is not able to practice a profession proficiently, they end up teaching that skill/knowledge to others. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

❖ **[10 min]** Many people say that teaching students to read should be one of the main purposes of school (at least in the elementary grades). Discuss the importance of reading in school.

- If your learner has read the challenge article, discuss and review any difficult vocabulary and hard to understand sections.
- Ask: do you agree with the article’s main idea? (That reading as a subject should be compulsory in school) Why or why not?
- When learning English, is reading important? Why or why not? Is reading/writing more important, less important, or as important as speaking/listening? ➤ When and how did you learn how to read in your native language?
- Do you remember the first thing you read? What was it? If a person does not know how to read effectively, what bad things might happen? (Not being able to navigate around a city, not being informed in the news, etc.)

❖ **[10 min]** American Classroom Etiquette

- Review the article the learner read. Clarify any areas of confusion. Ask what they found to be most interesting or surprising.
- Tell the learner about classroom etiquette that you are familiar with. If you go/went to school in the US, discuss classroom etiquette in the US. If you did not go to school in the US, discuss classroom etiquette in your own country. ➤ Discuss the following questions:
 - Have you studied in the United States? If so, what was it like? Did you have culture shock or was the transition easy?
 - If you haven't studied in the US, what are your impressions of US school culture? Where did these impressions come from (friends who've been abroad, US movies/TV shows?)
 - How does U.S. classroom culture differ from Ukrainian classroom culture? Are there any similarities?
 - What is personal space? Do you think ideas about personal space are the same in your country as they are in mine?
 - Americans like to keep space between people they know / do not know. Is that the same in your country?
 - Why do you think Americans keep space between people?
- Do you prefer U.S. classroom etiquette or Ukrainian classroom etiquette? Why? Have the learner give 3-4 reasons.
- If you could change one thing about the classroom etiquette in your country, what would it be and why?

Week 2 Individual Session: The Subjects

Session Goals

- ❖ Discuss and share opinions on school subjects and college majors.

Pre-Session Instructions for Learner

- ❖ Watch the video at this [link](#). Take notes on difficult vocabulary that you do not understand, or parts that are confusing. The video has captions.
- ❖ Review [this list of unique school subjects](#).
- ❖ Think of one favorite topic you studied in class - you can choose any subject. You will “teach” this topic to your buddy in the session.

Pre-Session Instructions for Volunteer

- ❖ Watch the video at this [link](#).
- ❖ Review [this list of unique school subjects](#).

During the Session:

- ❖ **[20 min]** Introductory discussion of subjects (discussion questions are ordered from basic to more advanced).
 - What does an average student in your country study when they are young (elementary school)? When they are teens (high School)?
 - Have the learner share a few examples of subjects they are studying in school or college. Which ones does the learner like? Which one does the learner not like?
 - How many classes do Ukrainian students typically take per year? Do you get to choose which subjects you study in school?
 - Tell me about your favorite subject. Why is it your favorite? Do you like your teacher in this subject?
 - Does a good teacher make a student like a subject? Does a bad teacher make a student dislike a subject?
 - Do you study subjects in English outside of English class (e.g. chemistry in English, history in English)? Is that an option at your school? If it is not an option, would you like it to be? Why?
 - How many people study English in your country? Is it required? Do you think it should be required? Why or why not?
 - How many years have you studied English? Did you like English at first? Why or why not?
 - What is the most challenging aspect of studying English for you?
 - What subjects do you think Americans study in school? More subjects or fewer subjects?

- What is a subject that you have never studied before? Why have you never studied it? (e.g. rare subjects like agriculture, theology, etc)

❖ **[15 min]** Discussion of College Majors

- Discuss the video on college majors. Ask a few comprehension questions and answer any questions the learner has.
- What are liberal arts? What is STEM? (Help the learner understand these concepts if they are unfamiliar)
- What is the most common major in your country, do you think? Why do you think it is the most common major?
- Does this major help you get a good job? Why? Are you interested in this major?
 - Is it more important to study what you love, or study what will make you money?
 - Do you know what you want to study in college (or did you?) Do a lot of people struggle to choose a major?
- Do a lot of people have this problem?

❖ **[10 min]** Presentation of the learner's favorite topic!

- Before the session, the learner should have created a short 1-2 minute presentation about their favorite topic.
- If they did do this, have the learner give their presentation. Take notes on an interesting fact that you learned, grammar or pronunciation errors, and things the learner did well. Give feedback to the learner and ask follow up questions (e.g. Why do you like this topic? When did you learn about this in school?)
- If they did not make the presentation, give them a couple of minutes to think of an interesting topic they've learned about in school this year - a particular unit in history or science class, a book they read in literature class, etc. Ask them to teach you a bit about this topic.

❖ **[15 min]** Unique school subjects and wrap-up

- Screenshare [the list of unique subjects](#). Ask if your learner had any questions about it and clarify as needed.
- Ask which of these subjects the learner would most like to study and why and which they would least like to study. Share your opinions as well.
- What are some subjects that are not taught in primary/secondary school that should be? (For example politics, government, home economics ("adulting"), cooking, photography, etc.
- If you could design a new class for you and your classmates to take next year, what would it be? What topics would you teach and how (lectures, guest speakers, group projects, etc?)

Week 3 Individual Session: Comparing Post-Secondary Education Systems

Session Goals

- ❖ Learn about American universities and colleges.
- ❖ Discuss the differences between American universities and colleges and Ukrainian universities and colleges.
- ❖ Discuss cheating in college admissions and the Varsity Blues scandal.

Pre-Session Instructions for Learner

- ❖ You are going to teach your conversation buddy about Ukrainian universities and colleges! Create an *oral* response describing both of them and be prepared to present it. You can choose 4-6 questions from [this list](#) to focus on:
- ❖ Watch [this trailer for a movie](#) based on a real-life college admissions scandal in the US
- ❖ Read [this article](#) about American universities and colleges; take notes on any difficult words or sentences you didn't understand.
 - **CHALLENGE:** Advanced learners can challenge themselves with [a more difficult article](#) on the same topic instead of the easier article.

Pre-Session Instructions for Volunteer

- ❖ Refer to the [training video on Ukrainian culture](#) for a brief introduction to the differences between colleges and universities in the United States and Ukraine.
- ❖ Watch [this trailer for a movie](#) based on a real-life college admissions scandal in the US. Review this [article](#) if you are not already familiar with the Varsity Blues scandal.
- ❖ Please read this [article](#) (easy) or this [article](#) (difficult) about American universities and colleges. Be prepared to discuss it with the learner.

During the Session:

- ❖ **[10 min]** Have the learner present their oral response.
 - Give feedback on grammar usage, vocabulary, and pronunciation and remember to tell them the things that could work on **as well as** the things they did well.
 - Ask specific clarification questions and follow-up questions. You can also choose [questions from this list](#) that they haven't covered.
- ❖ **[10 min]** Discuss the article on American universities and colleges
 - Ask the learner if he/she had any questions or didn't understand any part of the article, and clarify as needed.
 - Discuss the following questions:

- What are the differences between a school, college, and university in the USA?
- How do the terms "school," "college," and "university" differ in other countries?
- What are some examples of schools, colleges, and universities in the USA?
- How does the level of education differ between schools, colleges, and universities in the USA?
- How do the academic programs differ between schools, colleges, and universities in the USA?
- What is the admissions process like for schools, colleges, and universities in the USA?
- What is the typical duration of study for schools, colleges, and universities in the USA?
- How do the costs of attending schools, colleges, and universities in the USA differ?
- What are some of the benefits and drawbacks of attending a school, college, or university in the USA?
- How do schools, colleges, and universities in the USA contribute to society?
- What are some of the challenges faced by schools, colleges, and universities in the USA?
- How do you think the COVID-19 pandemic has affected schools, colleges, and universities in the USA?

- ❖ **[20 min]** Discuss the similarities and differences between post-secondary education in Ukraine and the US (and/or your country, if you're not in the US).
 - Tell the learner about post-secondary education in your country. If you live in the US, you can provide more details and personal experiences about US colleges and universities. If you live in another country, you can focus on that country.
 - *To avoid a monologue, invite the learner to ask you questions. If they have trouble coming up with questions, screenshare the list of questions for the oral response and use them to guide the conversation.*
 - What can you do at a college or university in one country but not the other? ➤ Which education system seems better? Note: This is a great opportunity to practice common vocabulary used to compare and contrast such as: however, although, in contrast, similarly, but, compared to, etc. Example: "Ukrainian universities don't have as many extracurricular activities *compared to* American universities."

- ❖ **[20 min]: Discuss College Admissions Scandals**

- Screen share and watch [the trailer](#) from the pre-work together. Ask your learner what this movie is about. Have them retell the story and clarify any details they missed or have questions about.
- What are the parents in this movie trying to achieve? How are they getting an advantage for their children?
- Ask if they have heard about the Varsity Blues college admissions scandal in 2019. If so, what do they know about it? Fill in the gaps.
- What surprised you the most about this college admission scandal?

- Why do you think parents might go this far to get their children into college?
 - Do you think that the parents didn't believe in their children's ability to get admitted into college?
 - Do you think that the parents believed successful parenting depended on how good a university your child can get into?
 - What is the problem with these ways of thinking?
- What are the consequences of being involved in this admissions scandal? For the parents? For the children?
- Are there admissions scandals in Ukraine? How do parents try to influence admissions? Who is involved? Do these people ever get caught? What are the consequences for the people involved?
- What can be done to prevent future cheating by parents in the college admissions process?
 - Why will it work?
 - Who is responsible for doing it?
 - Why is it better than other possible solutions?

Week 4 Individual Session: Schools - The Ups and Downs

Session Goals

- ❖ Discuss negative and positive aspects of schools in the US and Ukraine.
- ❖ Justify why something is “bad” or “good”.
- ❖ Discuss standardized testing.

Pre-Session Instructions for Learner

- ❖ Make a list of 10 good things and 10 bad things about school.
- ❖ Watch [this video](#) about standardized testing. You will talk about this video in your next session.

Pre-Session Instructions for Volunteer

- ❖ Watch [this video](#) about standardized testing. You will talk about this video in your next session.

During the Session:

- ❖ **[10 min]** Share the pros and cons of school.
 - Define “pro” and “con” if your student isn’t sure what these words mean (pro = good aspect, con = bad aspect).
 - The learner should have made a list of 10 good things and 10 bad things about school. Have them share the list and ask them to justify 2-3 of the pros and 2-3 of the cons.
- ❖ **[15 min]** Discuss public and private education.
 - NOTE: This activity is a good chance to compare the school systems in the US vs. the learner’s country. For each discussion question, offer your thoughts on the US school system after the learner shares about their country.
 - Discuss public and private education with questions such as:
 - Does your country have both private and public schools? If necessary define public schools (free education financed by taxes) and private schools (each family pays for their child)
 - Which type of school do you go to? Why?
 - Which kinds of schools do you think are better and why?
 - Which schools are more diverse: public or private? (If your student isn’t familiar with this term, explain that diverse = composed of people from different backgrounds, identities, races, etc.)
 - Are there public and private universities in your country?

❖ **[15 min]** Standardized Testing

- *NOTE:* Learners will probably not be familiar with U.S.-centered standardized testing (PSAT, SAT, ACT, GRE, etc.) They may be familiar with English language testing (TOEFL, IELTS, etc.), which test a person's English ability.
- Define standardized testing and discuss the video, clarifying difficult vocabulary and concepts
- Ask your student the following questions about standardized tests, and share your thoughts and experiences on these topics as well.
 - Are there government-sponsored standardized tests in your country?
 - Are there private standardized tests that people in your country take?
 - What is the longest test you have taken?
 - Do you plan on taking an English language test? (TOEFL, IELTS) Or have you? If so, when and why?
- Discuss your opinions of standardized testing. Here are some questions you can use:
 - Are standardized tests good or bad? Why?
 - Is a 4-5 hour long test good at measuring a person's ability? What if you get tired at hour 2-3? What if you lose focus?
 - Besides standardized tests, how can we measure people's ability? Grades, written reports, essays, etc?

❖ **[15 min]** Reimagining Schools

- Ask your student what do you think schools will look like in 20 years? 40? 60?
 - What will be the new technology that changes the world of education? (You can share an example from the past, such as online grading and grade checking, which was an innovation in the early 2000s.)
- Should the ideas / voices of students be considered when changes are made in schools? Why or why not?
- What are the obstacles to giving students more authority over their educational experience?
- What is one change you want to see in your school? How would that change affect your school day? Do you think the change is reasonable? (Can it be accomplished in the "real world"?)