

**Immigrant Centre Manitoba
Access English Centre**

**Conversation Circles
Guidelines for Facilitators**

March 2011

Goal: Host conversations between AEC participants to encourage them to freely practice their oral English skills in a welcoming and friendly-learning environment. Facilitators are encouraged to choose topics based on settlement themes such as: *Working in Canada, Education, Housing, Community, Law, Recreation, Environment, Culture, Family, Friends, and Neighbours*, local or global news/issues. Talk about friendly topics that everyone is comfortable in discussing.

Please avoid controversial topics such as religious/sexual orientation/political issues. Create a positive and warm classroom environment by fostering good conversations between the learners.

Role: As a conversation circle facilitator, your role is to facilitate or to coach, but not to teach or to lecture.

Begin sessions with:

1. **Warm Up (15 min):** Greetings, the agenda of the day, and/or small talk (weather, activities in the past week, family, news, etc.) or an ice-breaker activity.
2. **Work Out (60 min):** Volunteer Facilitator asks a question about the topic of the week to get the opinions started.
 - A. Group activities on the theme of the week: Small groups are best. An example is to distribute question slips or pictures among the groups. Groups look over the questions or pictures and decide which ones they will discuss, unless otherwise indicated (recommended for higher level).
 - B. Dialogues and/or conversation practice (recommended for intermediate level).

C. Usage/vocabulary-building and using conversation starters: These can be with the question or reading sheets. Participants read the usage section, and then practice the structure with the topic in mind. Also, repetition of vocabulary and demonstrations/modeling are suggested (recommended for lower level).

D. You can listen in to the groups, guide language practice and make corrections, if needed. If you hear any obvious errors, take some time to correct in the large group after the discussion is finished, if you feel it's appropriate. Keep in mind the simple pattern – *think, pair and share*. Give the learner time to *think* of the topic (about 10-15 seconds), *pair* the students, they *share* their ideas with each other, then later call on some individuals to *share* their results with the whole group.

3. Cool Down (10-15 min)

A. End of each session: Do a quick review. Ask participants to recall/recap the session's learning or summarize opinions. Give next week's topic if you have decided what to do for the following week.

Time Management

Try to manage 90 minutes session effectively.
Suggested time allocation is: 15 min. – 60 min. – 15 min.