

*i-to-i*

# THE PRACTICAL GUIDE TO TEFL **FOR STUDENTS**





# ARE YOU MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR UNIVERSITY HOLIDAYS?

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*Would you like to:*

- Work and travel around the world BEFORE you complete your degree?
- Gain fantastic experience for your CV?
- Pass on practical knowledge that can transform lives?

*Are you:*

- Aged at least 18?
- Fluent in English?
- Ready to learn a new skill?

If so, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) could be perfect for you.

You can train and work as a TEFL teacher during your degree - and gain fantastic experience for when you graduate.







# WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF TEFL

TEFL stands for Teaching English as a Foreign Language. TEFL teachers work all around the world, teaching English to students who don't speak it as their first language.

If you are at least 18 years old, speak English fluently and are prepared for an adventure, you can train and work as a TEFL teacher across the world.

We've put together this practical guide to help you find out how to become a TEFL teacher while you're a student.

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## SECTION 1: The Nuts and Bolts of TEFL for Students

Section 1 sets out practical information to help you decide if TEFL is for you. It looks at what TEFL teachers do, where you can work, who you might teach, how much you can earn as a TEFL teacher - and many more TEFL questions.

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## SECTION 2: Choosing a TEFL Course

Section 2 explores what's involved in a TEFL course. It examines the different types of courses available and explains how to choose the programme that is right for you.

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## SECTION 3: How to Find Your First TEFL Job

Section 3 looks at TEFL opportunities available to newly qualified TEFL teachers. It provides practical advice to help you successfully find and apply for your first TEFL job.







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# THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF TEFL FOR STUDENTS

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TEFL stands for Teaching English as a Foreign Language. But what do TEFL teachers actually do? Where can you work? How much can you earn? And what qualifications do you need to find a job?

Fear not! We've got all the answers right here...

## What does a TEFL teacher do?

A TEFL teacher teaches English to students who don't speak it as their first language. As a TEFL teacher, you'll be expected to:

- Plan, prepare and deliver well-structured English language lessons, relevant for the size, age and ability of your class
- Create appropriate activities and materials for your classes and provide both written and oral feedback on students' work
- Carry out relevant admin tasks, such as keeping a student register and providing reports on students' progress.

### You may also be expected to:

- Develop, set and mark tests and prepare students for external/international exams
- Get involved in extra-curriculum activities, such as sports events, excursions and marketing campaigns
- Develop or contribute to wider professional development activities for colleagues.

If this all sounds pretty overwhelming, don't worry! A good TEFL course will give you the skills you need for your first TEFL job.





» With a recognised TEFL qualification in your hand, you'll be able to work pretty much anywhere you want in the world!

## Where do TEFL teachers work?

TEFL teachers work in schools, language centres, universities and businesses as well as teaching English online and to private individuals. You'll find TEFL teachers anywhere that has non-native English speakers wanting to learn the language - in other words, pretty much everywhere!

It's important to be aware that employers often expect teachers to commit to a minimum of nine months to a year - so some TEFL jobs may need to wait until you graduate. However, there are opportunities for shorter paid contracts that can fit into holiday periods - particularly at the numerous EFL summer camps hosted across Europe. If you're keen to work in other parts of the world, it's also worth considering a voluntary post or an internship. These can be a great way to gain an insight into a new country plus gain brilliant experience for your CV.

## Who do TEFL teachers teach?

TEFL teachers teach English to children, young people and adults across the world. If you're under 21, then you're most likely to find a TEFL job working with children, either in a school or a privately run setting such as a language centre or summer camp - although you could also consider private tuition and online TEFL teaching.





## TEFL Internships

TEFL internships can be a good route into TEFL for students as they provide a supported route into your first TEFL post and generally don't require you to have a degree.

In return for an upfront fee you'll receive a package of support. This usually includes TEFL certification training, a teaching placement abroad, an orientation with fellow interns and practical assistance during your placement. Depending on the programme, your placement can last anything from a few weeks up to a year - and you may get additional perks, such as accommodation, meals, a living allowance and a bonus on completion.

Completing an internship during one of your university vacations also means that you can head to the top of the TEFL jobs queue once you graduate - with TEFL certification and work experience already on your CV.

You can find out more about internships at [www.i-to-i.com/teaching-internships](http://www.i-to-i.com/teaching-internships)



## What skills and qualifications do I need for TEFL?

### Most paid TEFL jobs require:

- Age 18+ (some countries require 21+)
- Excellent spoken and written English skills
- TEFL certificate from accredited provider
- Ability to work under pressure and be flexible
- Good organisational skills
- Positive, can-do attitude.

» You don't need to speak another language, have previous teaching experience or to have saved loads of money in order to do TEFL.







## Do I need to pass any exams to become a TEFL teacher?

Reputable TEFL employers will expect you to have completed a TEFL certification course. This will provide you with a solid grounding in teaching methodology and train you how to plan and deliver effective TEFL lessons.

TEFL courses are normally assessed through short knowledge tests, written assignments and/or observation of teaching practice rather than formal exams. A good TEFL course will be very practical. It will enable you to gain the skills you need to successfully gain your TEFL certification and be ready for your first TEFL job.

Take a look at Section 2 to find out more about TEFL courses.

## How much does it cost to train to be a TEFL teacher?

TEFL training doesn't need to break the bank. Prices vary considerably, based on the level of course, whether you want to study online or in a classroom environment and who is delivering the course. If you're happy to study online, you can find a good quality, regulated Level 3 TEFL certification course for as little as £150. At the other end of the scale, a classroom-based CELTA course could set you back around £1,500.

Section 2 explains the difference between TEFL courses and will help you choose the type of course that is right for you.





» If you don't have loads saved for a gap year, TEFL's a perfect way to travel the world and earn money at the same time!



## What's the difference between TEFL and TESOL?

TEFL stands for Teaching English as a Foreign Language. TESOL stands for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. You're likely to see both terms when you're looking at TEFL jobs boards and courses.

Technically TEFL focuses on teaching English outside of English speaking countries and TESOL is used for teaching English to non-native English speakers in an English speaking country - although officially it covers both areas.

In practice, both TEFL and TESOL tend to be used interchangeably to refer to the whole field of teaching English to non-native English speakers. However, if you want to teach in a particular country, it's worth checking whether they prefer a qualification that states it is TEFL or TESOL as this could impact on the course that you choose.



## Do I need a degree for TEFL?

While some countries do require TEFL teachers to have a degree (and often to also be over 21 years old), it's definitely not essential worldwide.

Latin America, Cambodia and parts of Europe, for example, do not require TEFL teachers to have a degree.



## What hours do TEFL teachers work?

On average, a full-time TEFL teacher has 20 to 30 teaching hours per week, plus preparation time for lessons. TEFL teachers working in schools tend to have a set timetable based around the school day. TEFL teachers working privately, in private language centres or summer camps are expected to work more flexible hours, with sessions often scheduled for late afternoon, evenings or weekends.

## How much does a TEFL teacher earn?

TEFL salaries vary enormously, depending on a teacher's role, level of experience and the country in which the teacher is working. A newly qualified teacher in Costa Rica might earn £500 per month, for example, while an experienced, degree educated TEFL teacher in the Middle East could rake in as much as £3,000 per month, often with added benefits on top, such as housing, flights and health insurance.



Don't compare jobs on salary alone. You may actually have a better quality of life on a lower salary if living costs are low in the country you're in. Also bear in mind what you're expected to do for your salary - and that both costs and salaries can change fast!





## Can I work as a TEFL teacher if English is not my first language?

You can work as a TEFL teacher, even if you're not a native English speaker, as long as your English is at a suitable level for TEFL - CEFER level C1 or IELTS 6.5 score is usually seen as the minimum. However, if English isn't your first language, you're also under 21 and don't have a degree, you may find to struggle to find a paid TEFL role. You might be better looking for voluntary positions and/or moving into TEFL after completing your degree.

## What can I do after TEFL?

TEFL is a good grounding for a career in many industries. You will develop skills in areas such as giving presentations, leading groups of individuals and enhancing cultural awareness - as well as demonstrating your resilience and resourcefulness by working overseas.

Some of the most popular career options after TEFL are: teacher training in the UK, working in the travel industry, finding roles within NGOs and moving up to higher level TEFL qualifications and roles.





## Is TEFL for you?

### TEFL'S GREAT IF YOU'RE...

- At least 18 years old
- Fluent in English (ideally a native English speaker)
- Excited by the idea of working abroad
- Ready to pass on a valuable skill
- Willing to train to be a TEFL teacher
- Not expecting to earn a fortune

### TEFL MAY NOT BE FOR YOU IF YOU...

- Are less than 18 years old
- Struggle with written or spoken English
- Want to earn a top salary immediately
- Don't want to invest time in training to be a TEFL teacher



» TEFL can be an excellent way to gain temporary work experience for your CV. Or, it could be the start of an exciting career in travel and teaching.





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## CHOOSING A TEFL COURSE

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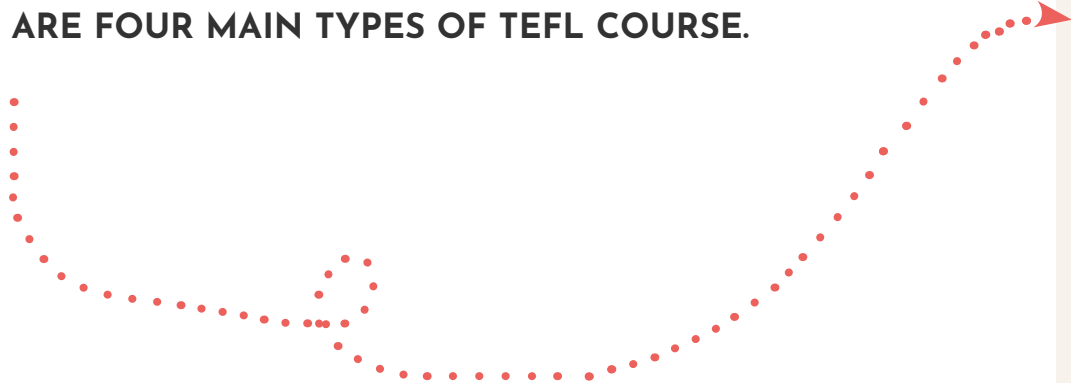
A good TEFL course will equip you the skills you need for your first TEFL job and give you that all-important TEFL certificate that employers are looking for. But with hundreds of courses out there, how do you decide which course is right for you? This section provides a step-by-step guide to help you confidently choose a good quality TEFL course.





Step 1  
Choose the type of TEFL course you need

THERE ARE FOUR MAIN TYPES OF TEFL COURSE.



TYPE OF COURSE

WHAT IS IT?

GOOD IF YOU...

Taster / introductory course

Short introductory TEFL course.  
  
This type of course will give you a taste of TEFL but doesn't cover topics in enough depth for paid work.

- Only need a sprinkling of TEFL knowledge eg. for a short, voluntary placement.
- Want to dip your toe in before committing to a longer course.

Certification course

*Perfect if you aim to find paid TEFL work*

The 'entry level' course for paid TEFL jobs.  
  
Certification courses combine teaching methodology with practical skills such as how to prepare effective lesson plans, teach core TEFL components (vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing and listening skills) and manage a class effectively.

- Are new to TEFL.
- Want to do a course that can lead to paid TEFL work.

Specialist courses

Short courses focussed on a specific topic, such as preparing students for international English exams or teaching young learners.  
  
Specialist modules can be offered as an add-on to a TEFL certification course or as stand-alone courses.

- Want to develop additional skills to give your application an extra boost.
- Are looking for additional training to improve your confidence

Delta

Advanced professional qualification for TEFL teachers.  
  
You normally need a minimum of one year's full-time English teaching experience before starting a Delta.

- Have worked in TEFL for at least 1-2 years.
- Want a career development qualification







## Step 2 Look for quality

There are no internationally agreed standards for TEFL. This means that there is a wide variation in the quality of TEFL certification courses and training providers on offer. To ensure you choose a good course, it's important to look for quality indicators.

### A GOOD TEFL CERTIFICATION COURSE SHOULD:

- Last a minimum of 100-120 hours
- Be run by a training provider who is accredited by a recognised national body, such as the Open and Distance Learning Quality Council (ODLQC), Accreditation UK or the British Accreditation Council (BAC)
- Have good reviews on independent review sites such as [www.reviews.co.uk](http://www.reviews.co.uk)
- Ideally, lead to a qualification that is regulated and listed on the register of a recognised regulatory body, such as Ofqual or SQA.

### WHAT IS OFQUAL?

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) is a non-ministerial UK government department that regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England. For a qualification to be regulated by Ofqual (or SQA, which is the equivalent body in Scotland) it has to pass rigorous quality assurance checks and meet agreed standards. While regulation is not mandatory for TEFL, it is a good indicator of quality. You can check if a qualification is regulated by looking on the Ofqual register.



» Displaying an accreditation body's logo on its website may simply mean that a course provider has paid for membership – and not that it meets quality standards. Always check rather than assume!



Step 3

## Choose Level 3, Level 5 or CELTA

Until recently, there were only two types of regulated TEFL qualifications - CELTA or CertTESOL. Today, there is a small but growing number of independent providers who also offer courses leading to regulated TEFL qualifications at either Level 3 (equivalent to an A level) or Level 5 (foundation degree level).

### What's the difference between CELTA, CertTESOL and TEFL courses?

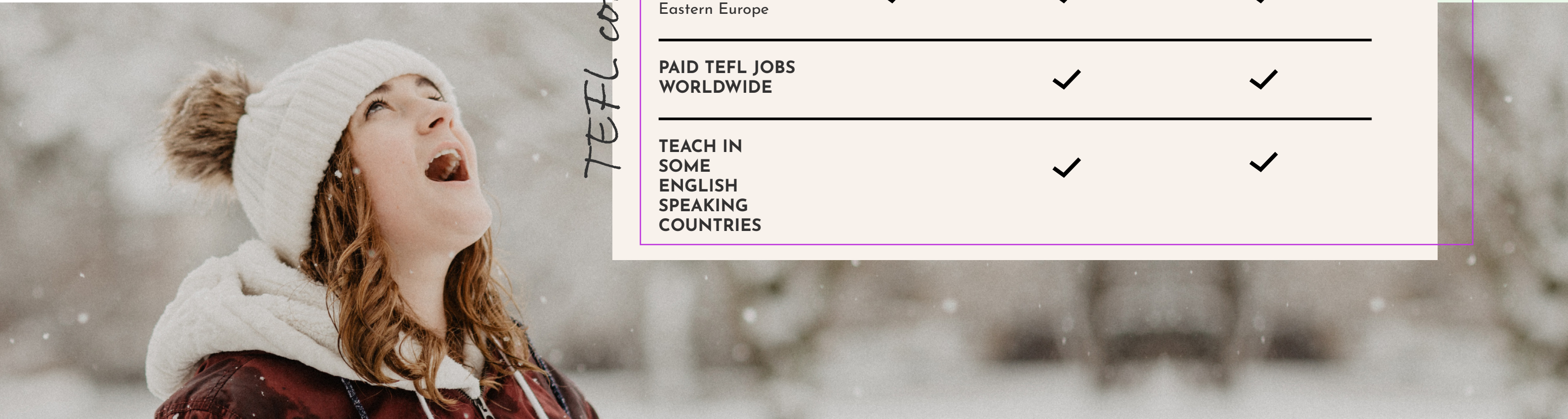
A TEFL course is any course in TEFL (including introductory courses, certification courses and Delta). CELTA and CertTESOL are two specific TEFL certification courses, each leading to a regulated level 5 qualification.

There are now a small number of other regulated level 5 TEFL qualifications, which have similar content and assessment levels to CELTA and CertTESOL - often at a far lower price. However, as CELTA and CertTESOL are the most widely recognised TEFL qualifications worldwide, some countries / employers give preference to candidates who have followed these specific courses.

If you want to teach in a particular school or country, it's worth checking whether it has a preference for a specific qualification before selecting your course.







All of these courses should give you the core skills you need to find your first TEFL job but vary in terms of budget, timescales and the level of TEFL opportunities available. Use our table to decide which type of course is best for you.

TEFL courses comparison

	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 5	CELTA / CERTTESOL
AVERAGE COMPLETION TIME	8 weeks	15 weeks	4-5 weeks (full time, intensive) 15 weeks to a year (part time)
AVERAGE COST	£100 - £250	£350 - £700	£1,500
PAID TEFL JOBS IN Asia, Latin America & Eastern Europe	✓	✓	✓
PAID TEFL JOBS WORLDWIDE		✓	✓
TEACH IN SOME ENGLISH SPEAKING COUNTRIES		✓	✓

» Tip: If you want a regular TEFL job abroad or online, a Level 3 certificate is perfectly fine. If you want access to competitive jobs, you'll need a Level 5.



## Step 4

### Choose your teaching format

By now you should have narrowed down your options considerably. Your final decision is to decide which teaching format will work best for you - fully online, classroom based or a combined course, which has a blend of both online and classroom learning.

The most appropriate teaching format for you will depend on your personal circumstances and preferred learning method - including whether you want to do an intensive course during a university holiday or study part-time alongside your other course work.



#### FULLY ONLINE

**What?** Full course is delivered online. Good courses blend informational content with film and audio clips as well as interactive activities to make the learning as engaging as possible. You can usually start as soon as you sign up and learn at any time and location, as long as you've got Internet access.

**Pros:** Cheapest option, extremely flexible, learning is at your own pace.

**Cons:** No face-to-face interaction.

#### CLASSROOM

**What?** All training is delivered face-to-face, usually in a group of around 10-15 students. Sessions will be scheduled for specific times and locations.

**Pros:** Practical classroom experience, learn with a group of other students, face-to-face feedback from your tutor.

**Cons:** Restricted to fixed times and locations, learning is at the pace of the class rather than you individually, most expensive option.

#### COMBINED

**What?** Blend of online and classroom teaching. Students will take online modules individually and then come together for practical elements at a set time and location.

**Pros:** Balance of online flexibility with classroom experience, learn with another group of students, cheaper than classroom course.

**Cons:** Classroom elements have fixed times / locations, higher cost than online course.





SUPPORT

Effective support can be invaluable as you start your TEFL adventure. Find out:

- What help you will get with understanding the course content or completing assignments
- Whether the course provider will provide technical assistance if you have any issues with online elements
- If the course provider offers ongoing support after you complete the course, eg with finding a TEFL job
- How support is offered (eg through FAQ pages, web chat or by phone)

Which TEFL course?

CHOOSE YOUR  
TEFL COURSE TYPE



Focus on TEFL certification courses if you want paid TEFL work

CHECK QUALITY  
INDICATORS



- Check if a course:
- Lasts a minimum of 100 hours
  - Is delivered by an accredited training provider
  - Leads to a regulated qualification
  - Gets good reviews

DECIDE ON THE  
LEVEL



**Level 3**  
Jobs in Asia, South America

**Level 5**  
Worldwide jobs

**CELTA/CertTESOL**  
International recognition

CONSIDER  
TRAINING FORMAT



**Online**  
Fully flexible, cheapest

**Classroom**  
more intensive, greater interaction, higher cost

**Combined**  
Blend of online and classroom





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## HOW TO FIND A TEFL JOB

Once you've got your TEFL certification, it's time to look for a TEFL job. This section sets out practical tips to help you find your first TEFL post.

### Tip 1 Focus your search

When you're looking for your first TEFL job, it's important to be realistic - particularly as you don't yet have your degree. That dream job with the £40k salary in your top location may be yours once you've graduated and got TEFL experience under your belt. For now, focus on countries where:

- There's high demand for English
- It's not mandatory to have a degree to teach English
- The minimum age is 18 (rather than 21 or higher)

The majority of TEFL jobs that fall into these categories are in Latin America, Southeast Asia plus some European countries. Target jobs in these areas and you've got a far greater chance of finding work.

### BONUS TIP

Look out for broader roles such as counsellors in English language summer camps. These are often open to 18-20 year olds and can be a great way to gain paid experience within a TEFL environment.



## Tip 2 Look where the jobs are

There are four main routes to finding a TEFL job.

### JOB ADVERTS

Hundreds of TEFL jobs are advertised every day. Check out online TEFL jobs boards such as [www.lovetefljobs.com](http://www.lovetefljobs.com) and [www.eslcafe.com/jobs](http://www.eslcafe.com/jobs) as well as education job sections of national newspapers and vacancy sections of English newspapers in your preferred destination.

### RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

Recruitment agencies are common in TEFL as teachers tend to be in a different country to the school when they apply for work. You'll normally find adverts for agencies alongside TEFL jobs on jobs boards and newspapers.

### DIRECT CONTACT WITH SCHOOLS

If you're already in your destination country, dress smartly and knock on the door of local schools with a copy of your CV. If a school has a vacancy, you could be hired on the spot. Alternatively, research schools online and then make a direct approach to the person responsible for recruitment.

### WORD OF MOUTH

Tell everyone you know in person or social media that you're looking for a TEFL job and check whether your course provider has any direct contacts with employers. It's amazing how many opportunities can come your way.



### BONUS TIP

Consider TEFL internships and voluntary positions. They can be a great way into TEFL and often require a shorter time commitment - making them a good way to fit TEFL work into a summer break.



### Tip 3 Look professional

It's always important to present yourself professionally on an application. However, if you're under 21, this is even more critical. A key reason why employers are reluctant to take on younger teachers is they assume younger teachers lack the professionalism and maturity to do the job. Prove them wrong!

Start by ensuring the layout of your application looks professional. Keep your CV to maximum of two pages of A4 using a clear font such as Ariel. Use headings, keep sentences short and leave white space between sections to make it look attractive and easy to read. If you're asked to attach a photo, pick one where you look smart and friendly - definitely avoid holiday snapshots! Finally make sure you proof everything and ideally ask a friend to give it all a final check.

#### BONUS TIP

Save your documents as pdf files to ensure that they arrive the other end in the format you intended.

*» Remember to triple proofread your CV. There's nothing worse than a typo in an English teacher's application!*



### Tip 4 Customise your application

Once you've identified potential jobs, don't be tempted to simply fire off your standard CV. You only have a short time to get an employer's attention. The more you shape your application to the job and demonstrate your passion, the more likely you are to get through to the interview stage.

Read everything in the job application pack before you start, note down any skills or experience you have that meets each of the requirements and tailor your application to fit the role. Remember - voluntary work for a church crèche, a paid newspaper round, a leadership role at school or university and the practical experience of your TEFL course can all help demonstrate you've got relevant skills and a professional approach to work.

#### BONUS TIP

Ask someone else to check your application. They might spot something you've missed.



## Tip 5 First impressions count

Think of your cover letter as a brilliant opportunity to make a fantastic first impression. Rather than simply stating that you're attaching your application, briefly flag the key reasons why you fit the job criteria and be really enthusiastic about this specific job.

### BONUS TIP

Use plain, clear English to ensure your application can be easily understood by a non-native English speaker.



## Tip 6 Dress the part

Your application shows that you have suitable qualifications for the job. An interview is your opportunity to demonstrate that you also have the right attitude and personality to fit the school.

First impressions really do count. Select a smart outfit that you feel comfortable in, avoid revealing or short-length clothes, cover up any tattoos and remove piercings - and be ready to start the interview on time.

### BONUS TIP

TEFL interviews often take place by Skype, as teachers and employers are in different countries. Treat this just as seriously as a face-to-face interview.

## Tip 7 Smile

During your interview, speak clearly and stick to the point. If you don't know something, then say so - but add that you are eager and willing to learn. Try to smile, make eye contact and sound enthusiastic about the job. A friendly, professional attitude goes a long way to leaving a positive impression.

### BONUS TIP

Always tell the truth. If an employer finds out you lied during the application process they could fire you or even sue you!



## Tip 8 Be prepared

Take time to prepare for your interview. Create a list of bullet points that demonstrate how your particular skills and experience are suited to the role. Also consider how you would respond to common interview questions, such as your previous experience, why you want the job, explaining a particular grammar point or managing an issue in the class. This will help you to give succinct, relevant answers in the interview.

It's also worth preparing a few questions that you can ask the interviewer, as you'll generally have this opportunity towards the end of the interview. Rather than jumping straight to the salary, ask relevant questions on topics such as the blend of pupils, class sizes or course books used. This is a great opportunity to show that you've done your research on the school and have really thought about the role.

### BONUS TIP

Research the school and local area online. Even the smallest school tends to have a website these days - and TEFL teachers often write blogs or are part of Facebook groups you can link to.





## Tip 9 Check the details

Confirm the practicalities to avoid a last minute panic. Make sure you're clear on all the details, including who will be interviewing you, when and where the interview is being held and whether you'll be expected to deliver any demonstration teaching activities.

If you're being interviewed over Skype, make sure you know who will be making the call, ensure you're logged in and set up your interview space in advance. Position the camera to a suitable background (plain, if possible), close the windows and turn off anything that beeps.

### BONUS TIP

Leave plenty of time to get to the interview. It's better to arrive early and take a walk around the block, then run in late and flustered.



## Tip 10 Don't give up

It can take time to find your first TEFL job. Most TEFL teachers apply for a number of positions before they're successful. Look on each application as a way to practise and perfect what you're doing. If you're turned down after an interview, ask for feedback so you can prepare even better next time round.

### BONUS TIP

Check your contract before accepting a job. It's important to know how many hours you'll be expected to work and if your pay package includes any add-on benefits, such as holiday pay, accommodation or health insurance

### TEFL INTERNSHIPS

If you're struggling to find your first TEFL job, why not consider a TEFL internship? It can be a great way into TEFL, as there are less restrictions on age or level of education plus you'll have loads of support as you start your TEFL adventure.

Find out more at [www.i-to-i.com/teaching-internships](http://www.i-to-i.com/teaching-internships)



# GET READY TO TEFL

Hurrah! You've been offered a TEFL job. Here are our top 10 tips to help you make the most of your TEFL adventure.

1

Find out as much as you can before you start. Look at the school's website, ask to be put touch with other teachers, read TEFL blogs, look at online videos and join social media groups to get a feel for what TEFL's like in reality.

2

Check your passport will be valid for the whole time you're away and apply for your visa / work permit, if required. This can take some time, so don't book your plane ticket until it's come through - and definitely don't leave it until the last minute.

3

Gather a small selection of everyday objects from your home country. Leaflets from your local tourist office as well as menus and travel tickets can all be great starting points for lessons - while games such as a pack of cards or scrabble can also double up as ice-breakers when you arrive.

4

Sort out your health. Book vaccinations, have your teeth checked and buy an extra pair of glasses, if you need them. Ask your doctor for a written prescription for any regular medication and check the active ingredient so you can identify a local alternative if needed. It's always better to be safe than sorry!

5

Prepare a few lesson plans and outline activities to get you through those first days of teaching. Having a couple of fail-safe warmer activities up your sleeve will make your students seem much less scary.

6

Write down five things you want to do within your first week or month. This could be anything from a top tourist attraction you want to see, to ordering a drink in the local language. It will give you something concrete to hold on to when the whirlwind of living and working in a new country threatens to take over (it happens to us all!).



7

Learn the language. Even if you just know how to say “Hello”, “How are you?”, “Please” and “Thank you”, it’s great start.

8

Go virtual. Unlock your mobile phone so you can put in a local SIM card. Download books and teaching resources onto a cheap laptop or tablet to free up vital space in your bags and save copies of key documents onto cloud-based storage or email.

9

Pack a few small personal items, such as photos. They can do wonders to brighten up your room and help connect you back to home.

10

Expect the unexpected, be flexible and remember that it’s okay for things to be different from back home - and you’ll have the TEFL adventure of a lifetime!



## Find out more

We hope you found this guide useful! To find out more about TEFL, head over to [www.i-to-i.com/tefl-blog](http://www.i-to-i.com/tefl-blog) for our regularly updated articles on all things TEFL.