



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

# Tips for Communicating with English Language Learners

**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.