

Teacher of English as a Foreign Language

Introduction

Teachers of English as a foreign language teach English to learners both in the UK and other countries. The emphasis is on reading, speaking, listening and writing.

Also known as

- English as a Foreign Language Teacher
- TEFL
- EFL Teacher



Work Activities

There are lots of acronyms to explain teaching in this area. This can be very confusing - although the meanings and teaching methods involved are broadly similar. The most important areas are TEFL and TESOL:

- TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) is about teaching English to learners, both in other countries and the UK, who don't normally live or work in an English-speaking country. For example, learners might want to learn English for business, holidays, a hobby or to study in the UK.
- TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) is for learners who have moved to an English-speaking country to live and work.
- ELT (English Language Teaching) covers both TEFL and TESOL.

You can work both in the UK (mainly in TESOL) and other countries (usually in TEFL). You'll also work with learners from a wide variety of backgrounds, ages and cultures.

The work ranges from teaching people on informal 'conversational' courses to working with business people who need English in their jobs.

Whichever area you work in, you'll need to analyse learners' language abilities and assess their needs, making sure they are learning at the right level and pace for them.

You must skillfully plan and deliver creative, imaginative lessons, using a variety of activities and resources. Variety aids learning, and also ensures that you can meet the needs of learners with differing learning styles. You might have to adapt resources to make them more appropriate to the language level and cultural sensitivities of the class.

English is the main language in classrooms, and is usually spoken at all times. Teaching methods include:

- pair and group work
- role plays
- interactive whiteboards and online language games
- audio-visual resources such as recorded conversations, songs and films
- realia (using everyday objects to illustrate a language point and build vocabulary).

Teaching can take place in universities and colleges of further and higher education, private language schools, community centres and workplaces. There are also opportunities to give private, one-to-one tuition, which could take place in the learner's home or the teacher's home.

Being able to read, write and speak Welsh may be an advantage when you're looking for work in Wales.

Personal Qualities and Skills

In this job, you'll need:

- Sound knowledge of English grammar and punctuation, and some knowledge of phonology.
- The ability to encourage, motivate and support learners.
- Patience, tact and sensitivity.
- Organisational and time-management skills.
- Confidence to stand and teach in front of a class.
- Imagination and creativity to develop and adapt lesson resources.
- Good listening and observation skills.

Knowledge of a foreign language can be useful but isn't essential because English is usually spoken at all times during lessons. Foreign language knowledge can help you to anticipate problems that learners from particular backgrounds tend to experience in English, for example, because a tense in English doesn't exist in their first language.

When teaching English to people who are working in commerce or industry, it can be useful to have some knowledge of business, medical, legal or technological terminology.

Pay and Opportunities

Pay

The pay rates given below are approximate.

- Starting: £20,500 - £22,000
- With experience: £24,500 - £29,500
- Senior Teachers earn £32,000 - £35,500

Overseas salaries may be tax free and might include supplements. Other benefits might include free accommodation and flights, and other allowances.

Hours of work

Teaching (or 'contact') hours vary widely, depending on the number of classes you have and whether you are full- or part-time. For example, you might have 26-30 teaching hours a week (but will also need to spend time preparing lessons and marking work).

As a Teacher with a full-time position in the UK, for example, in a further education college, you could have a more standard working week but might need to take evening classes.

People who teach abroad often have evening and weekend work.

Teachers who give private tuition can have more flexibility to vary their hours.

Where could I work?

There are a variety of employers and working environments. In the UK, employers include universities, colleges of further and higher education, adult education centres, local authorities and private language schools.

In other countries, most opportunities are with private language schools and organisations such as the British Council. You can volunteer to teach English in developing countries through organisations such as Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) and through other charities.

Where are vacancies advertised?

Vacancies are advertised in the local press and national titles such as The Guardian and The Times Educational Supplement (TES), and on job boards such as Tefl.com and Dave's ESL Cafe.

Social media websites, such as LinkedIn, Twitter or Facebook, are a great way to network, find vacancies and get in contact with possible employers. Make sure that your profile presents you in a professional manner that will appeal to potential employers.

Take a look at our General Information Article 'Finding Work Online'.

Entry Routes and Training

Entry routes and training

Two qualifications are widely recognised by employers as providing high quality initial training.

These are:

- CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) from Cambridge English Language Assessment.
- CertTESOL (Trinity College London Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

You can study on a full- or part-time basis. Courses can last from four weeks (intensive, full-time) to a year part-time (for example, one day a week). It is also possible to study for these qualifications in another country. Courses involve observed, assessed teaching practice and written assignments.

You can study TEFL/TESOL as a part of some degree and PGCE courses. However, content varies among courses, so you should choose courses carefully and check to see whether they lead to a recognised qualification.

If you already have the CELTA or CertTESOL but no experience of teaching young learners, you may be able to take the Young Learner (YL) extension to CELTA or the SKOLA Trinity Young Learners Extension course (STYLE).

If you want to work in the 'lifelong learning sector', which includes further education colleges and adult education and community centres, there are a number of relevant qualifications, starting with the Level 3 Award in Education and Training.

A great way to get into this career is through an internship. Take a look at our information article 'Internships', for more details.

Progression

Experienced Teachers can take further qualifications such as the Cambridge Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA).

Teachers can move into management roles such as heads of department or director of studies (for example, with responsibility for recruiting new teachers and organising their timetables).

There are also opportunities to move into the English language teaching publishing sector.

Some Teachers go on to teach training courses such as the CELTA and CertTESOL.

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act

In the UK, this career can be an exception to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 if you're working with children or vulnerable adults or on the site of a further education college where there are learners aged under 18. This means that you must supply information to an employer about any spent or unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings, if they ask you to.

This is different from other careers, where you only have to reveal information on unspent convictions if you are asked to.

Qualifications

Entry requirements for the CELTA and CertTESOL vary, although you'll usually need qualifications for entry into higher education, such as two A levels or equivalent.

You might need to pass a written English grammar test for entry to courses.

Some universities accept the Welsh Baccalaureate as equivalent to 1 A-level.

Adult Opportunities

Age limits

In the UK, it is illegal for any organisation to set age limits for entry to employment, education or training, unless they can show there is a real need to have these limits.

However, the situation outside the UK will vary from country to country. Some countries will not have laws against age discrimination, meaning that some employers can set upper age limits for recruiting teachers.

Some countries set age limits for working visas.

If you're planning to teach abroad, you should establish what the situation is before looking for work.

Skills/experience

Some entrants are already qualified and experienced teachers in another area, although this isn't necessarily an advantage. Knowledge and skills gained through working with children will be useful if you plan to teach to this age group.

Distance learning

A number of centres offer qualifications by distance learning. However, observed teaching practice is very important and therefore a distance learning course without this is likely to be unacceptable to most employers.

University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations provides an online CELTA which blends distance learning with teaching practice in a classroom.

Further Information

Contacts

- **LGjobs**
Local government vacancies
Website: www.lgjobs.com
- **myjobscotland: Scottish local government vacancies**
Scottish enquiries
Email: myjobscotland@cosla.gov.uk
Website: www.myjobscotland.gov.uk
- **Eteach**
Email: info@eteach.com
Website: www.eteach.com
- **British Council**
Address: Bridgewater House, 58 Whitworth Street, Manchester M1 6BB
Tel: 0161 9577755
Email: general.enquiries@britishcouncil.org
Website: www.britishcouncil.org
- **British Council Scotland**
Scottish enquiries
Address: Waverley Gate (4th Floor), 2-4 Waterloo Place, Edinburgh EH1 3EG
Tel: 0131 5245700
Email: general.enquiries@britishcouncil.org
Website: www.britishcouncil.org/scotland

- **English UK**
Address: 219 St John Street, London EC1V 4LY
Tel: 020 7608 7960
Email: info@englishuk.com
Website: www.englishuk.com
- **International House London (IH)**
Address: 16 Stukeley Street, Covent Garden, London WC2B 5LQ
Tel: 020 7611 2400
Email: info@ihlondon.com
Website: www.ihlondon.com
- **Trinity College London**
Address: 89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TP
Tel: 020 7820 6100
Email: info@trinitycollege.co.uk
Website: www.trinitycollege.co.uk
- **Cambridge English Language Assessment**
Tel: 01223 553997
Website: www.cambridgeenglish.org
- **Working Abroad**
Address: The Coombe, Spring Barn Farm, Kingston Road, Lewes BN7 3ND
Tel: 01273 479047
Email: info@workingabroad.com
Website: www.workingabroad.com
- **Volunteer Work Abroad (VSO UK)**
Address: 27a Carlton Drive, Putney, London SW15 2BS
Tel: 020 8780 7500
Email: enquiry@vso.org.uk
Website: www.vso.org.uk
- **TEFL.com**
Address: 72 Pentyla Baglan Road, Port Talbot SA12 8AD
Email: support@tefl.com
Website: www.tefl.com
- **Dave's ESL Cafe**
Website: www.eslcafe.com/jobs/
- **An A-Z of ELT (Methodology)**
Author: Scott Thornbury Publisher: Macmillan Education
- **People Exchange Cymru (PEC)**
Public sector recruitment portal for Wales
Email: peopleexchangecymru@gov.wales
Website: www.peopleexchangecymru.org.uk/home
- **EF Education First**
Address: 22 Chelsea Manor Street, London SW3 5RL
Tel: 020 7341 8531
Email: overseas.recruitment@ef.com
Website: www.englishfirst.com

Related Careers

- Nursery Nurse
- NVQ Assessor
- School Lunchtime Supervisor

- History Teacher
- Geography Teacher
- Modern Foreign Languages Teacher
- Teaching Assistant
- Music Teacher
- English Teacher
- Maths Teacher
- Science Teacher
- Education Welfare Officer
- Playworker
- Special Educational Needs Teacher
- Art and Design Teacher
- Design and Technology Teacher
- Early Years Teacher
- Physical Education Teacher
- Primary Teacher
- Secondary Teacher
- Training Manager
- Higher Education (HE) Lecturer
- School Business Manager
- Lecturer
- Teacher
- Welsh Teacher
- Nursery Assistant
- Headteacher