SCHOOL OF TEFL.

Guide to Getting into TEFL in 2026

Everything you need to know about TEFL and the life-changing opportunities it can give you.

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What is TEFL?

A TEFL certificate is your passport to a world of life-changing opportunities. Whether you end up teaching for two years or twenty, TEFL is one of the most rewarding careers you can choose!

So what is TEFL, exactly?

TEFL stands for **Teaching English as a Foreign Language**.

Everyone has a **first**, or "native" language. Somewhere around 400 million people around the world have English as their first language. This means that for at least 7 billion people, English is not their first language. And out of these, somewhere between 1.5 and 2 billion are actively learning English as their **second** language. (Your second language is the one that you learn next, for whatever reason, after your native language.)

A language is, quite literally, "foreign" to you if you don't know it, and that's why we refer to "Teaching English as a **Foreign** Language".

You may also see the terms **TESL** and **TESOL**. These are "Teaching English as a Second Language" and "Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages". In practice, all three acronyms refer to the same thing.

So TEFL (or TESL or TESOL) is all about teaching people how to communicate in a language - English - which is not their native language.

From that definition comes **EFL** (TEFL without the "T"). This is what your students learn – English as a Foreign Language. And that brings us to the next question…

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How much demand is there for TEFL?

The short answer is: **A huge amount**, though the type of demand and jobs available varies by country and region.

Here's the longer answer:

A lot of Teaching English as a Foreign Language is done in the school system in different countries. But the amount and quality of that teaching varies, depending on how much of a priority it's given.

As a result, there's a huge demand for English language teaching **outside** of the school system, and it's this demand which fuels the TEFL industry around the world. The size and scope of the industry in any particular country comes from a combination of two factors:

1. The real or perceived need for English in that country
2. The gap between what is taught in schools and the level and standard of English required to meet that need.

...And that need is normally very high.

Why? Because English is, at the moment, the dominant international language. It's the language of international business, where speaking English is often an essential skill, even a basic requirement to secure a job in some cases. It's also the language most likely to be spoken when two people who don't share the same native language meet.

So, even if children leave school with a basic command of English, this usually falls short of the level they will need to study in English or secure a job that requires it.

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And so... TEFL!

And that's where the TEFL industry comes in.

It starts with teaching English as a foreign language to kids, whose parents recognise their children's future English needs and want to give them a head start.



It continues with students, hoping to pass an English proficiency test to enable them to go and study in the USA or UK, or simply taking an English course in their own country.



And it continues again with business people who need English to get a job, get ahead in their industry, or work with international colleagues.

At each of these stages there are places to teach to meet those needs.

There are **language schools** in just about every country in the world. There are **summer schools** in English-speaking countries, where students from around the world come for a few weeks to improve their English. There are **state-run programs** giving classes to immigrants, **voluntary organisations** teaching English in disadvantaged communities, **universities** offering English as a Second Language courses, thousands of **freelance teachers** giving private classes…

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So as a TEFL teacher you might teach...

- A group of 10-year-old children in a private language school in Vietnam. Their parents and guardians have decided to invest in extra English for them outside of school.

- **A one-to-one class with the production manager of a company in France, at her place of work. The company has just started working internationally and she needs to communicate more effectively with her colleagues in business situations.**

- A group of 8 university students in Brazil at a language school. They need to prepare for an exam that allows them to go and study in the USA.

- **Online classes with Chinese elementary school children or a group of Spanish IT professionals.**

Ultimately, TEFL is about teaching people to communicate in English according to their needs and context.

Any reason you can think of for a person or group of people to use English is a possible context for TEFL! With TEFL you have almost limitless opportunities to live, work and travel in just about every country in the world, or to teach online from anywhere.

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What's life like as a TEFL teacher?

The great thing about TEFL is the number of opportunities available to you in just about every country in the world and online. With almost every one of these opportunities comes the chance to immerse yourself in another culture and get enormous job satisfaction while having a positive impact on the lives of others.

Want to live in Buenos Aires, working by day and dancing tango by night? You can do that with TEFL. Want to work in a rural community in Thailand, teaching kids who wouldn't otherwise have access to learning English? That's possible with TEFL as well. Or maybe you've always dreamed of living and working from anywhere, teaching online and setting your own schedule. TEFL can give you that freedom too.

Of course, TEFL is a job, and like any job there'll be bits you love, bits you love less (or not at all!), amazing days and forgettable days, highs and lows, stress and excitement, and the expectation to perform well at the job you're being paid to do.

But the thing about it is…

…it may not feel like a conventional job. Whether you're in a different country, immersed in a new culture, or working online as your own boss, TEFL has a way of feeling more like an adventure than work. And that's one of the things that makes it so appealing.

Then there are the incredible lightbulb moments when you're in a class and your student suddenly gets it, suddenly understands a language concept that up until then had seemed elusive. The look on that student's face is one of the most rewarding things about teaching.

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Day-to-day life as a TEFL teacher

The day-to-day of a TEFL job depends on where you're teaching.

If you're working in a language school, which is the most common type of job for newly qualified teachers, you'll be given a timetable of classes to plan and teach each week. (A typical number of teaching hours each week is between 20 and 25.)

With some schools, all of your teaching will be in the afternoons and evenings, as kids come for classes after they finish school and adults after they finish work.

With other schools, you might go and teach business professionals at their place of work in the morning, have a break in the middle of the day, and then teach kids in the late afternoon.

If you're teaching online, you may have to adapt to the time zone where your students live.

You'll plan and teach lessons on grammar and vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading and writing skills….

…and you'll learn how to do all of this in a lot of creative and satisfying ways on your TEFL course!

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How do you get into TEFL?

So how do you become a TEFL teacher in the first place?

The main way in is to **take a TEFL course.**

A TEFL course trains you with the skills you need to become a professional English teacher, and equips you with a qualification at the end of it - the all-important “passport” that makes you eligible for thousands of English teaching jobs around the world.

Can you teach English without one? In theory, yes.

But without a TEFL qualification, you’ll find it very hard to find work. Long gone are the days when just being able to speak English fluently is enough to land you a teaching job. It may still be possible in some countries, but your options will be extremely limited and you may end up working under the table.

So how do you choose a TEFL course?

There isn’t one “best” TEFL course for everyone - the right choice depends on where you want to teach, how you learn best, and the support you need.

There are quite literally hundreds of different courses to choose from, all promising to give you exactly what you need to start teaching. There are online courses and on-site, classroom-based ones. Long courses and short ones. Good quality courses and not-so-good quality ones. Accredited courses and those that have no accreditation.

So how do you narrow down the choice? How do you know which is the right course for you? Let’s look at a few questions to help.

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Choosing a TEFL course

1 Is it better to do an on-site (in-person) or online course?

There are a few reasons why this is important:

Cost and flexibility

These are the two main advantages of online courses. Online courses are usually less expensive than on-site ones, and give you the flexibility to study when and where you want, maybe even fitting the course around a job.

For some people, these two factors are overriding ones, and they're certainly important to keep in mind for everyone. But there are other factors to consider too…

What will you get out of the course?

There's the question of what you'll get out of the TEFL course and how prepared for teaching you'll feel at the end of it. Most on-site courses and some online courses give you experience of actual teaching practice with real, live students. That's what you'll be doing when you start work, which is why many employers place such value on the teaching practicum element of a TEFL course.



School of TEFL's on-site and online courses **all** include teaching practice with real students.

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Getting to know other trainees

Another thing to think about is the sense of camaraderie with fellow trainees that often comes with an on-site course. These courses usually take place over an intensive 4 weeks, and the shared experience of "being in the same boat" can lead to close bonds and friendships that can last a lifetime.

Local contacts

Reputable on-site TEFL courses often have a network of contacts with language schools and other employers, which can be invaluable when you're looking for work after your course. So if you know you want to teach in Italy, taking an on-site course there and taking advantage of the local connections and insider job market knowledge of your TEFL course provider can give you a significant head start.



School of TEFL work with partner centres around the world, all of whom have expert knowledge of the local job market and provide you with first-class job and career support.

2 Is the TEFL certificate recognised where I want to teach?

The second part of this question, "where I want to teach", is the most important. All TEFL certificates are recognised somewhere, but different countries (and different employers) have different requirements. For some, an online TEFL certificate without teaching practice is enough. For others, only a certificate with real teaching practice will do. If you know you want to work in a particular country, you need to make sure you take a course that most employers there will accept.

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And that brings us on to the third question…

3 Is the TEFL course accredited, and by whom?

In TEFL, there's no central international accrediting or regulatory body. Anyone can create and sell a TEFL course. They could even make up their own accrediting body, self-accredit their course, and call it accredited. And, strictly speaking, it would be! But there wouldn't be any substance behind that accreditation.

So it's important to look for a reputable accrediting body behind the course that you choose. This ensures you are receiving good quality training that has met the standards imposed by the accrediting body. It also ensures that your TEFL certification will be recognised and trusted by employers.

So, look for accreditation on the course provider's website, and make sure that the course is either government accredited, or accredited by a private organisation. Then go and research that organisation. First of all, check to see that the course provider is listed on their site. Then check if the accrediting body has any substance. Does it appear reputable? Has it accredited other reputable-looking TEFL courses?



At School of TEFL we work hard to ensure that you're enrolling on an exceptional course.

All of our courses are either government-accredited or accredited by a reputable external organisation. For our on-site courses, we only work with partners who provide training and support of the highest standards.

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4 Does the course meet international standards?

The accepted international standards for a TEFL course are that it should:

- be at least 120 hours in length
- include at least 5 or 6 hours of observed teaching practice (that means practice teaching real students, observed by your trainer)
- be government accredited or accredited by a reputable external organisation **(see the previous page)**
- be taught by university-level trainers



School of TEFL courses are designed to meet or exceed these widely accepted standards and are taught by certified and highly experienced university-level vocational trainers.

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5 Where is the course?

For on-site courses, location is important. If you want to teach in Vietnam, for example, then taking a TEFL course there will (as we mentioned earlier) give you access to local contacts, expertise and insider knowledge and tips on the TEFL job market in Vietnam. Most courses also dedicate a session or two specifically to working in TEFL in that country.

Being in place on the ground can have its advantages too – you can visit employers directly with your CV and get a feel for the place where you might work. This is important in some countries that prefer teachers to apply for jobs in person rather than online.

There are also reasons to take the TEFL course in your home country or online though. You might not be sure yet where (or when) you want to start teaching. The training centre might be convenient to where you live. A part-time course near where you live or an online course could allow you to work at the same time.



All School of TEFL partner centres offer excellent support with aspects such as visas, accommodation and orientation on arrival. Both our on-site and online courses come with lifetime job support.

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Can I do a TEFL course?

At School of TEFL, we believe that **everyone** has the potential to teach, to challenge themselves, and to make a difference in the lives of others. TEFL gives you an unparalleled opportunity to do this.

So:

- ? Are you 18 or over?
- ? Have you completed secondary education to pre-university level?
- ? Are you proficient in all aspects of English?
- ? Are you prepared to put in the work to study a university-level course?

If you can say “yes” to all of these questions, then you can take a TEFL course!

So what's next?

You may have more questions about TEFL and what’s right for you personally. At School of TEFL we’re here to help, so please reach out at any time and we’ll answer any questions you have. We believe that TEFL is one of the most rewarding careers you can choose, and we're dedicated to helping you throughout your journey.

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Have a look at **School of TEFL's on-site and online courses**. You can even combine the two, studying half the course online and half on-site with one of our **hybrid courses**.

Enrolling on one of our courses is easy. Once you've checked that you're eligible, just choose your course, enrol, and get ready to start your TEFL journey!

When you enrol on a School of TEFL course, you'll also receive:

1 Our add-on Grammar Course

You'll cover grammar during the TEFL course itself, but our optional Grammar Course gives you a head start.

You can take it before your course begins or use it for support once you start teaching.

2 Lifetime job and career support

Before, during and after the course we're on hand with one-to-one expert guidance.

We'll help you with preparing your CV, applying for jobs, succeeding at interviews and building your TEFL career, for as long as you need us.

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About School of TEFL

We're an independent TEFL course provider, owned and run by **experienced, dedicated TEFL teachers**. Our mission is to help people launch their TEFL careers and experience the life-changing rewards of teaching English.

We're deeply committed to offering you the best TEFL course experience we possibly can. We work hard to ensure that you receive an exceptional quality course from trainers who are passionate about TEFL and dedicated to your success.

We've been involved in TEFL **for over 20 years**, teaching in language schools, training and mentoring other teachers and travelling the world. We've experienced first-hand the rewards and challenges of taking a TEFL course and living and working abroad.

We're also responsible for **Eslbase**, a trusted resource for TEFL teachers since 2005.

Get in touch with us today

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Some key questions and answers

And lastly... Here are some answers to some practical questions about teaching English abroad.



Can I teach English as a non-native speaker?

Yes! As long as you speak English at a near-native level you'll be able to take a TEFL course and teach English abroad, and there are plenty of opportunities for non-native speakers. However, it's important to bear in mind that your employment options may be more limited in some countries.

Please **get in touch** with us, and we'll be happy to chat with you about your options and what to expect.



Can I teach abroad if I don't have a degree?

Yes! Your options will be more limited though, as many countries make it a legal requirement for foreign teachers to hold a Bachelor's degree. In other countries, employers prefer it, even if it's not a legal requirement.

If you don't have a degree, there are still plenty of countries where you can teach. Please **get in touch** and we'll be happy to guide you.

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How old do I need to be to teach English abroad?

You'll need to be at least 18. In theory, there is no upper age limit, although some countries have an upper age limit imposed by the government or by individual employers (bear in mind that labour and discrimination laws work differently in different countries).



How can I find a job once I'm qualified?

Finding a job depends on where you want to teach. The majority of employers in some countries, like China, South Korea and Japan, recruit at a distance, advertising their vacancies on various online jobs boards. You'll apply by sending your CV or filling out an application form, and then do an online interview. In other countries, like Italy and France, many employers prefer teachers to be there in person for interviews. Some countries do both.

This can influence your decision of where to take your TEFL course. If you want to teach in Italy, being there on the ground, ready to visit language schools with your CV and attend in-person interviews will be a huge advantage. If you want to teach in South Korea though, being on the ground to apply for jobs doesn't really give you much of an advantage.

If you take a School of TEFL course, you'll get expert job help and guidance both from School of TEFL and, if you take an on-site or hybrid course, from our partner centre.

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Our partner centres have expert knowledge of the local TEFL jobs market and usually an extensive network of language schools and other employers who they can put you in touch with. They also know the ins and outs of how and when to apply for jobs in that country and their help can be invaluable when it comes to finding work.

At School of TEFL, we have more than 20 years of experience in the TEFL world. From us, you'll get support and advice with anything from creating your CV, to succeeding at job interviews, to finding work in different countries. That support is available to you as and when you need it, for as long as you need it.



How quickly can I start a course and start teaching?

Most on-site TEFL courses run for 4 (fairly intensive) weeks. If there are spaces available, you can start the next available course in your chosen location and be teaching within a few weeks of completing it.

Practically though, we advise applying for an on-site course a couple of months before it starts, partly to ensure there is a space available, and also to give you time to organise flights and other travel practicalities.

If you choose an online course, you can normally start immediately. You might choose to study intensively or on a part-time basis. With the School of TEFL online course you have 6 months to complete it, with most graduates taking between 4 and 12 weeks. To start work after an online course, you need to factor in time for looking for jobs online and/or travelling to where you want to teach and looking for work there.

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What will I learn on a TEFL course?

On a good quality, accredited course, you'll learn everything you need to start teaching English. You'll learn, among other things, how the language works, how to plan and structure a lesson, different teaching methodologies and how to apply them, how to teach grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, how to manage a class, how to test students, how to find and create materials and resources, how to teach children, one-to-one classes and business English.

You'll probably also learn a lot about yourself and what you're capable of! You'll experience highs and lows and the real sense of achievement that comes from successfully teaching your first class.



Can I work at the same time as studying for the TEFL course?

On a 4-week intensive course, we wouldn't recommend it! You can expect to be at the training centre from around 9am to 5pm (this varies slightly from centre to centre) and you'll spend evenings and some time at weekends planning lessons and doing coursework.

If you take a part-time or online course, one of the advantages is that you can fit the course around work commitments.

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How much money will I make as a teacher?

This depends on where you teach. In some countries, particularly in Europe, you can expect to earn just enough to cover living expenses and enjoy life! In many Middle Eastern countries, you can earn enough to save significant amounts each month. In Asia, you'll generally earn enough to have a very comfortable lifestyle. Remember that the cost of living varies significantly from country to country, and you have to think locally. So a monthly teaching salary paid in local currency in Indonesia will normally be enough to live a very comfortable lifestyle, with enough left over to travel around the country, but probably won't allow you to save significant amounts to send home.

Many teachers supplement income by teaching online or with private tutoring.



Can I choose what type of classes I teach in a job?

This comes down to what type of classes are typically taught at a school, as a result of the demand in that particular city or country. For example, in a lot of Asian countries, most of the teaching tends to be with kids, so this is a good region to look if your heart is set on teaching children. If you prefer to teach more business professionals, you might be better off with a job in Europe or the Middle East. There's a lot of crossover, but it's something to keep in mind when you're looking for jobs.

Generally, the more experience you have, the more choice you'll have, because more positions will be open to you. Teaching freelance and private tutoring (which a lot of teachers do in addition to working for one main employer) is another way to have more control over this.

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Can I teach online?

Absolutely! Online English teaching is booming, with all signs showing that it will continue to do so, and there are now a large number of online teaching jobs available. With many of these you can set your own schedule and, of course, teach from where it suits you. Many teachers start off teaching online to get some experience before moving abroad to teach. Others teach online full-time or use it as a way to supplement their income.



Where can TEFL lead?

Choosing your TEFL course is the first step on your TEFL journey. With your TEFL certificate, you can teach in just about every country in the world. Or if you prefer, you can teach online from the comfort of home.

TEFL can be for one year or fifty. It's something you can leave and come back to. If you stay in TEFL, you can stay in the classroom, with all the rewards and satisfaction of being in front of students. Or you can develop your career beyond teaching. You can become a Senior Teacher or Academic Coordinator, in charge of a particular aspect of the running of the school where you work, like Kids or Business English. You can recruit, manage and train teachers as a Director of Studies or Teacher Trainer. You could even open your own school.

But all that is for the future. Right now, why not take that first step? Choose your TEFL course now and start your life-changing journey!

Get in touch with us today

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