

SMCL Adult Learning - Adult Literacy Volunteering FAQ

What is Adult Literacy?

SMCL's Adult Literacy Program provides free one-on-one and small group literacy instruction to adults who want to improve their reading and writing skills. Trained volunteers are matched with a learner who they tutor consistently for at least six months, though some pairs have been tutoring together for many years. Please visit www.smcl.org/literacy to learn more.

What is the volunteer tutor's role?

After training, volunteer tutors support an adult learner in achieving their real-world literacy goals such as applying for a job, reading with their child, or getting their GED. They also plan lessons and use workbooks to help learners with targeted literacy skills.

Who are the participants?

Learners in the literacy program are adults who live within our service area and speak at least a basic level of English. Some are native English speakers and others are English language learners. They must complete an assessment that indicates literacy support is necessary.

Learners live in the SMCL [service area](#). If you would like to work with adult learners in another location, you may consider reaching out to these Adult Literacy Programs:

- [San Mateo City Library](#)
- [Redwood City Library](#) (does not include North Fair Oaks)
- [South San Francisco Library](#) (serves Colma, Daly City, San Bruno, SSF)
- [San Jose Public Library](#)
- [Santa Clara County Library District](#)

When do I volunteer?

We ask volunteer tutors and learners to commit to tutoring 1-2 hours a week for at least 6 months. Scheduling is flexible as long as tutoring occurs on a consistent weekly basis.

Where do we meet?

Pairs may choose to meet in person at one of our [branch locations](#) or online via Zoom. In-person volunteers and learners must follow all library Covid safety protocols. Many learners prefer to meet at the East Palo Alto, North Fair Oaks, or Half Moon Bay branch locations. Adult Learning staff will be present for the initial virtual or in-person meeting. After the first meeting, tutors and learners meet on their own.

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Is training provided?

All volunteers complete a 10-hour online training that can be worked on at their own pace. We also provide a hard copy of the tutoring manual [LitStart](#) to each volunteer. Finally, volunteers meet with Adult Learning staff for a follow-up training and practice session before being matched with a learner.

What other support is provided?

Adult Learning staff provide all necessary workbooks and materials that match the learner's level. Staff are always available to brainstorm and provide ideas for tutoring. We also host Tutor Roundtable Meetings for tutors to share strategies and receive training.

How do we report progress?

Tutors must log their volunteer hours and describe what they worked on each session and any progress made towards their learner's goals. Adult Learning staff also check in with the tutoring pair throughout the year.

What technology skills are necessary?

If tutoring online, volunteers need to have their own (free) [Zoom](#) or [Google Meet](#) account in order to create meetings and send invitation links to their learner. If tutoring in-person, volunteers should know how to navigate basic computer functions in order to help their learner with job applications, online forms, etc. as needed or refer them to library resources such as [tech tutors](#).

Is fingerprinting required for this opportunity?

Yes, fingerprinting is required for online and in-person volunteers. We provide fingerprinting services at no charge. Unfortunately, we cannot receive fingerprint results from other locations due to privacy concerns.

What other learning services and programs does SMCL provide for adults free of charge?

Please check out our website to learn more: [Adult Learning | San Mateo County Libraries](#) We offer Career Online High School, English classes, citizenship classes, English conversation clubs and more!