

FAQs about TEFL

These are all real questions we have fielded from prospective trainee teachers.

<p>1. What do I need in order to take an initial teacher-training course to become a TEFL teacher?</p>	<p>You need to be 18+ and have a good standard of education. If you are not a native English speaker, you'll need proof of competence in English.</p>
<p>2. Can I teach without a qualification?</p>	<p>You can, some schools will still accept unqualified teachers but if you do you won't be doing your students any favours. They already have a tough enough job trying to learn the language, the last thing they need is someone teaching them who doesn't know what they're doing. And in any case, times are changing and unqualified 'TEFLers' are not so welcome any more.</p>
<p>3. Which qualification should I do?</p>	<p>To be safe, you need either Cert. TESOL or CELTA. The first is overseen by Trinity College London and the second by the University of Cambridge Local Exam Syndicate. Both qualifications are recognised by the British Council and both are accepted world-wide by reputable language schools and institutes. Any other qualification will probably not be universally recognised. Our course is the Trinity College version.</p>
<p>4. What's the difference between TEFL, TESOL and TESL?</p>	<p>TEFL (Teaching English as Foreign Language) has now become the 'hoover' or 'thermos' of language teaching. It's a generic name which is largely being dropped. TESOL, pronounced 'teesol' (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) is more generally accepted. TESL pronounced 'tesl' (Teaching English as a Second Language) is generally associated with teaching in the UK to people whose adopted language is (or will be) English.</p>
<p>5. What role does Trinity College play and what is 'moderation'?</p>	<p>Trinity is the exam board which validates us as providers of the Cert. course. We have to follow their guidelines in the syllabus though we can add topics which we feel are important. Moderation takes place on the very last day of the course, Trinity sends a moderator who reads through the written work, reviews the grades we have awarded and interviews all course members. The moderator also assesses the materials you have made during the course.</p>
<p>6. What will I be able to do with the qualification?</p>	<p>Assuming you have what it takes, you'll be able to work almost anywhere in the world as an English language teacher. If you</p>

	don't have a first degree, you can't work in some countries.
7. How difficult is the course?	Don't underestimate it! Many people find it is far more demanding than they thought. ELT (English Language Teaching) has now spread its wings and tries to encourage professionalism in the long term. That's not to say that you can't still 'do TEFL' for a few years and then go on to something else but while you do it, a higher level of professionalism will usually be expected of you than a few years ago.
8. How much of the course do I need to attend?	All of it! If you miss something, you may have to repeat that module or even the whole course. 100% attendance is mandatory.
9. Presumably I'll be able to carry on doing my evening job in the pub won't I?	Absolutely not.
10. Is it possible to fail the course?	Naturally, otherwise it wouldn't be worth doing. We try to offer all the support needed but ultimately it's you who has to do the job.
11. I heard there's a lot of written work...	<p>There are 4 major written assignments during the course. They are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Reporting, in depth on four hours of lessons in a language unknown to the trainees</i> 2. <i>Recording an interview with a learner and after transcription, categorising and analysing errors</i> 3. <i>Keeping an accurate and detailed log of each lesson taught</i> 4. <i>Creating and critiquing teaching materials</i> <p>At the start of the course trainees receive a very detailed guide explaining what each assignment requires, how long it should be and when it is due. Unlike most courses, we offer a draft submission before the final so that you can respond to feedback before final marking.</p>
12. I'm a bit worried about the grammar. Should I be?	<p>What you probably mean is that you're worried about the formal descriptions of language: names of tenses, parts of speech and so on. Many courses make the study of this a major part of the course but we think that over a year or two of full-time teaching, you'll probably handle all the major structures of the language and therefore, learn their names and functions.</p> <p>Having said that, we do look at, use and teach a wide variety of grammatical terminology. We'll try to make it accessible and memorable!</p>
13. I heard there's an exam too,	Strictly speaking, yes but we don't think you should have to

<p>is that right?</p>	<p>memorise the content of the course, after all, it's basically a practical programme designed to turn you into a teacher! For this reason, our 'exam' is a take home paper and you can use your course notes and anything else you need to answer the questions and complete the tasks.</p>
<p>14. What do you think are the most important personality characteristics of a successful language teacher?</p>	<p>That's a tricky question because as all learners have their own styles, so teachers do too. Basically you can't teach without a sense of humour, patience, humility (at times), a willingness to learn from anybody and a very strong work ethic.</p>
<p>15. What about after the course, is there any support?</p>	<p>Absolutely. We run an online forum which you will have access to. There you can communicate with us as well as other teachers, experienced and not.</p>
<p>16. Will you help me find a job after the course?</p>	<p>We don't offer a formal service at the moment but it is quite possible that we can help you to make the right connections – between us we know a lot of people and have, in the past, helped to place many new teachers in good quality employment.</p>
<p>17. It seems quite expensive, can I get the course cheaper elsewhere?</p>	<p>Probably but we think you get the return on the investment you pay for. Our administrators and tutors are professionals at the top of their game, they need to be remunerated appropriately. Apart from that rather obvious point, our staff puts in many more hours than trainees will be aware of so the course might seem costly but we think it's excellent value for money.</p>
<p>18. How is the course structured?</p>	<p>Here are some examples taken from our timetable:</p> <p>Week 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teaching the brain to learn • presenting language • practice activities • structure and function • Phonetics & Phonology <p>Week 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Communicative Approach • the four skills • language error correction • teaching practice (every afternoon) <p>Week 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using games in the classroom • the Good Language Learner • post course – jobs, exams etc • English for Specific Purposes • teaching practice (every afternoon) <p>Week 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Humanistic Approaches

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • course review • preparation for moderation • teaching practice (every afternoon) <p>Naturally there's much more than this but we hope this will give you a taste of what's involved.</p>
<p>19. Will everybody on the course be younger / older than I am?</p>	<p>We can't guarantee the ages of trainees but we can say that we have had a broad mix, literally from 18 to 72! In any case, as a teacher you can find yourself working with any and every age group within the space of a day so it shouldn't make any difference how old or young your colleagues are!</p>
<p>20. I have special needs as a course participant – can I still join the course?</p>	<p>The quick answer is 'yes' as long as you can show that you are able to do things which might normally be expected of a language teacher. You'll need to talk to us so that we can advise you and if necessary (and feasible) make arrangements to suit you.</p>
<p>21. I am not a native English speaker, can I apply to take the course?</p>	<p>Absolutely. The days when only native speakers were considered good models has long gone and only the ill-informed would think a non-native speaker could not provide such a model. Naturally, you will need to demonstrate that your English language competency (written and spoken) is sufficient to do the job – but native speakers need to do that too!</p>
<p>22. What if I enjoy it, where can I go next?</p>	<p>There is now a career structure with qualifications which reflect the practice/theory nature of the job. A next step after a couple of years' teaching would be to go for a Dip.TESOL or an MA. We can advise you on that after the course.</p>
	<p>© 2009 Steve Hirschhorn</p>