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Module 10 : Getting a Job

Getting a TESOL job

You've learned everything you need to know, and now it is time to think about taking the next step and getting a job in the TESOL field. Regardless of the training you have, getting a job in any field can be difficult, so we will discuss how you can differentiate yourself from others when you are seeking employment. In this module, we will discuss what you need to start the process, how to build and write an effective resume, the best interview techniques, and other skills you will need to display your value to potential employers. Everything we have done so far has led to this, so get ready to start marketing yourself to the kind of employers you would like to build a career with.

Module 10: Getting a TESOL job

10.1 What do you need?

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10.3 Interview techniques: what are they looking for?

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10.1 What do you need?

There is a lot of demand for qualified individuals to become teachers of English as a second language, so the most important job we have is to ensure you can find your way to the schools, companies, and organizations who are looking for someone like you. In this section, we will look specifically at what you need to get a job in the TESOL field helping students develop their proficiency in English.

College degree: Most schools and organizations will look for you to have at least a Bachelor's Degree in order to become a TESOL teacher. That does not mean you need a BS or BA in TESOL, although there are majors more desirable than others. The majors employers like to see are English,



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Language Arts, TESOL, Education, Linguistics, etc. Again, the demand for individuals is high in this field, so a BS or a BA in a different major does not count you out.

Close study of TESOL: Courses like this one give you the background you need to look desirable to an employer. You may be required to get a specific certification, but many employers are looking for a background in TESOL, which you now have.

Work experience: For many of you, this course is your first step toward becoming a teacher, or toward becoming a TESOL teacher, so you may not yet have work experience. However, many organizations and schools welcome interns and volunteers at different levels of commitment. Some of these organizations and schools offer a track toward full employment from these volunteer or intern positions. Other organizations and schools are looking for talented individuals to manage their volunteering staff, which could give you good experience you can segue into a career as a TESOL teacher. Showing you are passionate about your future career to work for free will go a long way in the eyes of a potential employer.

A strong resume: We will discuss how to build and write a resume in the next section.

A good interview: We will also discuss interview techniques in great detail in a later section.

10.2 Building a resume

In this section we will discuss how to write a great resume, but we will first discuss what you can do to build a great resume. This means looking at activities, jobs, and interests that will catch the eye of potential employers, and getting experience in them. With that in mind, let's split this section into two.

10.2.1 What looks good on your resume?

Before you think about getting your resume out there, think about what you need to have on it to make it impressive and something that will help you stand out in a stack of viable candidates. Let's take a look at the kinds of experiences employers are looking for.

Education: This does not mean you have to run out immediately and get a Master's Degree in TESOL, but rather employers want to see you have education relevant to the job. As we mentioned in the previous section, most employers are looking for candidates who either have a BA or BS. If you don't have a college degree, your options may be limited, though the windows of opportunity are not closed. Employers ideally want you to have a BA or BS in a relevant field of study, though that is not a deal breaker. If you have a degree in a related field, that is great; if you don't, that just means you are



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going to have to make up for that in other parts of your resume. This course will look great on your resume because it shows you are committed to learning about TESOL, and it shows you have educational experience in the direct field in which you are applying. Some employers might require a further certification, which depending on the situation, may require you to take an extra test or a short supplemental course. Again, whatever you are lacking in this section, you will have to make up for in a different section.

Work experience: Of course it would look great if you already worked in TESOL and held a job in the field previously. But, you are just starting out, so that is highly unlikely. If you have teaching experience, that is something you want to highlight. If you don't have either, that is all right. However, you should look into getting some intern or volunteer experience before you go looking for a job. You can send in applications while you are getting the experience, but it will look good if you have direct experience in the field, even if it is unpaid (in some cases, it will look better if it is unpaid because it shows a great passion and commitment). As we discussed in the previous section, some of these intern and volunteer opportunities could lead to part or full time employment in the field, so look closely at the companies and schools offering these volunteer experiences.

Related work experience: Even if you are not experienced in the TESOL field, this section is where you display any work experience that is even tangentially related. Have you ever worked with children? Have you ever worked with non-English speaking people (helping them, not just worked alongside a non-English speaking individual)? Think about what it takes to be a TESOL teacher, and if you have used any of the same skills in a different job.

10.2.2 How do you make your resume look good?

So you have all your experiences and skills set up, now how do you present it in a resume that represents you well and makes you look good to potential employers? There are some specific things you can do to make your resume stand out.

Formatting: You want your resume to be clear and easy to read. You want the employer to pinpoint any piece of information that he or she wants as quickly as possible.

- Use wide margins to take advantage of space. That does not mean you should fill every bit of space with wordiness.
- Use a bulleted list to make things short, sweet, and easy to read.
- Organize your experiences and skills into logical and clear sections that are marked accordingly.
- Use bold and italic print sparingly, but smartly, to draw the reader's eye to the information you want to highlight.



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Focus on accomplishments, not job descriptions: A potential employer does not need the definition of your current or former job; they need to know what you accomplished at those jobs that makes you a valuable asset to their company or school.

- Mention your job title, then describe what you accomplished and what you worked on at that job. Were you a manager? Great. That means you led a team of employees. The point is to let the employer know that you did a lot in your previous jobs, and what you did for your former employer, you can do for your future employer.
- Ask yourself why the employer needs to know you did what you are claiming. If they do, highlight what they need to know. If they don't, remove it.
- Make sure the accomplishments you write are yours, and not just your team's or your company's. The employer isn't hiring your project team; they are looking to hire you.

Be specific: Being able to explain your former job in a fancy way is helpful, but will not separate you from the field. Be specific about what you accomplished, and give the employer something quantitative to work with. How did your work specifically improve your former workplace?

No mistakes: Read your resume over 5 times, and have 5 friends read it over too. This may seem like overkill, but something as simple as a typo is enough for an employer to toss your resume aside. This is especially true when you are applying for a job to teach English to new English language learners. If you cannot create a 1-2 page document that is error-free, how can the employer expect you to be an effective English teacher?

10.2.3 Avoid these common resume mistakes

Even the best candidates make the mistake of submitting a below average resume and then wonder why they don't get a callback. Do your best to avoid these common resume mistakes.

Being too vague: This may take more work, but you should adjust your resume for each specific job you are applying to. Every job is different and has different requirements, so why are you handing the same resume to every potential employer? You should not be changing anything dramatically, but look closely at what the employer is looking for, and adjust your wording so it addresses their needs.

Focusing on jobs instead of experience: Telling the employer your job title does not tell them anything about who you are and what you are bringing to the table. What was your focus at the job? What did you accomplish? Why were you a great employee for your former employer? Find a way to highlight your strengths and accomplishments.



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Length: The old rule that your resume has to fit on a single sheet of paper has been thrown out the window. That does not mean you should turn in a dissertation. Studies show employers give each resume about 25 seconds of attention, so make sure your resume is dynamic. It is acceptable to have a two or three page resume, but only if you have a lot to show. Do not have a third page on your resume just to tell the employer your hobbies are sports and movies. Use the space you need, be concise, but do not worry about fitting it onto one sheet of paper.

No focus: Most resumes include an objective or career summary. If your objective is missing or vague, you may not get a second look. This could be a great spot to tailor your resume specifically to each employer you are contacting. Be specific and highlight what you are looking for and what you want to accomplish.

Too busy: Make sure everything on your resume is in a logical place, and your resume does not appear too busy. If the employer can't make sense of what you are saying, he or she is going to move on to the next one.

Missing important information: Now is not the time to be humble. Feel free to act humbly in your interview, but here you are showing the employer everything that makes you desirable. Then, when you interview, they will have those accomplishments in front of them as they ask you questions.

10.2.4 Final resume tips

Here are some extra tips to make your resume as strong as possible. Remember, your resume is what gets your foot in the door; make sure it is strong.

- Have a purpose in mind when writing your resume. Besides being organized and categorized effectively, your resume should have a purpose, and tell a story. The more you know what that story is, the more a potential employer will see it.
- Pay attention to your diction. Look at the job listing and figure out what the employer is looking for, and use keywords that will draw their attention. If you are applying online, some employers filter resumes they receive using a keyword search, so make sure yours ends up on the top of the list.
- Do not be afraid to discuss the future briefly in your resume. It can be helpful for you to let the employer know what your career goals are (as long as they are goals that show your loyalty to potential employers and how you want to build a career out of this job).
- Use numbers and figures when possible. We discussed making your accomplishments quantifiable earlier, so if you can provide a number that displays your accomplishment, do it.



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- It could be helpful to directly acknowledge any difficulties the employer is facing that you could solve. Do some research, but only use this if you find something relevant. Do not assume the employer has a problem when they may not.
 - Whenever possible, use action verbs rather than “is” or “was.” This will highlight your role in whatever accomplishment you are noting.
 - Avoid pronouns, even though you would typically use them. You are the implied subject of every sentence because it is your resume. Instead of writing, “I excelled in my undergraduate work, earning a 4.0,” write, “excelled in undergraduate work, earning a 4.0.” It gets to the point and doesn’t bog down the space.

10.3 Interview techniques: what are they looking for?

Once your stellar resume has gotten you an interview, it is time to really show the potential employer what you are about. Up until now, you have just been words on a piece of paper, and though you obviously impressed the employer enough to stand out, you still need to come ready to impress.

10.3.1 Interview tips

- Do some research: We already suggested doing this when you were creating your resume, but look into the company or school again. Try to find out what exactly they are looking for, what they are lacking, and what their mission is. These are pieces of information that will help when you are planning for your interview.
- Dress to impress: First and foremost, make sure your clothes are clean and pressed. Even if you would not have to do so for the job, dress formally, and put-together. While it won’t necessarily hurt you to look a little flashy, you might be better off going with classic color combinations. You want to look stable, responsible, and prepared.
- Be prepared: Even though any good employer will have copies of your resume and other materials on hand, bring extra copies in a folder. If you know you are interviewing with a committee, bring enough to go around, just in case. If you know they are going to ask about something specific, have an example ready. There is no downside to being prepared, and in a best-case scenario, the employer is impressed by your preparation.
- Be enthusiastic and optimistic: It is a job interview so it is OK to be nervous, but you should still be enthusiastic. Be happy to be there and optimistic about your future with the company or school. Confidence is an attractive quality so remember you have prepared for this, let yourself be confident.
- Do not be late: This should go without saying, but is worth saying anyway. Be early for your appointment, and if you are travelling a route you are unfamiliar with or has the potential to be heavily trafficked, give yourself extra time.
- Pay attention to the person interviewing you: The interviewer will certainly be listening to your answers, so listen to their questions carefully. Not only will this ensure that you don’t seem



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uninterested, but will also help you understand what they are looking for. You can tell a lot about what an employer is looking for by the questions he or she asks. Pay attention to details and tailor your answers accordingly.

- **Be specific:** A lot of people come out of interviews happy with their performance because they gave good answers to the questions they were asked. But, if you are not specific, the employer might forget you by the time the next candidate walks in. Answer with as much specificity as you can so the interviewer remembers your answers, and can quantify your responses.
- **Ask questions:** Be smart about the questions you ask though. Many interviewers will end the interview by giving you the opportunity to ask questions. Ask questions that show you are interested in the job and the company or school. Do not ask how many vacation days you get.
- **Be cognizant of your body language:** The interviewer is going to be evaluating everything about you, including your body language. Make sure you are projecting confidence, passion, interest, and enthusiasm. Do not act overly comfortable, but try to stay loose and appear like you belong there.
- **Anticipate questions:** Many interviewers have prescribed questions to avoid legal issues, so searching the Internet for common interview questions and preparing answers could really pay off. You may even find that you end up with the same source the interviewer used.
- **Practice:** Being prepared is important so don't be afraid to practice. If you have someone who will help you, ask him or her to run through scenarios (like an argumentative interviewer or an interviewer who is intentionally trying to cause you anxiety to see how you react). It seems like a lot, but if this is the career you want and the job you want, is there really such a thing as too much preparation?
- **Follow up:** Lastly, follow up with the interviewer after the interview. Do not ask if he or she has made a decision yet; simply thank him or her for the opportunity to interview for the position and tell him or her you look forward to hearing from him or her. Be pleasant and grateful, and you will make sure your name remains in their mind.

10.3.3 What not to do in an interview

Just as there are tips for how to act in an interview, here are some tips for how not to act in an interview.

- **Try not to ramble.** While you want to answer questions to the best of your ability, keep your answers to the point. You will show that you know what you are talking about, that you are listening to what they ask, and that you know how to get things done.
- **Be friendly, but do not be too personal.** It is all right to make a joke, but it has to be a joke you would be willing to make to a stranger. The interviewer is not your friend; he or she is likely your potential boss (or at least a boss), so act appropriately.
- **Try your best not to look disinterested.** If an interviewer has a group of candidates coming in to interview, why would he or she offer the job to someone who does not seem to want it? Pay attention to your involuntary actions and your body language, and make sure you are projecting enthusiasm.



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- A common question that interviewers ask is why you are leaving your old job. Avoid saying anything negative about your old employer or company. Even if you frame it as a compliment to the interviewer or his or her company, it will still look like you are being disloyal, and no one wants a disloyal employee. Give a reason that is steeped in positivity, like you are looking to grow professionally.
- Although you want to appear confident, do not bulldoze the interviewer. It is all right if you take control of the interview at times, but always let the interviewer know that he or she is in charge, or else he or she may be put off. Who wants to work with someone who is going to drown them out?
- Have an opinion, a purpose, and a set of standards. You have to strike a balance between confident and flexible. While no one wants to hire someone who is rigid and arrogant, no one wants to hire someone who just goes along with whatever he or she thinks the management wants.
- Avoid being a cliché. The biggest cliché is answering the classic, “what is your greatest weakness?” question by turning it into a strength, saying something like, “my greatest weakness is that I work too hard.” Your interviewer is not an idiot, and this is not going to impress him or her. Give an honest answer, but also provide the work you have done to improve on that weakness and how you handle your weakness on a daily basis.

While many of you are looking to teach English as a second language in your home country, there are many opportunities for teachers who like to travel, see the world, and learn from different cultures. Here are some of the countries looking for the most help.

Europe

Spain, Portugal, Germany, France, Italy, Greece, Poland, Czech, Hungary, Russia.

Asia

Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, China, Indonesia, Mongolia, Turkey, Thailand

Latin America

Mexico, Costa Rica, Colombia, Chile.

Middle East

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco.

10.5 Preparing to join a different culture

If you decide to use your TESOL talents to travel to another country and learn about another culture, make sure you are prepared for the culture you are about to immerse yourself in. Research your destination and learn as much as you can about the culture before you get there. If you do this, you can avoid offending anyone accidentally and ease your way into the culture easily. Typically, you will likely experience this new, foreign culture in the following stages:



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Beginning stage: Prepare for your journey by doing research about the culture, and make sure you are ready for your journey and new environment.

Initial happiness: You are in a new place, and everything is unique and cool. You will initially feel happy to be in this new place and excited to help out the people you meet there. Even if you have a great experience, this initial euphoria wears off.

Frustration: Once the happiness begins to wane, you are likely to get irritated with your new home. The culture is different, and a lot of the things you loved about your home are rare or not available to you anymore.

Adjustment: You get used to the new customs and culture of your new home. You find yourself less irritated by the things around you, and are starting to feel comfortable with them.

Adaptation: Once you begin feeling comfortable with the culture, you will start to feel a sense of biculturalism, where you identify and even like the new culture you are experiencing. Everything that was once foreign and odd to you now feels comfortable and normal.

Re-entry: When you leave this foreign culture to return home, you may find that you go through these stages all over again, albeit at a much quicker pace. You will always cherish your experience with another culture, but be very happy to be home where you are more comfortable.

[Link to Exam](#)