

Learner Frequently Asked Questions Partners in Reading (PAR)

What are the requirements to be in Partners in Reading (PAR)?

- Speak and understand English
- Be at least 18 years old
- Read or write below the high school level
- Commit to work on basic reading and writing for six months or more
- Study with a tutor two times a week for 1½ hours or more
- Live or work in San José

Where is the PAR office?

The PAR office is on the first floor of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library. You can be tutored in any of the 25 San José Public Library branches or another public place.

How do I start?

First you call PAR at (408) 808-2361 or come in to the PAR office to sign up. We will ask you questions and fill out a form for you. Then you come to a group orientation at the King Library or sometimes at a branch. Next you sign up to meet one on one with a PAR staff member for an interview and an assessment. If you qualify for the program, you will be added to a waiting list to be matched with a volunteer tutor in a group or to meet one on one.

How much is PAR?

PAR is FREE for adult learners.

When do I meet?

PAR will ask you what days and times you can meet. We will look for a tutor who can meet at those times.

Where do I meet?

You will meet with your tutor at a library or another public place. We may ask you to go to a library up to 20 minutes from where you live.

Can I meet in my house?

No. You need to meet in a public place. Libraries, coffee shops, or community centers are good places to meet.

How many times do I meet?

You need to meet two or more times a week with a tutor for 1½ hours or more.

Can I be tutored in my first language?

No. All instruction is in English.

What if I want to improve my English?

PAR is a basic reading and writing program, so you will spend most of your time working on reading and writing. You have to be able to have a conversation in English to meet with a tutor and to be able to talk to a volunteer on the phone in English. It is very important for you to practice speaking and listening in English every day.

There are other classes for improving your English. For example, the library has ESL Conversation Clubs at most branch libraries.

Where do I park if I meet at King Library?

Park in the 4th Street Garage at 4th Street and San Fernando. Staff can help with free parking for PAR learners.

Do I have to do homework?

You do not have to do homework, but it is a very good idea. If you do homework you will learn a lot faster. Sometimes homework is only 15 to 30 minutes.

Do I have to get a library card?

You do not have to get a library card, but it is a very good idea. You can check out books and movies for more practice. You can also use your library card to reserve a computer or a meeting room.

I want to use a computer, but I do not know how. What do I do?

The library has computer classes and PAR has a computer lab. Talk to a PAR staff member to sign up to use the PAR computers. A volunteer will show you how to use the computers. Then you can come in and practice when the PAR office is open. Talk to a library staff member about other computer classes that are for all library users. Using the computer lab is a good way to get started while you are waiting to get a tutor.

Who will teach me?

You will be working with a volunteer tutor. This person has been trained by PAR to help you with basic reading and writing. This person is giving time to you and to the program and is working for free.

How will I know if I'm learning?

You will talk to your tutor each time you meet about what new things you are able to do. We hope you will try to use reading and writing every day, so that you will know you are learning. You will be asked to set a reading and a writing goal. Think about these questions: What do you want to read better? What do you want to write better? Then work with your tutor to do these things and practice them at home and at work and at other times during the day.

I had a difficult time in school. How will I know if I can learn with PAR?

PAR works with you on what you want to learn. Your tutor will go at your speed. You can repeat what is difficult as many times as you need to so that you can learn the information or the skill well. Then it's important to practice it a lot.

Do you have anything to help kids?

PAR is only for adults, 18 and over, who live or work in San José. If you are a PAR learner meeting with a tutor you will get books and information to help your children who are under 14.

Can I bring my kids?

We do not allow tutors or learners to bring their children.

What if I do not live or work in San José?

If you live in the City of Santa Clara you can call Read Santa Clara at (408) 615-2956; if you live somewhere else in Santa Clara County you can call the Reading Program at (408) 262-1349 or Vision Literacy at (408) 676-7323; if you live in a different area you can call your local library.

Can I sign up my brother, sister, or friend?

If your friends or family want to be in this program they must contact PAR at (408) 808-2361.

I was in the program in the past, but I had to stop. What do I do if I want to start again? Call our office or come in to the King Library to sign up for an orientation to start the program again.

How long will I have to wait for a tutor? Once you sign up for an orientation, take the assessment, and complete the interview, you will be put on the waiting list. Sometimes we can match you very quickly. Other times you will have to wait. While you are waiting it is good to come to the PAR computer lab at the King Library to get started.