



Survival Topic #5: Education

Questions to Ask:

Can you tell me about the education system in your home country?
What was school like for you?
What languages do you speak, read, or write?
Did you have any chance for learning more in a refugee camp or in a country other than your home country?
Do you know how your children are doing in school?
Do they have any problems in school that you want to talk about?
What do you hope to learn in this country?
Are you going to English classes now?
How many hours a week do you study?

Topics to Share:

Talk about how you or your children feel or felt about school and what kind of educational system you went through. Tell them about college or about a vocational program you completed. Did you like school?

English Language Learner Tips:

For beginners, concentrate on teaching basic nouns related to school. Start with things like: school, teacher, book, paper, and pencil. See if they can point to the items or produce the correct nouns. Use actual objects for identification.

Ask if your mentees need help with their homework for English class, or their children's schoolwork. Go over the lessons they are studying with them.

If applicable, try to make up a dialogue about a parent-teacher conference, or have them make a mock phone call to ask how their child is doing in school.

Other Notes:

Refugees come to this country with a diverse educational background. Some are highly

educated, while others may not have learned how to write their own language. Some may have an educational background that is not readily transferable to this country. People who have a lower level of education may take a longer time to learn basic English and may feel less confident about working. Finding out about your mentees' background will help you to understand his or her perspective and the challenges ahead.

Some refugees may need help identifying options for college or post-secondary schooling. You can help them to fill out applications and write essays. Help your mentees realize that many Americans combine work and school. And further, that previous work or internship experience is considered very important to finding a job—not just education.

Refugees with limited English language ability will probably be enrolled in an English class. Many mentees count on their mentors for additional language support. If you are not experienced in tutoring in English, you can attend free tutoring workshops at Literacy Works by simply telling them you are from RefugeeOne when you sign up (www.litworks.org).

Mentors can also help refugees to understand the importance of their children's education within a U.S. context. They may not know how to help them with homework, or expect older siblings to help with childcare instead of studying. You can explain what is expected of children in school and even help the children find tutors through their school. You can figure out if the children have any special needs and assist the parents in advocating for their children.

Our system of education is probably very different from what they had in their own country. They may be confused about how our system works. Answer their basic questions about educational options in your area.