

# Teaching Languages: Online Guest Speakers — How to Plan, Host and Reuse Sessions

REAL LIFE LANGUAGE



Here's a simple, repeatable project called Online Guest Speakers. With teaching languages, we want to get students speaking the target language with real people. In this article I'll walk you through why guest speakers are powerful, a step-by-step plan for running a session, the best tools to use, and classroom-ready examples you can adapt for any level.

## Why invite online guest speakers?

Your students will get authentic communication with people outside of the classroom community; they'll gain confidence, hear different accents and learn how to use language in real contexts.

Bringing a guest speaker into class gives students true immersion without leaving home. It proves the language they're learning actually works in conversation, builds motivation, and exposes learners to accents, dialects and cultural knowledge they wouldn't otherwise encounter.

## Quick overview: the core steps

1. **Select a theme** based on your learning objectives and student level (personal info, environment, education, travel, health, hobbies, etc.).
2. **Set up your account and recording platform** — a Gmail or Google Meet (or alternative tools like Zoom, Teams, etc.) will let you host and save the session for later use.
3. **Gather equipment** — computer, stable internet, webcam and microphone are the essentials.
4. **Find a speaker** — options include relatives, community contacts, or paid tutors on sites such as italki.
5. **Prepare collaboratively** — give students a shared Google Doc to write original interview questions and edit each other's work.
6. **Practice, host and record** — rehearse the tech, run the interview with students asking prepared questions, and save the recording for absent students and follow-up activities.

## How to find and prepare a guest

Finding a guest can be as simple as asking family or friends, but if schedules or availability are a problem, sites like italki open up a global pool of passionate native speakers and tutors available at many hours. When you hire someone, share your objectives and the student level so they can tailor their input.

Create a collaborative Google Doc for question-building. Require students to write original questions, edit for accuracy (diacritics, punctuation, vocabulary), and then distribute the final interview script so each student has a copy to annotate during the live event. This eliminates repeated questions and keeps the conversation flowing.

## Hosting and recording: tools that work

Many teachers use Google Meet because they integrate with Google Drive and make saving easy. Practise connecting ahead of time, check audio, and run a short tech rehearsal with any remote participants.

Save the recording to your channel or Drive so absent students can still access it and so you can create follow-up listening or comprehension activities. Reusing

recordings is one of the most valuable outcomes — you can turn a single interview into multiple lesson resources.

## Extend the activity with Google apps

- **Google Maps:** Use screenshots (locked to your chosen language) for direction-giving and spatial language practice.
- **Google Forms:** Collect quick responses, then use the response graphs as speaking prompts and data-based discussion starters.
- **Google Docs:** Try timed fluency writing tasks where students write without aids, then research afterwards; or run collaborative Q&A projects.
- **Google Slides:** Have students create slide tours (e.g. a house tour) and record narrated presentations with the Fishbowl app for oral assessment.
- **Gmail:** Pair classes for pen-pal exchanges or written communication practice.

## Practical examples you can adapt

For novice (A-level) students, structure the interview so questions are short and highly scaffolded — students prepare their questions carefully in advance. For higher levels, invite a native speaker with an interesting background (travel, work, hobbies) and encourage students to ask follow-up questions that push comprehension and spontaneous production.

Use recorded tutor sessions to model natural speech, highlight corrections from chat logs, and create listening comprehension tasks. You can also base culture and vocabulary lessons on anecdotes or objects the guest mentions.

## Final tips and next steps

Start small: one guest speaker session every term can already transform student confidence and motivation. Use collaborative planning to maximise student speaking time, record and reuse each session, and experiment with different Google apps to create varied follow-up activities.

If you want students to see language learning as real, social and useful, Online Guest Speakers is a low-cost, high-impact project that brings the world into your classroom — and brings your classroom to the world.