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Module 26: Teaching English Online

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26.1 Teaching Online vs. Traditional Classroom

Teaching Online

The job of an Online Teacher involves tutoring or teaching children, teenagers or adults in various subjects and performing tasks of regular teachers. The main difference with those who teach in classrooms and online teachers is the setting of classes. Some online teachers teach English to non-English speaking adults, while others tutor adults via online classes, even if they live thousands of miles away from their students.

To teach online, you need to be reasonably tech-savvy and confident when using online platforms, and to have a reliable internet connection. This is because interactions with students will take place through online platforms, email, and video calls. Various methods can be used, such as one-on-one video calls, group video calls, and webinars. Also, you may need to create digital resources to share with your students, such as PowerPoint presentations, videos, audio lectures, and pdf guides. Additionally, you must provide consistent availability, give feedback to the students and assess their performance in class.

Traditional Learning

Traditional (Face-to-Face) teaching (also known as in-person, F2F) is conducted synchronously in a physical learning environment (utilizing appropriate safety measures), meaning that “traditionally,” the students are in the same place simultaneously. The



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traditional classroom has the significant advantage of face-to-face interaction between the student and you and the students themselves.

A pre-planned curriculum is set for these traditional classrooms, and you follow the same. Regular tests are conducted to test the understanding of the students of the curriculum. These traditional classrooms are usually equipped with tables, chairs, blackboards, fans, and other such classroom essentials.

You can pay individual attention and understand the difficulties faced by the students. This is usually absent in distance or virtual learning. Traditional classrooms have a schedule, and the student is expected to follow the same to learn a particular subject or lesson. Punishments are very common in a traditional classroom.



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	FACE-TO-FACE LEARNING	ONLINE LEARNING
Environment	Passive and physical	Active and asynchronous
Reading	Textbooks or other traditional materials	Textbooks, supplemental materials, as well as online discussions, student-teacher interactions, student-student interactions, course announcements, assignment instructions and more
Course Pace	Instructor sets the pace	Students may set the pace
Discussions	In person, instructor led, face-to-face monitored at a specific time	Written, researched responses, student-facilitated
Assessments	In-person exams, closely monitored at a specific time	Exams may be timed, screens may be recorded. The date and time is more flexible
Assignments	Submitted online or in person. Review is done online or in person	Submitted and reviewed online only
Group Work	Class time is used for group work and collaboration	Students must schedule to meet outside of a regularly scheduled time, and may have to do a lot of self-monitoring and asynchronous communication



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26.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Teaching English Online

ADVANTAGES OF TEACHING ONLINE

1. Diverse job opportunities: The online TEFL/TESOL industry is going strong and growing by the minute, which means there are plenty of job opportunities for qualified teachers. This also means that companies are competing to get teachers by offering better pay, benefits, etc.

2. Location independence: One of the main benefits of teaching English online is that you can work from anywhere in the world. There are many online ESL teachers who frequently travel, and having a remote job means that your work isn't affected if you ever have to move. Plus, working from home means no commuting.

3. Ability to set your own schedule: Online ESL jobs are often very flexible when it comes to choosing your online English teaching schedule. You pick when you want to work and how many hours each week you want to invest in teaching. You'll also usually have the freedom to take time off when you want/need to without stressing over admin permissions or arranging a substitute teacher to cover for you.

4. Competitive hourly pay: Online teachers typically earn a decent hourly rate, with companies offering anywhere from \$9 to \$24 per hour. If you decide to enter into the online TEFL/TESOL industry via a teacher marketplace or set up your own online teaching freelance business, you can even set your own pay rate!

5. Minimal teaching prep: Teaching online means spending less time and resources on things like printing materials and arranging your classroom. Furthermore, if you teach for a company, you almost never have to design your own curriculum, which means there's less time spent on preparing to teach and more time dedicated to actual teaching.

6. Smaller class sizes: Another one of the benefits of teaching English online is that most classes are smaller in size. This means that you'll be able to devote more attention to each student. You'll find many opportunities to tutor students one-on-one or teach classes of no more than four students.

7. Connect with students all over the world: Perhaps the biggest benefit of all when it comes to teaching English online is that you get to connect with interesting students from all over the world. You'll learn about different cultures and interact with people who have different backgrounds from your own.



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DISADVANTAGES OF TEACHING ONLINE

1. A competitive job market: To count on a good stable income, you will have to compete with other teachers. Firstly, it is a matter of customer confidence: specialized diplomas, certificates, and documents confirming your competence will become an advantage. Secondly, this is the problem of promotion: you will have to actively promote your services in order to gain an audience.

2. Few to no health/retirement benefits: One of the biggest things you have to consider when it comes to the pros and cons of teaching English online is whether or not you need a job that has benefits, such as a retirement plan or health insurance. It's important to be aware that most online ESL tutoring jobs don't offer these types of benefits.

3. Odd work hours: Since you're going to be teaching people in other parts of the world, you'll have to consider time differences. Often, this means that you'll teach at odd hours. If you teach online for a company, many of the students may be based out of Asia, which means you could be teaching very late at night or in the early morning hours.

4. Booking that isn't guaranteed: When weighing the pros and cons of teaching English online, you'll need to remember that booking isn't guaranteed. Unlike when you teach at a physical school, your hours may vary and you might not get paid for a time slot you open if it doesn't fill or is canceled at the last moment. Many teachers make sure they have enough students by teaching online with multiple companies or supplementing their job with freelance online English teaching.

5. Technical issues: The Internet connection is not always reliable. Even though the greatest thing is convenience because the session can be done almost anywhere, sometimes the Internet program or weather does not want to cooperate and can prove to kill your session time due to technical difficulties. Connection reliability and speed can really be a hindering factor in your session if they are not good or not working. Luckily, if these things are paid attention to and considered ahead of time, these glitches can be made sparse, but it is inevitable they will occur and the session can be completely lost or you end up paying trouble shooting rather than academic help.



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26.3 Who Can Teach English Online?

Since there are many online English companies out there, most native English speakers can find a job that matches their credentials. In general, online English teachers must meet the following requirements:

- Native English speaker (though some companies will hire fluent speakers as well)
- Bachelor's Degree or higher
- TEFL (Teaching English as Foreign Language), TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) or other equivalent certificates
- Love working with people, especially children
- Patient and understanding when speaking to a new English learner
- Regular access to high-speed internet and a teaching device such as a laptop or tablet.

26.4 What Will You Teach, Who Will You Teach, and How Will You Teach?

What To Teach?

An English teacher instructs students in English language and literature. English teachers may encourage learning the English language in a fun and engaging environment, depending on the age level taught. They may teach native speakers of English as well as non-native English speaking students.

Who Will You Teach?

Online students tend to be young kids or teenagers. They usually attend their virtual classes after regular school hours or on the weekends. Asian countries, such as China, put a strong emphasis on English learning at a young age, making it common for many online teaching companies to be based there.

It's also possible to teach English to adults online. For example, you might teach business professionals or students who attend virtual classes in the evening or on weekends. Online English classes work well for more disciplined, independent students.

How Will You Teach?

You'll usually be leading a student or group of students through a theme-based discussion. You will make corrections, encourage responses, and ensure that each student gets a fair turn to participate. Materials are generally provided, but there can be some scope for using your own.

Many students may have studied English previously but lack fluency and the ability to converse naturally in English, so the majority of lessons are often conversational in nature.



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The themes you'll discuss likely will include hobbies, family, culture, sports, music, and films. Depending on the school, you may be expected to complete some admin work outside of lessons, such as writing lesson summaries, sending corrections by email, and assigning homework.

26.5 How to use Props

A good prop for teaching online serves as a visual aid in order to teach learning content. However, props are not only for your students' benefit. They are also tremendously helpful for getting your point across. When you want to teach the word "pencil" to a low-level student, you could spend the next five minutes of your valuable lesson time describing it, and still not get any response. Or, you could simply hold up a pencil into the webcam saying "This is a pencil" and your student will understand immediately.

The basics

Of course it goes without saying that you have a laptop or PC, headset with microphone, and a stable internet connection. If you have power issues, make sure you have a back-up battery pack and UPS so as not to interrupt your lessons if the power goes out.

It's also a good idea to have a comfortable chair to sit on, considering you'll be sitting in it for your entire working day. Plus you might need a laptop stand so that your laptop is at the appropriate level to make sure your students aren't looking down your shirt during your lessons.

When teaching children

When teaching children, you want your props to be colorful, fun, and engaging, in order to keep your four-year-old student happy in front of the computer screen. Online teaching props should make the room behind you look fun without being distracting and they should vary in shape, form, and color.

1. A backdrop

What is behind you in the lesson is very important. It makes sense to have a wall behind you that you can decorate appropriately. No matter if you are teaching youngsters or adults, you should have your name displayed somewhere behind you. It's helpful for first-time students so they don't have to keep asking you your name or calling you ma'am or sir, and it's good for younger students to practice their reading and pronunciation. This can be a simple printout with your name written on it, or it can be a colorful poster. It's also a nice idea to have your national flag on display behind you so the students know where you are from. If you are teaching Young Learners, add some colorful bunting or well-known characters, or you could have a world map or a few nice pictures which can be used as conversation starters.



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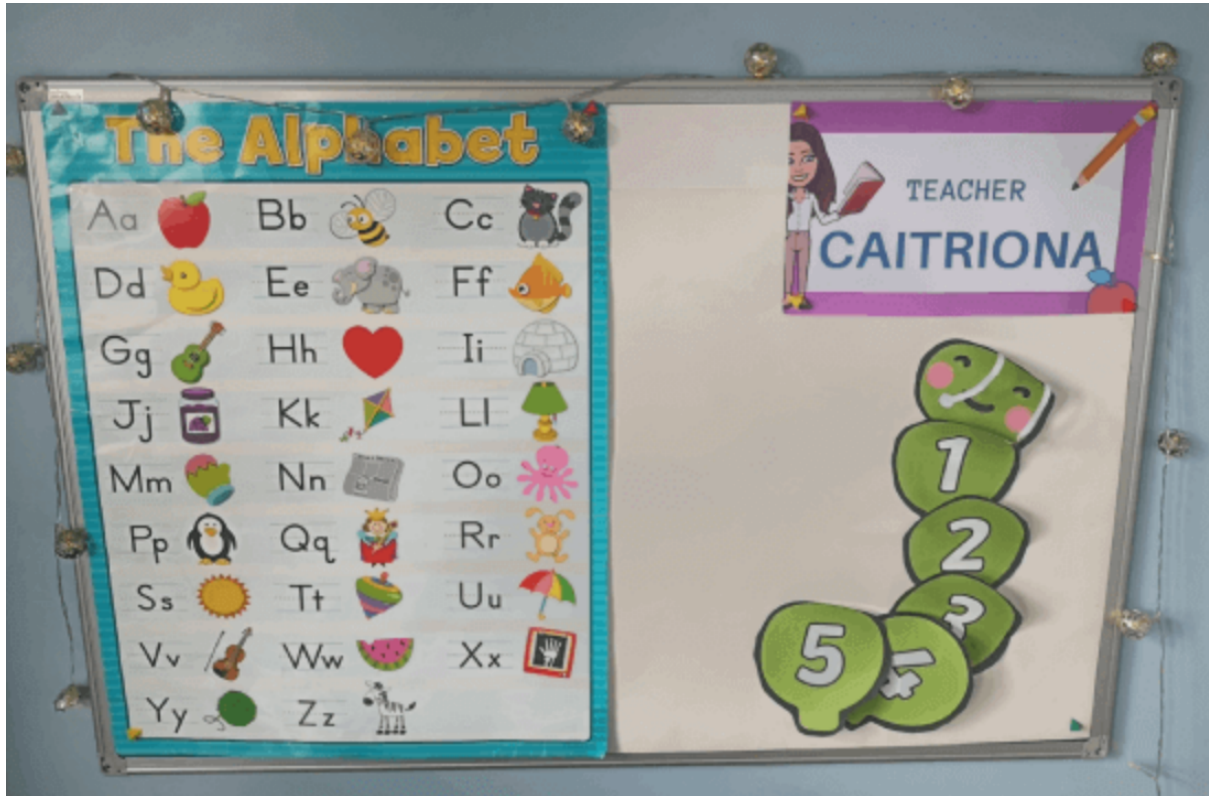


2. Whiteboard

An absolute must! Whiteboards can be used to write down vocabulary terms, explain language points, display pictures – there are so many ways you can use a whiteboard. Because they're magnetic, they can be used with magnetic letters and numbers; plus it's much easier (and cheaper) to put up pictures with a magnet. Don't forget your markers and an eraser!



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3. Scoreboard or reward chart

Depending on the age of your student, you will need a scoreboard or a reward chart. This can be a simple white board or chart which you put stickers or points on. Even better is if you have a magnetic board (like a mini white board) which you can put magnets on so it is reusable. Reward charts help students see their progress and motivates them to achieve targets. They are especially useful in group classes to introduce an element of competition into the lesson.





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4. Puppets and soft toys

First of all, a soft toy can act as a class mascot for younger learners. The mascot can greet the students and introduce the lesson theme. Similarly finger puppets are a great way to demonstrate a dialogue or activity.





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5. Realia

Realia are as important in an online classroom as they are in a physical classroom. Realia include everyday objects that are referred to in the lesson. This can be anything from food to stationery to clothing. Realia can help students make a connection between the word and its meaning, while also making the language more memorable. It is also one way to introduce authenticity in the ESL classroom.





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26.6 How to Plan an Online Lesson

Good lessons typically have:

- One main objective which outlines what the student will be able to do by the end of the lesson
- Key vocabulary words that will be taught to the student
- Target sentence frames that the students will be able to use in context
- Plenty of opportunities for the student to practice speaking
- Visual and audio elements to enhance understanding

Step 1: Decide on Your Lesson Plan Objectives

When creating a lesson plan, you must take into account how many students you have and their age and English level. These factors will shape your entire lesson, and noting these details on your lesson plan will make it easier to reuse the plan for future classes.

This is the daunting part, but it's crucial that you know this from the start. Step one is the foundation of everything that follows. Your focus could be:

- a discussion topic
- a specific grammar point such as forming questions or practicing the present progressive. Young or beginning learners might need to focus on the conjugation of only one specific verb such as "to be." More advanced students could practice multiple irregular verb conjugations.
- a general exercise such as understanding a short passage
- a vocabulary group. For example, you might teach cooking, colors, medical terminology or animals.

Step 2: Outline Your Lesson Plan

It's crucial to plan how much time you think each part of your lesson plan will take so that you have enough material (but not too much) to teach the lesson well within the allotted class time. Try including one optional activity at the end of class to anticipate any leftover time you might have.



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Step 3: Create ESL Materials and Worksheets

ESL stands for English as a Second Language. It's true that the internet has a lot of free worksheets. By all means, use them. Time, however, is your greatest enemy. You first must know where to find quality ESL material. Until you have a few favorite sites, searching for worksheets on the internet will take a lot of your time. You also have to tailor it to your class's level.

It's also important to consider what resources the school or language institute where you teach is capable of providing and reform your lesson plans to meet possible restrictions. Online English teachers will need to make sure that the materials they choose to use are suitable for the digital classroom as well.

Step 4: Create Stellar Visual Aids for Your ESL Classroom

You'll need visual aids that add depth and interest to your class. It could be a PowerPoint presentation, a restaurant menu from home or things from your kitchen. Whatever you choose, make sure it enhances your lesson.

Step 5: Prepare for Anticipated problems

A lesson plan is a great place to note any potential problems you anticipate and how you plan to solve them. This could include providing fast finisher activities, filling leftover time, reducing side conversations during group work, or dealing with a technological issue. Having a plan in place ahead of time to deal with these types of problems will allow you to remain calm and in control during the class and reduce wasted time.

26.7 Finding an Online Teaching Job

For experienced teachers and newbies alike, the process of getting an online teaching job can be full of unknowns. Teachers may wonder where to find jobs with legitimate companies, what to expect during the application process, or how to prepare for a teaching demo during the interview. These job tips for teaching English online will help you start your new career off on the right foot.

Understand your job options for teaching English online

Once you're TEFL/TESOL certified and feeling prepared, it's time to jump into the online teaching job market. There are basically three categories when it comes to how to teach online. Which one you choose depends on your goals, your preferences, and your level of commitment.



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- You can work with an established online tutoring company.
- You can work via a teacher marketplace.
- You can work for yourself (i.e., start your own business).

Specialize your TEFL/TESOL training to increase job prospects and earning potential

Most online teaching jobs offer a range of hourly pay. How can you fall on the high end of that range? Earning a specialization certificate (such as specialized certification in teaching online or a Bridge Micro-credential course certificate) in your teaching area of interest, whether it's teaching kids, adults, or professionals, is a great way to maximize your earning potential.

Showcase your language skills, especially if English isn't your first language

If you've learned (or are learning) a language, you'll likely be better at teaching one, so make sure and highlight your experience as a student of any second language. And, if you're a non-native English speaker, your first language can be an advantage as an online English teacher since you can market yourself to beginner students in your home country or anywhere your first language is spoken.

Create a resume specifically for teaching online

Don't worry, your teaching English online resume won't be drastically different from your standard resume; however, there are some small changes you can make to fit this type of job.

- Be sure to highlight any specialized certification in teaching English online.
- List technical skills to show your comfort level in a virtual setting.
- If you have an intro video or recorded teaching session, include a link to it.

Focus on students when answering questions during your interview

Unlike other job interviews, which focus a lot on you, ESL teaching interviews should focus on how you interact with students. When the interviewer asks you a question, see if you can put your answer in the context of working with a student in the virtual classroom. Highlight how your teaching methods lead to the best possible outcome for your online English students and their learning goals.

Be prepared for the demo teaching lesson during your interview

During your interview, you may be required to provide a short demo ESL teaching lesson so that the employer can see your teaching skills in action. This is your chance to show the different methods you've learned in your Teaching English Online TEFL/TESOL



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course, such as communicative language teaching, minimizing teacher talking time, applying teaching methods and demonstrating effective error correction.

26.8 Working for an Online School

Advantages

1. Support

If you're new to teaching English online, working with a company usually offers some support, such as training and tutorials, onboarding, and even a mentor or professional development opportunities in some cases.

2. Students provided

When you work with a company, you are not responsible for finding students; the company has a bank of students already, and they'll either be assigned to you or you will select students based on your availability.

3. Materials provided

Another pro of working with a company is that you won't have to come up with lesson plans and teaching materials, as these are provided for you.

4. No marketing required

Unlike working for yourself, either via a teacher marketplace or when running your own business, when you work with a company, you won't have to create a teacher profile, an intro video, or a website to attract students, as they are provided for you.



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Disadvantages

1. Salary limits

The first is that, of the three job options listed here, the income potential is the lowest. Online teaching companies usually offer a range of pay to their tutors (based on qualifications and experience) and also the chance to earn more through performance-based bonuses; however, there is always an upper limit to how much you can earn per hour. For example, if you are hired at the top of the pay scale with VIPKid, and you earn all available incentive bonuses, the max per hour that you'll make as a tutor is about \$22 USD.

2. Less freedom

When working with a company, you'll likely have to work within certain hours, you may have to wear a uniform, and lessons are usually pre-made and very structured. While having structured lessons provided falls into the "pro" category for many teachers, others prefer to have more room for creativity when it comes to the curriculum they'll teach and how they'll teach it.

3. Finding the right company

A third downside is that you'll have to do some legwork during your job search to find the right company for you. Points to consider include the curriculum the company uses, the number of available students (and therefore teaching hours for you), whether the company caters to young learners, teens, or adults, and where the company is located.

26.9 Working as an Independent Online Teacher

For many teachers, working in an online tutoring marketplace represents something of a sweet spot between working with a company and working entirely for yourself. The marketplace acts as an agent, or "middleman," and you use their platform to market your services to students seeking an English teacher.

Advantages

Working via a marketplace is a step on the way to total independence. As a tutor for a marketplace, you set your own hours and your own prices (the marketplace takes a



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commission from what you earn). Because you set your prices based on your online English teaching qualifications, the income potential can be higher than when working with a company, especially for more experienced teachers.

Disadvantages

It takes more than just teaching skills to set up an effective marketplace profile. For example, most profiles include a professional-looking image, an engaging description of what you have to offer, and a video introduction, so you'll need to put some work into crafting all of these elements. You'll also want to think about choosing a teaching niche (such as ESL pronunciation or IELTS exam prep) so that you can stand out from the crowd.

In addition, you'll need to consider how to structure your first lesson, or trial lesson, with a student and how you'll prepare them to purchase more lessons from you. To do it well, you'll need to get comfortable with some basic sales and marketing principles. Finally, teaching in a marketplace usually means you have to source your own teaching materials.

26.10 Activities and Photocopiable Resources

ESL Worksheets, PowerPoints & Video Lessons

<https://en.islcollective.com>

Free Printable TEFL/ESL Games, Quizzes, Activities, Lesson Plans and etc.

<https://www.twinkl.com/ph/resource/tefl-efl-esl-young-learners-free-taster-resource-pack-elementary-level-a2-t-e-831>

<https://games4esl.com/printables/>

Resource books for creative teachers

<https://www.helblinglanguages.com/int/en/the-photocopiable-resource-series>

The teaching materials collection

<http://jetprogramme.org/wp-content/MAIN-PAGE/current/publications/altcirseahandbook/7all.pdf>

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