# **Getting Started in Teaching ESL/EFL**

In nearly every nation opportunities are abundant for teaching English. The ever-increasing worldwide demand for the language means that there are thousands of openings for teachers who speak the English language, either natively or as proficient non-native speakers. These opportunities include teaching in educational institutions (universities, colleges, elementary and secondary schools, language institutes, business institutes, seminaries, Bible schools); teaching in English-language camps for adults and children; teaching for government agencies, overseas corporations, or private U.S. companies with offices abroad; teaching in programs sponsored by Christian agencies or local churches; and private tutoring.

Here are five important steps you can take to get started in becoming an effective ESL/EFL teacher. As you study these five, you may want to skip the information that is not relevant for your teaching situation.

### 1. Learn about the demand for English and the need for teachers.

In this section you will learn about the role of English as a global language, the available teaching opportunities and qualifications for teaching.

[The Role of English in the 21st Century](http://exchanges.state.gov/englishteaching/forum/archives/docs/00-38-1-a.pdf)

[Opportunities for ESL/EFL teachers](https://cms.wheaton.edu/terminalfour/page/content)

[Qualifications for Teaching Overseas](https://cms.wheaton.edu/terminalfour/page/content)

### 2. Explore what it means to be a Christian ESL/EFL teacher.

Each of these articles addresses one or more issues that Christian ESL/EFL teachers need to consider in order to be optimally effective in the classroom and to interact appropriately with those from other cultures and belief systems.

[Preparing for an ESL/EFL-Teaching Ministry (PDF)](https://cms.wheaton.edu/terminalfour/SiteManager?ctfn=download&fnno=60&ceid=174da80d171ff0ddca3bb1ceaed05634326fc909)  
Presents the need for special preparation to teach English, discusses the types of preparation available, and lists steps you can take to become an effective ESL/EFL teacher.

[Teaching English to the World: Options and Opportunities (PDF)](https://cms.wheaton.edu/terminalfour/SiteManager?ctfn=download&fnno=60&ceid=de0dcadf2e5d5df3c16b0b943165bf00badd5532)   
The first half of this article discusses the contribution of TESOL to overseas missions, the role of the teacher, as well as qualifications and training for teachers.

### 3. Learn what it’s like to live and teach English in your new country (for those planning to teach overseas).

If you are planning to teach overseas, learn as much as you can about living and teaching in your new location. You can often find helpful information on the Internet. (For example, you can do a metasearch with Google or another search engine to search for the phrase, "Teaching English in \_\_\_\_\_\_.")

Intercultural Press offers a variety of publications to help you learn more about different cultures, including books, videotapes and simulation games that deal with topics such as culture shock, living overseas, and negotiation across cultures, as well as many publications that focus on specific countries, regions, and cultures.

NTC Publishing Group offers a wealth of practical advice in Teaching English in Eastern and Central Europe (Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria), Teaching English in South-East Asia (Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore Brunei, Indonesia, and the Philippines), and Teaching English: Japan.

### 4. Gather information about your specific teaching situation.

Find out as much as you can about your future teaching situation, including the qualifications you are expected to have, information about your students, etc. You’ll need answers to questions such as these:

Will I be teaching alongside experienced EFL teachers, or will I be working alone? Will I have a senior teacher or mentor to consult with as needed?

Will I be teaching adults or children? Will I be teaching formal classes, or will I be tutoring individual students? If formal classes, how many classes will I teach and how many students per class?

Why will my students be learning English? How do they plan to use their English skills? Do they consider English important for their studies or for their future work? Do students generally take their learning seriously or are motivation and work habits sometimes a problem?

Which skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and which content areas (e.g., grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, literature, culture) will I be teaching? Which levels (e.g., beginning, intermediate, advanced), or will I have multi-level classes?

Will I determine course content and choose textbooks, or will someone else do this for me? Will I be expected to bring or create my own teaching materials? How easy is it to purchase materials in my new country? What teaching supplies and equipment will be available for my use? Will teacher resource materials (i.e., teacher-training books, articles, videos) be available for my use? Will I have Internet access?

Will I need to test prospective students to place them into sections divided according to proficiency level? Will I need to design and administer other evaluation instruments such as achievement tests?

Armed with answers to even some of these questions, you will be better prepared to gather teaching materials and other resources, get the training you need, and plan your teaching experiences.

### 5. Begin to build a foundation of essential information.

These articles address some of the discipline-specific essentials it’s good to know as you begin your journey as an ESL/EFL teacher.

**For those teaching adults**

[English as a Second Language in Volunteer-Based Programs](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/SCHLUSBE.html)   
Describes some common types of volunteer-based programs for adult learners of English in the U.S. and notes some of their common characteristics, including how they tend to handle training for volunteers, the benefits and challenges for the learners and the instructors, and current trends.

[Beginning to Work With Adult English Language Learners: Some Considerations](http://www.cal.org/caela/esl_resources/digests/beginQA.html)   
Introduces some fundamental principles of adult learning, basic information about second language acquisition, procedures that promote appropriate cultural sensitivity, and sound approaches and techniques to follow with adult learners.

**For those teaching children**

[Myths and Misconceptions about Second Language Learning](https://cms.wheaton.edu/terminalfour/SiteManager?ctfn=download&fnno=60&ceid=e71a400c7c2110a84072dc12557e501c04e20e60)  
Presents five commonly held myths or misconceptions about children as second language learners and offers guidance to teachers and others who are helping these children to learn ESL/EFL.

[Fostering Second Language Development in Young Children](https://escholarship.org/uc/item/23s607sr)   
Discusses how children learn second languages and lists eight foundational principles that elementary teachers need to know in order to promote effective teaching and learning.

**For those teaching overseas**

[Teaching English to the World: Options and Opportunities (PDF)](https://cms.wheaton.edu/terminalfour/SiteManager?ctfn=download&fnno=60&ceid=de0dcadf2e5d5df3c16b0b943165bf00badd5532)   
The second half of this Internet article (also included in Step 2 above) offers a number of practical suggestions for new teachers.