Smile. It puts English language learners at ease and helps them to feel they are in a safe zone where they can take risks and be vulnerable.

Speak more slowly than usual. (Talk slower, not louder.) Speak clearly and distinctly.

Pronounce their name correctly. Don’t be embarrassed to make a mistake. If you don’t say it correctly the first time, keep practicing. Once you get it right, repeat it a few times to lock it in your memory.

Speak SIMPLY. Use present tense and singular. If you are speaking slowly and there is still no understanding, check yourself for simple language and rephrase. Avoid idioms, slang, acronyms and abbreviations.

Show when you tell. Use body language that aids in communication. Provide examples and pictures whenever possible. Act it out. Demonstrate using real objects. Use visuals and reinforce with written material whenever possible.

Pause between sentences. Use shorter sentences than you do usually. Pause frequently to give the listener adequate time to process the language and content.

Be personal, not mechanical. Be genuine, make good eye contact.

Present ideas or facts in a logical order. Don’t give more information than is necessary.

Listen. Let English Language Learners finish their sentences. Allow extra time for responses, they are translating what you’ve said as well as figuring out the best way to respond.

Check for understanding by asking the listener to repeat back what you have said.

Ex: I will pick you up at your apartment at 10 a.m.
What time will I pick you up? Where will I pick you up?

Have an attitude of helpfulness. It is your patience that makes it possible for them to approach you and to learn from you.

Believe communication can occur. Handle your fear. Embrace awkwardness.