

English as a Second Language Teacher

You teach English to people who already speak another language, in schools, adult centers or abroad. Modest pay, and work that changes someone's whole life.

TYPICAL PAY

\$61,540

a year, full time

PAY RANGE

\$42k to \$98k

starting to experienced

TIME TO QUALIFY

4 to 6 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

Yes

regulated job

WHERE YOU WORK

Public schools, community colleges, adult education centers,...

How you get there

- 1 High school diploma** Grade 12
English, and take a second language as far as your school offers it. Having learned a language yourself is the best preparation there is.
- 2 Bachelor's degree** 4 years
Education, English, linguistics or a language are the usual choices. Any major works if you add teacher preparation afterwards.
- 3 Teacher preparation and student teaching** 1 to 2 years
Supervised classroom practice, either built into the degree or taken after it. Required for a public school license.
- 4 State license with an English learner endorsement** Months
Pass your state's teaching exams and add the endorsement for teaching English learners. Every state names it differently.
- 5 Optional master's degree** 1 to 2 years
A master's in teaching English to speakers of other languages, or in applied linguistics. Needed for most community college jobs and it moves you up the district pay schedule.

Pros and cons

- + Four years of training and a relatively cheap degree
- + The work is needed in every state and in most countries
- + You see progress you can measure, in people who wanted it
- Pay is modest and rises slowly
- A lot of adult and college teaching is part-time with no benefits
- The occupation is projected to shrink, so openings can be scarce

Good to know

Language support in school is a civil rights matter

Federal civil rights law requires school districts to take real steps so that students who are learning English can access the same lessons as everyone else. It is not optional and it is not a favor, which is why t...

The professional body is worldwide

TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) International Association describes itself as the largest professional organization in the world for English language teaching. The field is ge...

Optional boosts

Bilingual authorization. Adult literacy and high school equivalency. Teaching abroad. Specializing in young learners.

Where these numbers come from

My Next Move: Adult Basic Education, Adult Secondary Education, and English as a Second Language Instructors (25-3011.00)
TESOL International Association
California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

Numbers checked September 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise. Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/english-as-a-second-language-teacher>



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