

TEACHING ENGLISH OVERSEAS

A Stepping Stone To International Careers

One billion people in the world want to learn English, so finding an English teaching job abroad is quite simple. Almost anyone reading this article could be on a plane heading overseas to teach English within the next three months. Your teaching job is almost guaranteed if you are a native English speaker, have a university degree, and have taken a short training course to teach English as a foreign language, such as TESOL or TEFL. Opportunities abound in all non-native-English-speaking countries. The hot markets are Eastern Europe, Turkey, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia, China, and Japan. In Western Europe, visa restrictions often apply, but there are still opportunities in Spain, Portugal, and Greece. In Eastern Europe, accommodations and salaries can be restricting, but Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic are active in recruiting teachers. In Latin America, there is work to be found in Mexico, Costa Rica, Chile, Peru, and Venezuela. This article will show you how to take the English teaching experience and transform it into an opportunity that suits your specific goals and objectives. For example, you can teach English in order to travel, learn a new language, or pay off student debts. What's more exciting is that you can teach English abroad to create a stepping stone to other professional international careers. The strategies suggested in this article are for the enterprising individual. You will need to take risks, go out on a limb, and plot your way to success often while you are traveling abroad, but the payoff is almost always guaranteed; there is generally little risk of failure.

TEACH ENGLISH TO ACHIEVE YOUR COUNTRY SPECIFIC GOALS

It's easy to do a country-specific job search for teaching English abroad. In the case of professional international jobs, it is generally the international employer who will select your destination, and for low-skilled jobs there are always problems with work visas. But when teaching English abroad you can simply choose any country where citizens are non-native-English-speakers and make a living abroad. This is exciting news, because you can teach English to achieve any number of country specific goals.

- **Teach English to follow a spouse, lover, friend, or relative to a specific destination:** There are many reasons to target a specific country to teach English: you fall in love with a French foreign student studying in the US and you want to return to their home with them; your spouse has an internship in Amsterdam; your best friend is living in a holiday home in Panama for a year; your long-lost relatives live in Italy; your uncle has just moved to Bangalore, India. In all these cases, you can join them and make a living by teaching English abroad.
- **Teach English to further your cross-cultural goals:** For instance, you can move to any country in South America, teach English on the side, and achieve your goal of improving your Spanish. Or you may be studying Russian history and be enthralled with learning of all things Russian. If you move to St. Petersburg or Moscow to teach English, you can finance your trip and achieve your goal of furthering your knowledge of Russia.
- **Teach English to pay off school loans:** You can save as much as \$15,000 a year if you are frugal while teaching English in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, or Korea. In most other countries, English teachers receive a basic salary – just enough to live off while affording some local travel. You can, however, move up the salary scale by teaching extra courses, moving to better paying schools, and giving private lessons.
- **Teach English to finance travel:** If you want to travel by spending a month or more in different exotic cities, you can finance your trip by teaching English. There are short-term opportunities at private schools, and for the enterprising individual, you can talk your way into working as a live-in private tutor for children of wealthy families. When traveling, offer to give English training to staff working in hotels and tourist attractions, and/or to edit the English text of brochures and signage.
- **Teach English to fulfil a retirement dream:** If you are approaching retirement age and want a rich and meaningful experience, consider teaching English abroad. There are no age barriers, so choose a country and take on a position that matches your desires.

TEACH ENGLISH TO BREAK INTO THE INTERNATIONAL JOB MARKET

There are thousands of ways to gain international experience, but teaching English abroad can be a productive back-door strategy to landing the job you desire.

- **Teach English to others in your field of expertise:** This is a powerful strategy that will help you gain career experience. The classic scenario is the MBA student who has just graduated and is determined to land a business job in Hong Kong. The fastest route toward meeting Asian business decision-makers is to teach business English in Hong Kong. Who will you meet while teaching business English? Business people who can offer you jobs! Specialists in other disciplines can do the same, teaching science English in a Chinese university, or music English with a Japanese cultural organization. Consider this: Costa Rica is the internet capital of Central America. If you are currently studying computer science or graphic design, offer to teach a specialized computer English or graphic design English course at any of the specialized private sector schools located in the capital city, San Jose. You can craft your own customized course, or audit the Spanish course for terms to teach (i.e. develop a lexicon of English-Spanish terms specific to one field). With this strategy, you will certainly find willing students, meet industry professionals, and improve your Spanish.
- **Teach English as a stepping stone to a writing career:** Many lovers of the English language dislike the very thought of teaching. Don't despair. There are many opportunities to work abroad as English language editors, writers, reporters, and communication consultants. Almost every major city in the world has at least one English language newspaper. Large corporations are always in need of English copy editors. Every tourist destination has the need for English writers. There are communications and public relations (PR) firms located in just about in every part of the non-native English speaking world, and they often have a need for English writers and editors. If you have web experience (and you should have if you consider yourself a writer in today's market), you can become a web copy editor and writer. All of these careers are possible, but you may have to teach first to make the required networking contacts.
- **Teach English to gain broad international experience:** Many university students want to have an international career, be it in engineering, political science, or economics; but international employers require previous international experience. For the recently graduated university student, teaching English abroad is a sure-fire way to prove to international employers that you have what it takes to succeed in another culture. If you can't afford to study abroad, and can't find an international internship, then acquire your international experience by teaching English abroad.
- **Teach English to gain professional experience while traveling:** If you are an enterprising individual, you can backpack your way across South East Asia for example, and offer your English teaching and editorial skills on a volunteer basis. In the case of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), you may offer your services as an English editor for official reports to donor agencies. You could also offer to train their staff in correct English when using software, or in business correspondence. Another example for an enterprising individual would be to offer to write a tourist trail guide for an eco-tourism organization. You may not get paid for this work, but it will help you build experience for your resume.
- **Teach English as a stepping stone to teaching in an international school:** Many qualified teachers want to break into the exclusive world of teaching at an "international school." These schools are located in almost every large city and deliver courses to the children of diplomats, international business executives, and wealthy local elites. Without experience, you will find it difficult to find a job in one of these schools. Teaching English abroad is a fantastic stepping stone, proving your international competency. Consider it!

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