

Dear Student,

**Why are you here?**

I believe you are here because you truly want to learn English and that the goal to learn English is part of a larger dream – to study your specialty at an American university.

**Do you know why I am here?**

I am here to serve as your teacher, guide, and coach as you move through the process to acquire sufficient language skills to reach your goals.

**Do you agree with the two statements above?**

These two statements form the premise of what follows in this letter. Everything I do with you and for you is based on this premise.

**Philosophy**

Let me tell you something now about me – my philosophy of teaching and my philosophy of learning. I want to tell you how things will work in my classroom.

I believe learning is a process. It does not have a clear beginning or a clear end. It is not a linear process, but rather more like an organic process. It is constantly moving, and it moves in multi-layered and multi-directional ways. I believe you must trust your own learning process.

Together we must collaborate in order for you to meet your goals. This means we both have a role to play in your success. I cannot make you develop your English without your willing participation; and you cannot move through the levels in this program without my support.

I am highly trained for this job and I have a lot of experience to support that training. I am asking you to trust me as I lead you through the steps. Everything I prepare for you and the way that I teach is designed to move you forward as quickly and efficiently as possible. The order in which I do things is also carefully designed and methodically prepared. The reasoning of my methods may not always be clear to you, but if you trust my leadership and your own ability to grow, I promise you will benefit from our time together.

There are 168 hours in a week. We only have 4 of those hours together. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that you and I both promise to use our time wisely. In other words, I promise I will not waste your time with meaningless tasks and activities. Please do not waste my time with meaningless distractions and arguments. I respect your time. I am devoted to helping you grow in your English language proficiency and it is with this promise that I design our class time together.

I ask for this same level of commitment from you. Please respect my time and devote your efforts toward achieving your personal best.

**Specifically, consider the following chart:**

Things you can only do with me	Things you can do without me
Ask me questions	Text your friends
Hear my native American English pronunciation	Check Facebook
Get feedback on your work or your ideas	Check Titter
Engage with a native speaker of English	Consult your electronic dictionary
Practice your skills in real-life and real-time situations	Call your mom
Enjoy the rewards of learning English by interacting in “live” exchanges	Check in with your husband/wife
	Watch YouTube

When you have 164 hours a week to check Facebook and Twitter and contact your friends and family, consult your dictionary, etc., I do not know why you would want to distract yourself away from your most precious and yet limited resource: ME. I am “living” English; I am native English; I am alive and active; I am giving more than 100% of my professional training to you; I am more than 100% focused on you. I am here for you. I ask that YOU be here for you as well. Please use your time away from me to text, call your mother, chat, consult your dictionary, study for another class, prepare for our class, talk with your friends, watch YouTube, sleep, etc. Use your time with me to use ME.

Outside of our time together I continue to be focused on you; I continue to work on resources and materials that will support our time together. These things are available to you through our class website: [www.theriversidewriter.com](http://www.theriversidewriter.com). I assign only minimal homework because I respect your intrinsic motivation to develop your own areas of weakness during the times when I am not with you. You can do this by accessing the class website: [www.theriversidewriter.com](http://www.theriversidewriter.com), and the resources I have provided for you, and by meeting me in my office for any further clarification and assistance you may need. These things are your “homework” and your “homework” is on-going throughout our whole session. If you are a weaker student, you may have more “homework” to do. This is simply designed for the best way possible to assist you as you reach for your English language goals.

I expect you to use your time away from me to consult these materials, access your own weaknesses, prepare questions to ask me during class time, practice what we do in class, reinforce new things as you learn them, and to pursue your own language development. Together each of us can achieve more. We are a team on your journey to learn English. I have described above my role in this team. Please keep this in mind every day. Please determine your own role in this team. Your success is completely dependent on how you participate in this team.

**One final note:**

The way things work in my classroom is probably different from what you are used to. Because of the above stated philosophy that directs my teaching style, you may find some surprises. Listed below are some statements that should help you to better understand specifically what is expected of you.

- I cannot give you a grade; you must work for your grade and you earn what you get
- At the **beginning of each class period**, you should have:
  - Paper
  - Pen/pencil
  - Electronic device
  - Book(s)
  - Handouts (as requested)
  - Completed work due (as requested)
  - Printed materials from the website (as requested)
- Any questions from the previous class meeting that you need for me to address
- Put the required materials on your desk and everything else in your bag. Put your bag on the floor either beside or under your chair or under your desk.
- Write your name on every piece of paper used in our class
- Write your name and the assignment title at the top of every paper that you turn in to me
- Keep all returned and graded papers in a separate folder – keep them in chronological order
- Keep a running tab of your own grades on a self-created document
- If you must **miss a class**, find out from a classmate what you missed and come to the next class meeting prepared.
  - Turn in any assignments due
  - Do preparatory work so you can participate fully when you return.
  - Have required materials with you
  - Be prepared for whatever is to happen on the day you return.  
In other words, “I was not here so I didn’t know” is not an acceptable excuse for not being prepared.
- If you get a low grade on something, figure out what your problem is/was with the material and work to understand it. This means you need to consult the materials on the website; consult a friend; consult me.
- Keep track of the course outcomes and your progress toward mastering them.
- Take full advantage of everything I have prepared for you, including my time.
- Make time to see me during my office hours to get extra help.

You and I have both chosen to spend our time together in order to help you achieve your dreams. Our time is short, so it is important for both of us to respect our time, each other, and the others in the class. Let’s enjoy this time! Let’s learn English!