

# Teach Abroad Survival

*23 Hot Tips For Teaching Success*



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*A teacher affects eternity;  
he can never tell where his influence stops.*

*Henry Adams*

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## Introduction

If you've gotten this book because you've gotten a job overseas teaching English as a Second Language and you are in need of some valuable tips then congratulations.

If you are reading this book because you are thinking about teaching ESL well congratulations to you too. Even though this ebook is geared toward those fortunate enough with that taste of adventure to actually do something about it, it also contains some great information that you can use in many areas of your life.

And if you haven't quite taken that leap yet that has you say "yes!" to teaching ESL and/or teaching ESL overseas maybe what's said here will stoke that fire underneath you to make that decision.

So what you are about to read are some tips and advice about how to help you get you situated and comfortable in your new ESL teaching position in your host country.

Of course, a lot more can be said on this topic but my ebook coach said I could only put 23 in this ebook. (I've actually snuck in a couple more tips at the end. I couldn't resist.) Some of the tips can be used by any ESL teacher whether overseas or not and some are specifically about teaching overseas.

Some of this stuff you might not have heard before, some of it is in the realm of common sense, some of it might get you to do some deep thinking. All of it has to do with my own experience and what has worked for me. I started teaching ESL in Seville Spain in 1979 and at this writing teach at a small language institute in New Orleans, Louisiana.

I never thought that this would be what I would do with my life. But destiny has a funny way of sneaking up on you. Several years ago a psychic told me I would be a teacher of teachers. I didn't put much stock in it. But, dag nabbit, here I am with an ebook and a website for ESL teachers that's growing in popularity. Guess he was right.

So enjoy. Send me your questions and comments. Let me know how this ebook has helped you.

*Richard Bienvenue*

So let us begin with our first tip...

## 1. Travel Light

If you are going overseas or traveling anywhere, one of the hardest lessons to learn is that it's **more advantageous** to travel light.

What does travel light mean? Three heavy bags and a rucksack?

Well, some people may think so. But really when it comes to travel **less is definitely more**.

How many times have you taken a trip and realized that in the middle or at the end that you didn't need to take **all** the shirts and pants and shoes and books and knick-knacks that you thought were a good idea when packing? It just weighed you down.

I remember one time when I went to Spain I thought I was traveling light by only bringing a knapsack. Well, I stuffed that thing full and when I got to my destination at a friend's home in Sevilla I realized I had brought **too much stuff**.

So what did I do? I went through it all and just took out the necessities and packed the rest of it in a box and sent it back home. I was in for a shock when I after I having lugged it all the way to the post office they were gonna charge me \$60.

"Are you sure it's gonna cost that much?" I exclaimed in my best Spanish. The woman behind the counter assured me it would. What the heck I sent it anyway.

I could've saved myself the trouble by not packing all that stuff in the first place.

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### How to pack

They say that the best thing to do when packing is to lay out everything and **cut it in half**.

Take one bag with a shoulder strap and maybe a small carry-on for the plane (I use a little rucksack for this). Take some **medium toned to dark clothing** so it doesn't show dirt and stains and a pair of dress slacks or skirt (for the ladies) and a nice medium to dark-colored shirt or blouse.

### **A good pair of shoes is of utmost importance.**

The **best** universal good looking shoes are the **Rockport Pro Walkers**. These are by far the best shoes I have ever owned. I have a pair that are over 10 years old and are still in decent condition despite the fact that I wore them almost everyday for about 8 of those years. I bought another pair last year.

If you are going to be teaching ESL for a few months or more in a foreign country you can always buy what you need there. (Unless of course you are tall or extra big, which might pose a problem.)

You probably will go back home with more than you brought so you want to leave room in your suitcase anyway. Heck, you might even have to buy a new suitcase to carry back all that stuff you bought!

[eBags.com](http://eBags.com) is the largest online store for traveling bags and luggage. Find everything you need for taking your stuff overseas.

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## **2. Keep a Journal**

I've heard it said, "**If your life is worth living it's worth recording.**" I've kept a journal for many years and I go through spurts when I write in it almost everyday to times when I may write only once or twice a month.

This practice has helped me **tremendously** with being able to sit down and work on my website ( <http://www.english-teaching-info.com> ) or write articles to be published or a proposal for a school.

It's a good way of keeping track of ideas and also just being able to spew when I am concerned or upset about something.

It's like having my own psychologist. It helps to keep me **balanced and sane**.

So living and working in a foreign country has it's own challenges and

opportunities. I think it's **real** important to have a mental and psychological outlet.

For me I make it a ritual. I get up in the morning and after doing my morning meditation and reading I go to the kitchen and fix myself a nice cup of coffee and sit at the table and then just write.

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### **Off the top of your head...**

The trick is to write spontaneously **without** stopping and thinking about it. (I recommend *The Artists' Way* by Julie Cameron to get great instruction on this.)

But recently I started doing something that I am going to recommend to you.

You see I keep more than one journal. I keep my personal journal in which I record my thoughts feelings ideas brainstorms and dreams and goals. I also keep a separate journal in the classroom.

After each class (and sometimes during) I write in ideas, comments, questions, ways to improve as a teacher, what we worked on in that lesson, things I can do to help the students, etc.

This has proven to be invaluable for me and has added a **unique dimension** to my teaching.

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## **3. Get Clear on What's Expected of You As the Teacher**

It's important when you are in a new environment to find as much safety as possible so you can feel secure and not have so much stress.

You know, moving to another country or even traveling to another country involves a certain amount of stress. So you want to mitigate that by **making sure** you know just what it is that's expected of you as the teacher.

You might want to ask some questions so you can **be prepared** as much as possible before you take your first step into your new school environment:

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- How many classes will you be teaching?
- How many students in each class?
- What are the age groups?
- If you are teaching adults you might want to know what kinds of materials you are expected to use.
- Will you be teaching grammar, conversation?
- What does the school like to focus on? (For example at my school although we do grammar and such we mainly focus on conversation.)
- Will you have to do student evaluations?
- Does the school run on the semester, quarter or no system at all? (I work in the latter system which means I have to create all of my lesson plans and choose all of my own books.)
- If you are teaching kids you might want to know what socio-economic background they are from.
- What about class discipline? Is this a problem in the country you will be going into? (I understand that kids in Japan are very polite and shy and give very little trouble in class.)

You might want to find out something about the culture you are going into:

- How do they think.
- What are their values?
- What's their system of government?

What I'm saying is **don't go in cold**. Know the environment you are going into as much as possible. Of course, don't go overboard on this and get obsessed. You want a certain element of adventure and surprise too.

## 4. Put Together a Winning Lesson Plan

Some schools make it easy for you. They already have everything figured out about how and what to teach the students. The system is already set up and you just plug right into it and go.

That's why, as we previously discussed, it's **important** before you go into any teaching situation to find out what's expected of you.

But even if the school has the whole thing laid out for you it's good to not go into class empty-handed. In other words, come in with **your own ideas** about what and how to get through to your students.

I've been fortunate in that **all** of my teaching situations I have had to rely on my **own** skills and creativity to come up my own lesson plans.

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### What I do...

I usually start each of my classes with a **few minutes of conversation** just to get them **warmed up** and settled down after the break. Our classes are small so I try to get everyone to say something.

The important thing is you gotta keep the class interesting, you gotta keep it moving.

I've found that **the best thing** is to go into class with many different things to do. I may not get to all of them, usually don't.

And sometimes an **interesting topic** for conversation might come up at the beginning of class that might segue in something deeper or into other topics. And I wind up not even getting to any of the material I'd planned! (This is where it's important to be flexible which we'll discuss later.)

Now the above was for intermediate to advanced. Obviously, in beginner level you're **mainly** working on grammar and pronunciation and basic vocabulary so you may be limited in your opportunity to have any kind of deep conversation.

I teach three levels: beginner to advanced. I have what I call my bag of ESL tricks that I reach into to plan my lessons.

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They include:

- conversation,
- grammar,
- idiomatic expressions,
- reading and discussing short articles or stories,
- vocabulary building,
- dictation,
- practice TOEFL tests and discussion,
- essay writing,
- playing games (even for adults),
- watching movies,
- studying poetry.

Having a variety of and ready resources to choose from will never leave you feeling stranded and wondering “what the heck do I do now.”

Keep your eyes and ears open. The great things about teaching English is that there are infinite resources everywhere and more is added to the vast ESL “databank” each day.

Lesson plans don’t really have to be a big deal. For a more detailed discussion go to <http://www.english-teaching-info.com/english-lesson-plans.html>

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## 5. Be Flexible

Sometimes, depending on the mood of the class for that day, I'll completely throw out my lesson plan and do something different. Sometimes I can tell the class is **just not in the mood** to do what I've planned.

So in my commitment to keep the class interesting and not bore the students I shift gears and just **do something else**. It's a kind of flying-by-the-seat-of-your pants thing just to see where you land.

Sometimes the students want to know more about me so I let them ask me questions. When that peters out I start on something else.

I believe it's important to be flexible in **all** areas of life. Things are less stressful that way. As you already know, things don't always go the way you planned or expected.

So I think it's a good practice to **accept** things as they come along. **Change** the things that can be changed, accept and work with the things that can't.

**Wisdom** is in knowing the difference. (That's from one of those proverbs. I worded it a little differently.)

Living in a foreign country requires you to take on a certain amount of flexibility and is **key to survival** and enjoying a different culture.

Now this might sound a little crazy but one of the **best ways** to be flexible in mind is to be flexible in body. If your body is rigid and stiff chances are so will be your thinking.

Take some **Yoga classes** or get a book on Yoga. Have some kind of regular regimen so you can maintain a healthy flexible body. This will help you maintain calmness and serenity through some of the slings and arrows life throws at you.

And I believe will help you be a **more balanced and vigorous teacher**.

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## 6. Stay Healthy

I believe it is **so important** that you as the teacher maintain your health in as good condition as possible. Teaching requires a good amount of energy and vitality to be sharp and on your toes. If you are feeling under par all the time it's difficult to keep your energy level up and deliver a winning entertaining class.

As a teacher you are a servant to the students. You can give your best service **only** if your physical and mental health is not a liability but an asset.

So staying in shape or getting in shape, if you are not already there, eating mostly nourishing healthy foods (OK there will be times when you'll want to indulge in some questionable foods), getting the right amount of exercise and enough sleep is **very important**.

This is true **especially** if you are going to a foreign country. It pays to stay as healthy as possible. Why bother with all the rigamarole of doctors and hospitals when just a little preventive medicine will keep you well.

So here are my **Seven Secrets to Optimal Health**. (I may soon be writing an ebook with this title.) The following is just an outline and the complete discussion would be too extensive to go into an ebook such as this.

### 1. Elimination

Make sure you are eliminating at least once a day. Improper bowel function has been linked to **scores of diseases** including cancer and heart disease. This is ancient wisdom your great grandma knew but has been lost in our modern "scientific" medicine. Vegetables, some fruit and whole grains and fermented foods like yogurt, cheese and sauerkraut are necessary daily to help maintain good regularity.

### 2. Hydration

This means water and teas, maybe a little fresh fruit and vegetable juice. Not Coke and sugary soft drinks or lots of canned fruit juice. Read **Your Body's Many Cried For Water** by **Dr. Batmanghelidj, M.D.** to find out about the new research being done on how dehydration can cause all kinds of disease.

### 3. Oxygenation

See that you are breathing deeply enough on a regular basis from the gut rather than short breaths from the chest. Daily walks and exercise and breathing exercises are all beneficial to help maintain health and a positive outlook. Get some info about special breathing exercises that has origins in India called **Pranayama**. A quick search on the Internet will show you the many sites about this ancient practice.

### 4. Nutrition / Supplementation

Eat right, eat whole foods. Chicken, fish, meat and eggs some cheese, yogurt and natural fats and oils (not hydrogenated oils), all good for you. **Multivitamin and minerals** should be a standard everyday thing to make sure you get everything you need.

### 5. Recreation/Relaxation

Daily exercise, at least 15-30 minutes of walking or floor exercises, Yoga, all that. Mix it up. Don't stick to the same boring routine. **Get enough sleep**. Set aside time for the day to relax and be lazy. Other times just get away from it all and retire to some quiet place to recharge your batteries.

One of the best, most practical exercise gurus I've found is Matt Furey. His excellent bodyweight exercises will have you in shape in no time. No equipment necessary, you can exercise anywhere anytime, well, almost. You can check it out at <http://www.mattfurey.com>

## 6. Meditation / Prayer

It doesn't matter what religion you are or even if you are an atheist. It's been **scientifically proven** that those who have some kind of meditation and/or prayer routine are healthier, happier, more relaxed and open-minded. Start with 20 minutes a day, then do that twice a day, then extend it to maybe even 45 minutes to an hour. It's especially beneficial in the evening before bed.

## 7. Education

Educate yourself about health. For me it's been a **lifelong process** of reading and studying and trying things and discovering what works best for me. New information is always coming out, new things being discovered.

**Nourishing Traditions by Susan Fallon** is one of the best books I've read on overall nutrition. It's also a cookbook with great recipes. I would also get **Patient Heal Thyself** and **The Maker's Diet by Jordan Rubin**.

### Stock up on these before you go overseas:

#### 1. Cold-Eze Sugarfree

This stuff is incredible. It's little zinc tablets that you melt in your mouth every hour when you feel a cold coming on. If you follow this religiously your cold will be gone in under three days. My mom who is 91 at this writing has had two colds in the last two months that virtually disappeared after three days of taking this supplement.

#### 2. AirBorne

This was developed by a teacher because she was tired of catching colds from her students. It's an herbal concoction with vitamins and minerals in a fizzy tablet. It tastes good and works to nip colds in the bud.

Both of these you can get at most drug stores in the U.S. You can also order it over the Internet. **Don't leave home without these!**

#### 3. Ginger

This is good for upset stomach, motion sickness, and other kinds of stomach distress. You can get it in capsule form. You might just want to big a big thing of ginger powder with you. It makes great tea with a little sweetener and is a good overall tonic. I've also heard the creme de'menthe works wonders for diarrhea.

#### 4. Vitamin C Emer-gen 'C

This is an effervescent form of vitamin C ascorbates which are better and more

absorbable than ascorbic acid. Taking too much ascorbic acid can make your body too acidic which can make you sick. This product can be found in any health food store and some pharmacies now carry it too.

You can also get a bottle buffered vitamin C which is not quite as good but it takes up less space and costs a lot less.

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## 7. If You Teach Kids Learn How to Maintain Discipline

When I taught kids ESL in Spain it took me a semester and a half of misery to finally ask for advice from an experienced teacher on how to handle kids. **Her advice worked instantly** and I was able to magically maintain complete control over the class.

I wrote an article about it but it's too long to include here so you can go to my website and read about it.

<http://www.english-teaching-info.com/teaching-esl-for-children.html>

Also, I have a friend of mine who uses NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) techniques in his children's classes with fabulous results.

There are a lot of resources on the Internet you can go and get more information. Just search under NLP + discipline in the classroom.

You can download this article that gives an introduction and some techniques to this fascinating topic.

<http://www.english-teaching-info.com/nlp-classroom.html>

You can also check out [NLP in the Classroom](#) which has some great info and resources that can further expand your knowledge of using this elegant NLP technology in your classes.

I think the key thing to remember is this: if you respect the students they will in turn respect you.

## 8. Look For New Ways to Engage the Class

For your own sanity as well as for the class' it's worthwhile to be always on the lookout for new ways to keep the class interesting.

When we feel like we are stagnating and interest in class on both sides seems to be waning, it's time to **inject something new** into the lessons. It doesn't have to be completely new, maybe just variations on what you are already doing.

**Are you doing the same thing everyday?** The same routine? Try reversing your lesson plan or lay out a schedule where you'll do different things everyday.

Look into devising your own games using cards and pictures and maps, music and movies. Don't be afraid to experiment and don't be afraid to tell your students, "Hey, this is an experiment. Let's have fun trying something new!"

What about writing poetry?

I have a book you can download from a project I did a few years ago that's about having kids write poetry about nature. (This project actually was recognized by the United Nations Global Youth Forum.) This might give you some ideas of what can be done.

The project was called Child of Wonder and the book contains 400 pieces of poetry from grades K-6 plus some of their original artwork.

To get the ebook click on the link below.

[http://www.english-teaching-info.com/childof\\_wonder.html](http://www.english-teaching-info.com/childof_wonder.html)

What about a spelling bee?

Also, you can teach your students nursery rhymes and songs.

Take your students outside on a mini-field trip and see how many things they can identify correctly in English. You can do any of this for adults and children.

Go on the Internet and look at some ESL teacher websites for ideas. Dave's ESL café is a great resource for this.

Which leads us into the next topic...

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## 9. Get Advice From Other Teachers

Sometimes I am at a loss as to what to do with a particular student or a particular class. I might feel tapped out for new ideas. Other teachers are the **best resource** for new ideas.

You can find these teachers right in your own school or you can go on the Internet and cruise the different ESL teacher sites and read articles.

Also, pick a few select web forums at these sites and peruse the questions, comments and suggestions left by other teachers. **Add your own input.** There is always something that you know that others don't.

There are **dozens of books** out there about how to be a better teacher and books about activities in the classroom.

Also, as I suggested before, **keep a classroom journal** and jot down ideas that come to you. You'd be surprised at how ideas can sometimes seemingly come to you out of nowhere **especially** when you are keeping yourself open to them.

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Here's a good exercise to try:

### The "HOW" Question--

At the top of a sheet of paper write:

"How can I make this a more interesting class?"

Then write 20 answers without stopping . The trick is to **not think about** it but just write spontaneously. You can use this technique for anything you feel challenged on and you need some answers.

Try "How can I be a better teacher?" You may come up with answers that surprise you.

## 10. Locate the Nearest Bookstore With An English Section

So you're in a foreign country teaching English. You're gonna need some materials other than your grammar book.

You'll need:

- magazines,
- newspapers,
- joke books,
- short stories,
- children's' books (great for adults too!),
- idiomatic expressions books.

That kind of thing. Anything that's in English is fodder for your ESL classes. I **don't** recommend bringing these with you to the country you are going to be teaching in.

Remember, travel light.

The school should have material too from which to teach but these might not fit into your own style. It's good to have a **wide variety** of sources to chose from.

So find the biggest book store that is closest to you and check out their English section. Also, look for magazine stands and see what newspapers and magazines they have in English.

And does the country you're going to have a library system? If so find the nearest one and take advantage of their free resources.

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## 11. Encourage Students to Write

Many times I have suggested to my students to keep a journal and write in it everyday in English.

Sadly, very few of my students have ever taken this advice. I have not been

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able to successfully convey to them the value of doing this. This, of course, is more for your adult students of intermediate to advanced level but it could work just as well I think with intermediate and advanced children.

Why is it good that your students keep a journal on a daily basis?

Because it gets them **thinking** in English. And the **more** you can get your students thinking in English the quicker they will learn the language.

Encourage them to write **at least** a page a day or maybe just 15 minutes at a time. Give them specific topics to write about or just have them tell about their day to day experiences and how they felt about them.

One way you could ensure that your students do this is make it part of their homework and that every day they have to bring in their journal so you can look at it and check it to make sure they are doing it.

Then you can have one or two or three brave souls actually read their entries while you verbally correct their mistakes.

And be sure to be encouraging even if what they read is dreadful.

"Good job. Thanks for sharing that with us." Words like this helps the student feel good about himself and he'll want to continue doing the assignment.

A great exercise to help your students to learn how to write better is to have them **copy by hand** essays or short articles or a few paragraphs out of an article.

The author of the sequel to **Gone With The Wind** actually copied **all** 1000+ pages of Margaret Mitchell's classic three times by hand before she wrote the book! Why? Because she wanted to embed Mitchell's writing style, the way she built sentences and put her ideas together, into her subconscious.

Your students can do the same thing. You can try this in class. Have them copy a paragraph or two a couple times and then give them a short assignment for an essay. They will immediately see the efficacy of this method and will be excited to do more.

## 12. Be Open-Minded

**"The mind is like a parachute. It works best when it's open."**

**--Anonymous**

The reason Shakespeare is considered to be the greatest play-wright of all time is because he could take a situation and see it from multiple sides and convey the different viewpoints held by each of his characters. This is why he's considered a **genius** and why his plays are so rich and timeless.

You're traveling to a different country with different customs, different history, different traditions. And a different way of relating to the world. My experience with being an ESL teacher has been **tremendous** with respect to being able to see things from different points of view.

My view of the world has expanded and helps me to appreciate other people from other cultures. Because of this I have less of a tendency to judge others for their beliefs.

My classes have contained people who are Buddhist, Catholic, Atheist, Muslim, Agnostic, Animist and no "ist" at all.

I've taught Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Turkish, Turkmen, Kazak, Russian, French, German, Mexican, Peruvian, Brazilian, Ecuadorian, Argentinian, Chilean, Italian, Thai, Korean, Vietnamese, Saudi Arabian, African, Moroccan, Venezuelan, Columbian.

Being able to **embrace** these other cultures and be genuinely interested in learning about them and my students I think is one of the reasons my students like to come to my classes. They know I will listen without judgment or trying to force my own opinion upon them.

I think open-mindedness goes hand in hand with being **open-hearted**. And when the students know you really care about them they will be more inclined to listen to what you have to say and what you have to teach them.

**How do you be open-minded?** Just accept what comes in your new environment. Look at the new things with fascination rather than judgment and resistance. The more you resist the more stressful things will be. And the last thing you need is a lot of stress while you are trying to adapt to your new surroundings.

## 13. Be Decisive

The sign of a good leader is his ability to be able to make **quick decisions**. You are never going to be right 100% of the time, maybe not even 50% of the time. Cogitating over something for an extended period sometimes leads us down the path to inaction and procrastination.

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If you are reading this ebook and you *still* haven't decided if you want to teach ESL overseas what are you waiting for? Either do it or don't. **do it** I know it's probably a big risk and there a monsters waiting for you on the other side of the ocean **do it** but you'll never know unless you jump in with both feet **do it** and try. You have nothing to lose and **do it** everything to gain.

(The **do it** is my low-tech attempt at subliminal messaging. **do it**)

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Many times if we make mistakes we can go back and fix them or at least do better the next time after learning from the mistake. In the classroom the teacher is the Alpha dog and the class is looking to you to lead.

So procrastinating and hemming and hawing over a decision about what lesson to do or how long to do it, or being influenced by certain students who are whiney and don't want to do the work just doesn't, well, work.

Sometimes I'll go into class with several things to chose from and I'll give the students a choice about which one they would prefer to do that day. I don't do this all the time, just occasionally. It kind of gives them the feeling that they do have some say-so in what happens in class.

But in my opinion I don't think it's a good idea to have the class run as a democracy (unless of course that's part of the lesson).

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I'll tell you a **short story** about an experience I had about being decisive.

Many years ago when I lived in Mobile, Alabama I worked for a start up women's fashion newspaper. Photography was a hobby of mine and although I had a good eye I had never really worked professionally much less done any fashion photography. I was green as guacamole.

We went out on shoots with a mix of non-professional and professional models.

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I intuitively knew that I had to, on these shoots, make quick decisions. Although I basically did not know what I was doing I **took on the posture** that I did. It was actually a survival tactic.

When whoever was in charge of the shoot for a particular day came to me and asked for a decision like "Where should we have the models stand?" I would just point and say, "Have them stand over there. Have one sitting here and the other one there."

Then they would come to me with about five dresses or outfits and ask which ones we should use. I would look at them quickly and within seconds just say, "That one and this one," and walk away. Now you have to get this. I didn't know and still don't know anything about fashion photography! I just chose what I chose on a whim.

However, **because I was decisive** the shoots moved quickly, everyone acted very professionally, there was **never** any conflict with anyone.

And, surprise of all surprises, we got **great** pictures! So much so that the local professional photographers were worried that I was going to start stealing all their fashion work!

Strangely enough I got the best work out of the non-professional models because they didn't know enough to be bothered by the consummate professional I was intending to be. (Notice I used the word "intending" not "pretending.")

The professional models got nervous and self-conscious around me because my professionalism intimidated them. They didn't know where I had come from. They just knew I was a photographer from "out of town."

In no way was I being a jerk. I was just being warm, friendly, relaxed and decisive. And that decisiveness carried me through and we got excellent work from everyone.

So now let's talk about another aspect of being a leader and how you appear to others.

## 14. Be Professional

Being professional is about assuming a certain posture, a way of being that **commands respect**. This is not about being above people or thinking that you are better than anyone or that because you teach English you must know everything about English.

Teaching ESL is a profession. Being any kind of teacher is a profession. Being professional is about respect. But it's a two way street. You can't **make** people respect you. Respect others and they will respect you.

What does it entail to be the consummate professional? Here are some guidelines to consider.

### 1. Appearance

**A fair exterior is a silent recommendation.**  
--Publilius Syrus, *Maxims*

We discuss this more fully in the next section. Suffice it to say right here that your presentation, that is how you present yourself and how you feel about yourself, has a lot to do with how people perceive you.

**You want to make a good first impression...and second impression and third impression...**

One of the best ways to do this is through dressing well, wearing nice clothes with a professional hair style that fits you. You will have a much better chance at getting a good job if look and act the part of a professional ESL teacher.

Appearance also includes your resume:

- Is it well laid out on nice paper with simple easy to read fonts (Verdana or Arial are two of the best)
- Proof read by others to make sure there are no mistakes or typos?
- Is there a good well written cover letter? A good cover letter is **very** important.
- Is the photo you included clear and professional looking?
- Did you set up a webpage with your resume and other pertinent information

on it? (This is not absolutely necessary but it's **that little extra thing** you can do to add to your professionalism.)

Having a well-written professional looking cover letter is probably even more important than the resume! The cover letter really gives you an opportunity to tell more about yourself on a personal basis. For a great guide and program to help you with this check out [Amazing Cover Letters](#).

Having a nicely done business card is a good step in putting forth that winning professional appearance. You can go to [Vista Print Business Cards](#) to get some cards done before going to your new job. Just get the address and phone number at the school where you'll be teaching so you can get them printed on your cards.

## 2. Responsibility

**Change the way you look at things and the things you look at change.**  
**--Wayne Dyer**

You are in charge of your life. Don't expect the school, the students, fellow teachers to always do what they say they are going to do. If you need to get something done you can do it or learn how to delegate responsibility. If you need someone to follow up on something make sure you follow up with them.

Whatever is happening in your life you'll feel more in charge if you take responsibility for it. Looking around to blame others if things aren't going the way you want them ultimately doesn't work.

I know. I've tried.

I've found that it's better to come from the viewpoint that I am responsible for my world, for the way I look at things.

So what the heck am I talking about as far as teaching ESL?

It's all about personal power and how that's linked to your attitude and enthusiasm in the class room. **Personal power, enthusiasm, focus, awareness** are all **key** to delivering a successful class.

Good teachers know that ultimately how a class goes rest **squarely** on his shoulders and that, true or not, he is ultimately responsible for the success of his classes and the success of himself as an ESL teacher.

### 3. Preparation

Remember the boy scout motto: **Be prepared**. It's worth remembering as an ESL teacher.

What does this mean?

Well, an actor doesn't go on stage without knowing his lines. But what does he do when the inevitable happens? All the best-laid plans of how the play is supposed to go gets altered by another actor's misstep or forgotten line, or a piece of the scenery falls or someone misses a cue.

A good experienced actor will be able to maneuver around these mistakes and make it look like nothing out of the ordinary happened. It's all in a day's work. The consummate actor is prepared for this eventuality.

So not everything will go smoothly for you everyday in the classroom or at school. To be able to accept what comes and be able to change your plans at a moments' notice without upset or complaint is the mark of a professional.

Things change, classes get moved around, students come and go, another teacher is absent. You have to be able to roll with the punches and come up smiling.

Another aspect of preparation is, of course, being prepared for your classes.

- Do have something else to do if you finish the lesson you'd planned early?
- What if you go into class and you can feel that the mood of the students that day don't fit your particular lesson.
- Are you prepared to immediately switch to something else?
- Also, are you prepared for the inevitable question a student will ask you that you have no idea how to answer?

For that last question I will do one of two things. I will either say, "I don't know the answer to that and I'll find out for you." Or I might put it to the rest of the class and say, "Does anybody else know the answer to that question?" Sometimes someone does, sometimes not.

#### 4. Being on time

**Punctuality is the politeness of kings.**

**-- Louis XVIII of France**

The relationship to being on time and being professional cannot be emphasized enough. Being on time is about **respect for the other person**. Being late for an appointment can, in my mind, mean only one thing: disrespect.

(OK. I now there are times when being late is unavoidable. But you know people, maybe you are one yourself, who always seem to be chronically, unavoidably late. This is what I am referring to.)

But being on time is simply **not enough**. If your first class starts at 9 o'clock and you get to school in a rush and you walk in with 5 minutes or 30 seconds to spare, even though you've gotten to class on time, you really **aren't** prepared to start your class.

I would say you need **at least** 10 minutes of decompression from your morning commute before you get into class. And it's not fair to your students to have you spend the first 10 minutes of class time decompressing.

This is why it would be a good idea to find living quarters relatively close to school. I'd say that, if you can help it, you probably don't want to be any more than 30 minutes from school, either by walking or transportation. And you want to give yourself ample time to get to school so you're not late or rushing in at the last minute.

Being late doesn't look good for the school or for your professionalism. And it shows lack of respect for your students and for your fellow teachers. So do your best to **always** be on time **way ahead** of time.

#### 5. Always looking for ways to improve

We can't know **everything** about teaching. If we taught for a hundred years there would always be something new to learn. There are always new ideas, new concepts, new discoveries about how people learn and about what's the best way to teach.

## Teach Abroad Survival...23 Hot Tips

There are so many ideas out there about how to be a good teacher. I believe it is important to investigate and **try new things**. I always want to be experimenting, to never be completely satisfied with my teaching skills, otherwise I'll get complacent and teaching will get boring and I'll stagnate.

So it might be a good idea to occasionally take stock and ask yourself some pointed questions:

- Am I delivering the material well?
- What could I do to improve?
- How is my attitude overall?
- How are the students responding? Do they seem to be engaged in my lessons?
- What's working?
- What's not working?
- Am I being the best I can be or am I just getting by?
- How would I rate my teaching skills overall from 1 to 10?

### **6. Being upbeat, winning, positive, courteous and cheerful**

If you're happy make sure you **show it on your face!**

Your students would rather have an upbeat, cheerful, supportive, encouraging person in front of the classroom rather than some dour sourpuss. Your students will respond to you better, will want to do the work to please you and will feel good around you.

The above stated qualities are so important to being professional and successful.

### **Having an attitude of success breeds success.**

I'll tell you a secret...I used to be a moody person. People would initially feel intimidated by me because I didn't smile a lot. It wasn't that I was necessarily an unhappy person just not very bright or cheerful. I had a habit of being sarcastic and judgmental, critical and opinionated and, the plague of our current American generation, ironic.

## Teach Abroad Survival...23 Hot Tips

I had no idea that I was intimidating until friends would mention it later after they got to know me. Actually, the intimidation had a lot to do with my being shy and self-conscious. Consequently, I didn't feel at ease and thus didn't smile a lot.

So what did I do?

I had to consciously change my attitude. I really didn't want to intimidate people, it was just kind of a thing I did for self-protection.

So I just started smiling more and laughing more. Lo and behold, I actually started feeling better about myself. I felt more at ease, more comfortable, more confident. And that was reflected in the way people responded to me. People became more open, less guarded, more friendly.

### 7. Following through

The mark of a true professional is one who completes on what they say they are going to do. If you've set a certain time frame or deadline to do something and it looks as if it won't be finished on time let those to whom you are responsible know in advance. Things have change and the schedule needs to be revamped.

If you tell your students you are going to take them on a field trip, or see a movie, or go to a museum or give a new assignment **do it**. If you have to change things tell them why and then reschedule. This helps to build that important element of trust between you and class.

### 8. Doing more than what's asked of you

If you really love what you do then going to work really isn't work. I think it was Emerson who said that most men live lives of quiet desperation.

So to have a great job like teaching English as a Second Language is fortunate. To love it is even **more** fortunate because it's **not** a drudgery or a grind. There's always new things to learn, more ways to improve, new people to meet.

If you are just going to school, filling in the hours with adequate work and then going home it's not enough.

**Teaching should be a passion** for you. So it's a good idea to keep yourself open to opportunity to do things beyond the classroom.

Is there a student that needs a little extra help?

What about planning a field trip, taking some students to a movie, or an afternoon coffee, a meal or a museum.

Suggest to them that they can do some outside work like writing essays or letters that you'd be happy to correct.

It's good to always look for ways you can **add value** to your students' learning experience. It's the little things, the little services that you perform that are the mark of a true professional.

## **9. Being genuine, authentic, honest, integrous**

If you go around trying to act like you are perfect all the time, that you are always right, that you have no problems or challenges in your life then it makes it difficult for people to warm up to you.

You are not being truthful about who you are and it makes it difficult for people to identify with you. However, this does **not** mean wearing your heart on your sleeve all the time or bringing your problems to your class.

I noticed in class that the more I was willing to tell one on myself about stupid things I've done or mistakes I've made or failures that I experienced and told it with a light heart the more my students started opening up to me. This is of course important for gaining rapport with the class.

You don't want to be seen as a difficult taskmaster. You really **do** want your students to like you.

### **Being professional in my view is about being:**

- amiable,
- agreeable,
- open-minded,
- open-hearted,
- a good listener,

## Teach Abroad Survival...23 Hot Tips

- willing to admit mistakes,
- to change course when things aren't working,
- to be always in training and development
- and to have impeccable integrity.

### 10. Being extraordinary

**Ghandi said you ultimately find yourself by losing yourself in others.**

What would it take to be an extraordinary teacher? I'm not sure. But I think that's a **good question** to ask ourselves.

Maybe it has something to do with being of such service to the students that you ultimately lose yourself in them. I've heard it said that being extraordinary comes from an ordinary person who makes an **extraordinary commitment**.

Ghandi was an ordinary, skinny little lawyer who saw injustices done to his countrymen and made the commitment that his people would be free and that England would leave India without a war, without violence.

And it happened.

What extraordinary commitment could we make regarding being teachers and living our lives in integrity to that?

Maybe it could be something as simple as "No excuses. Just do it."

Craig Desorcy an ESL teacher in Japan has written a great book that will help you navigate the sometimes rough waters of teaching overseas. Although his book is aimed at those teaching in Japan it's great for any ESL teacher anywhere.

I learned a heck of a lot from it and found it inspiring.

You can check out his book here. [The Super Teaching in Japan Handbook](#)

## 15. Dress Professionally

**Clothes and manners do not make the man; but, when he is made, they greatly improve his appearance.**

**--Henry Ward Beecher**

It sometimes seems that the costume de rigueur in today's world is to dress as messily as possible. I think this grew out of the grunge movement started by some Seattle bands. That time and that style of dress are quickly becoming passe. It's no longer cool (and, in my opinion, **never** was) to look like a mess.

OK. I gotta admit that there was a time in the past where I thought it was cool to be able to have a job and go to work in jeans. I've changed my mind.

With the exception of working on a farm, rustling cattle or doing manual labor, jeans in the workplace just don't cut it any more. It appears that we are now moving into a time of elegance where people want to look their best.

As an ESL teacher you want a **professional** appearance.

That means nice casual clothes that fit well and the colors match. Whether you realize it or not wearing nice clothes has an effect on people and will have a positive effect on your students. And will have a **positive** effect on you.

I know there are some teachers that feel that they need to maintain their "coolness" and dress like their students who may be coming to class in ratty jeans and shirt tails hanging out.

Let's not do that.

You are **not** the students. They are coming to class to learn from you.

You are the **leader** of the class and dressing well and having a good presentation will go a long way in having the students respect you.

Not only that, it's important to make an impression on the school administration too. They want people who are professional, and dressing professionally is an important element to the whole posture of the ESL teacher being a **true professional**.

A guy doesn't need to go so far as wearing a coat and tie (although I have gotten a wild hair and gone to school wearing a tie) or a woman the powersuit.

You can be well-dressed **without** going overboard.

I know I feel better when I'm dressed well in a nice shirt, nice slacks and shined shoes, hair trimmed. I feel more confident, more like I know what I'm doing.

There are many books about dressing professionally. I recommend **The New Professional Image: From Business Casual to the Ultimate Power Look** by **Susan Bixler, Nancy Nix-Rice** (You can get this and the other recommended books on Amazon.com.)

Employers really do care about how you look and looking good really does make a lasting first impression.

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## **16. Always Look For Ways You Can Add Value To The School**

As with anything there is **always** room for improvement. No school is perfect.

One school might excel in one thing, another in something else. Whoever I work for I am always on the lookout for ways to make things better. Sometimes a business is not aware that something is lacking or that it can stand improvement in some areas.

The trick is to offer suggestions without offending anyone and without trying to impose your will on the administration, and feeling hurt or upset if they don't accept your ideas.

**Friendly suggestions** many times are welcome by the owners and directors. If they respect you, and if you follow things I am suggesting in this ebook they should, they will be more apt to listen to what you have to say.

Offer suggestions not as criticism but as ways that you perceive could make things better.

If you provide value to the school you will be viewed as valuable to the administration and other teachers.

For example, I bring in magazines, maps and books to be used as resources for the students and teachers. I occasionally buy a box of 100 count tea bags to

put on the coffee cabinet for all to use. It doesn't cost much to do this. It's a little thing that people appreciate.

I also wrote a proposal on how to improve the school website (<http://www.mli-esl.com>). They were so impressed that they actually paid me to do the work. The site is now the key ingredient in the school's marketing efforts

(But be careful about stepping on toes and making suggestions about how someone else could do their job better. That won't work. You have to be tactful and respectful.)

Also, look at how you specifically can add value to the school by just becoming better at being a teacher.

A **caring, conscientious teacher** speaks volumes about the kind of people the school hires to represent them. You *do* represent the school to the students and also to the world outside the classroom. So living as a responsible professional is a **key part** of your role as an **excellent and valuable** ESL teacher.

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## 17. Stay Out Of School Politics

If you work at a small school such as I do where there are less people this shouldn't be much of a problem if at all.

But as a school, or any organization for that matter, gets larger you have more egos and more personalities to deal with. So petty politics can sometimes come into play. Usually but not always this politicking occurs from the top down and has to do a lot with how much the owners and administrators respect their employees.

If the people in charge come from an **attitude of gratitude** and abundance then employees won't feel a need to jockey for position to try to gain more power or recognition.

If the administration comes from an attitude of disrespect and lack then I think it opens the channel for the possibility of office politics.

**The best thing to do is to stay out of it.**

When other teachers or staff complain to you about the way things are run in the school, or about a certain teacher or the administrator the worse thing you can do is to take a position. You don't want to take sides or be unwittingly dragged into a conflict.

The best response when asked for an opinion like this is to say, "Really. That's something I have to think about." Or offer how you see it understanding both from a balanced point of view.

You want to be seen as an **asset** to the school and to everyone in it. You want to stay above the fray. You want to be the professional. Involving yourself in petty politics not only is unprofessional but childish.

If politics in your school is bad you have two choices as I see it. Either look on it as entertainment, as long as it doesn't encroach upon your commitment to be a great teacher, or find another school.

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## 18. Never Criticize Your School Or Another Teacher In The Presence Of Students

This follows closely on the heels of our previous topic of staying out of school politics. I must confess that I am guilty of criticizing a school and other teachers. I am also guilty of participating in petty school politics. (**All** office politics is petty in my view.)

What I discovered the **hard** way is that it accomplishes nothing and only creates animosity. It gives you an icky feeling whenever you are at school.

First of all you're not being totally honest and you're being judgmental. This is not only not good for your job but it ain't good for your health either. Believe it or not it wreaks havoc with your immune system.

So for your own peace of body and mind make a commitment to **be supportive** rather than destructive.

There's an American Indian expression that goes "**Never judge a man until you walk a mile in his moccasins.**" We have **no** idea why people do things a certain way or all the other things they have to deal with in life.

## Teach Abroad Survival...23 Hot Tips

We have no idea **why** the people in charge do things a certain way. I saw the error of my ways of being critical and complaining. And chose to be supportive instead. And I felt better about it and better about myself.

So what do you say if students make not nice comments about another teacher or anyone else at the school?

First of all **never** agree with them.

You can say something like, "I'm not the one to talk to about that. If you have any complaints talk to the director."

In support of the teacher you can say something like, "You can always learn something from everybody. This is your opportunity to be patient and see what there is to learn."

Now, no school is perfect. You will see things that in your opinion need to be changed.

Remember, that sometimes it may seem absurd that the school is doing something a certain way. Maybe it's because they've tried other ways and that way is the only one that works. You never know. Or it could be that they have a certain blind spot and you **might** just have the solution for that problem.

So, rolling your eyes, sighing, making little snide remarks about things that don't please you about the school in the presence of the students will have an effect on their confidence in the institution and, believe it or not, in yourself as a teacher.

You represent the school so you want to support the school as much as possible. After all they hired you and are paying you a salary to work there.

**Be an asset not a detriment. You will be loved and appreciated for it.**

If, however, you see that there are things about the school that *do* need to be changed don't complain about it to the other teachers or staff.

Just take your suggestions on how to improve directly to the administration and present them in a professional, supportive way. Most will appreciate you for your ideas and might even take your suggestions to heart and make the changes. Maybe even encourage you to make more suggestions.

## 19. Stay Up On Current Events Of The World And Your Host Country

Let me start this topic by saying that I don't like to read the newspaper much, watching TV news less so. Much of the news is geared toward sensationalism and twisting events to make good dramatic stories and instill fear. So I take everything I get from the news with a grain of salt.

(Sometime it's instructive to go on a news fast. This consists of reading no papers, news magazines or listening to any broadcast media. It's amazing how much lighter and happier you feel!)

That being said current events is a **great resource** for your intermediate to advanced classes. When you are in a foreign country you have the advantage of hearing about world events as interpreted by your host country's media as well as international media and magazines from the U.S. The comparisons can be fascinating.

You get to see how slanted news reporting can be. Staying current with your host country's news gives you **an insider's view** of the problems and challenges they have to deal with in their culture. All this is perfect material to use as a basis for discussion and essays.

You can take a news story as reported locally and compare it with the same story reported internationally. I can almost guarantee you that you will discover differences in interpretation, how it's reported and even sometimes differences in facts. Sometimes glaringly so.

One thing to be careful of, as stated before, is that it's important not to take sides. You aren't there to foist your own political ideologies on your students.

In my view this is unprofessional.

Your job is to have them learn English.

Keep politics out of the class and out of the school. I think it's OK to have a discussion about your views in another venue but class is definitely not the place.

So what do you do if someone asks about your opinion on what could be a sensitive matter? What I try to do is talk about it from both sides of the

situation, like Shakespeare, with an appreciation and understanding of multiple views. You want to be able to play to everyone not just to those of your own political or ideological bent.

So keeping yourself up on your host country's events will help you see their world from their point of view and how that fits into and interacts with that of the international community.

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## 20. Approach Your Job With Confidence

**The confidence which we have in ourselves engenders the greatest part of that which we have in others.**

--La Rochfoucauld, *Maxims*

When you first move to a foreign country you may sometimes feel like you're a **stranger in a strange land**. And indeed you are.

One of the best things about moving away from the comfort and familiarity of your own home is when you come back you get to see your own culture with fresh eyes.

Some things about your home you might find you don't like, other parts of it you may have a new appreciation for, an appreciation that you never felt before.

It's as if you were living in a fish bowl and that was the only place you knew. Then you are taken out of that bowl and you never realized that you were living in a fish bowl.

Anyway, what I am trying to get at is you may feel a little wobbly for a while in the new culture and it may take a while to feel solid on your own feet. So you don't want to look like a deer in the headlights when you go into your first class and meet your new students.

Give yourself some time to get accustomed to your new surroundings **before** you go into your first day of classes.

What I'm saying is that to be a teacher you need to have a certain amount of **confidence**, in fact a good teacher has a lot of confidence, a certain ability to be relaxed and not self-conscious in front of a class.

## Teach Abroad Survival...23 Hot Tips

Going through culture shock may wreak havoc on your confidence level. That's why it would be good to get to your new teaching assignment well in advance so you can get a lay of the land, so to speak.

Find out where you are going to live, how you're getting to school, what's expected of you, where's the nearest grocery store, drug store, bank. Get familiar with your surroundings.

Now despite doing all this you are still going to feel a little trepidation when you go into your first class.  
That's normal.

The best way to handle this is to be prepared. Know what you will be doing in class on that first day, that first week.

**Smile, greet people warmly, walk with confidence, breathe deeply, when someone speaks give them your fullest attention.**

Smile.

I already said that and I'll say it again.

**Smile.**

You don't need to walk around like a grinning Cheshire cat. Just have a warm friendly comforting look on your face. A smile does wonders to get you into an enthusiastic, up mood.

**Be cheerful.**

If you still need a little confidence builder try this:

**Say to yourself silently, "I like myself, I like myself, I like myself..."** Over and Over. OK. This might sound silly but believe me it really works. I've used this a lot. So can you.

If you still need a confidence booster stand in front of a mirror and say this out loud several times and often and mean it. **"I will win. Why? I'll tell you why? I have faith courage and enthusiasm!"** Alright. I know. Sounds silly. And you'll probably feel stupid the first time you do it. But so what. It works. And that's all that counts.

One of the best ways to build confidence is to get training in public speaking. There is no better resource for this than [Toastmasters International](#). There are clubs all over the world, hundreds in the United States, in every city and many small towns. Go to their website and have a look.

They also provide many manuals and books that will help you improve your speaking ability. Toastmasters is an **invaluable resource**. Many famous public speakers got their start at a local Toastmasters club.

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## 21. Instill Confidence In the Students

Encouragement is one of the best ways to make the students feel that they are progressing in their knowledge and use of the language. **Always** look for opportunities to acknowledge improvement and give the student lots of opportunity to do things right.

When you have to correct them for a mispronunciation or improper use of grammar, a simple thing like saying "Very good" and a smile when they do it correctly goes a long way in having them feel they are making progress.

Positive reinforcement is **key** to having the student feel confident. A confident student will feel good about himself and want to improve. Be aware also of certain self-talk that the student may use that is not supportive to his efforts of learning the language.

You may hear things like "English is so hard", "I can't get this" "I just can't pronounce this" "I don't speak well" and so on.

What happens is that he's telling his subconscious mind things that will hold him back from making rapid advancement. **Learning a language is a mind game really**. Learning *any* skill is a mind game. If you believe you can do it you will. If you believe you can't you won't.

Whenever a student tells me "Oh, teacher, this is so hard" I give them a little lecture. I say, "Your mind will believe whatever you tell it. If you keep saying English is hard, guess what, it will be.

"But if you tell yourself English is easy you'll create that frame of mind and eventually your subconscious will believe it and all the pressure and tension around learning it will fall away and it will actually **become** easy."

The fact is that English, or learning any language for that matter, for some people, actually *is* easy.

So why is it hard for other people?

I believe it has to do with their attitude toward it. Change the attitude and the world will change, or at least the way you relate to the world will change. I believe that when you say to yourself that something is easy it doesn't mean you don't have to work any less hard at it. It just means that you are no longer resisting it and the barriers to learning begin to fall away.

So make English a happy and fun experience for the student. Smile a lot, chuckle a lot, be up and enthusiastic a lot.

As Dale Carnegie used to say "Be hearty in your approbation and lavish in your praise." And it will give your students the confidence to keep moving and keep learning. Read ***How to Win Friends and Influence People*** by Dale Carnegie. This is a classic!

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## **22. Always Let the Students Know You Are in Charge**

As a teacher you have to learn how to maintain a perfect balance between being the student's friend and at the same time their taskmaster. It's human to not want to work hard, to always be looking for the easy way.

So even though you have students who really **want** to learn English they really don't want to have to work hard at it to become fluent. Of course, you have those students who are really committed and are willing to do the extra work and long hours to get to fluency in the language.

Let's face it. Despite what I said above about the "English is easy" affirmation, English *is* hard. The pronunciation is difficult for most people because we have so many sounds and diphthongs.

But our rules are all over the place to say nothing of our seemingly nonsensical spelling. The only saving grace to all this is that grammatically English is, compared to the rest, a piece of cake.

## Teach Abroad Survival...23 Hot Tips

So what am I getting at here? Well, when you get friendly with the students I think it's normal to not want to work them so hard. You want them to like you and to keep liking you, important for a teacher to gain and maintain rapport.

What happens sometimes as you become friendly with the students is when they start to cut up in class or complain about not wanting to do a certain task you are more apt to let things slide and go "OK, I guess we don't need to do that now."

But the thing is you are not delivering on your job and ultimately you are not being their friend because you are not doing what they paid you to do. Now I'm not saying that all students are like this.

From my own position right now as I write this I have several close friends who are my students. We became friends by them being my students.

So I find sometimes in class I want to engage in conversation with them or steer away from the lesson at hand because I relate to them on an equal footing rather than as teacher / student.

This doesn't work.

I excuse it away by saying to myself that, well, we're having a conversation so they are learning English, which is true, but I am being lax as a teacher. The solution is to remind yourself why you are there and to stick to your lesson plan (allowing for the requisite flexibility we previously talked about, of course) and not be wishy washy.

And, if you've already read my article, <http://www.english-teaching-info.com/teaching-esl-for-children.html>, remember never yell at, or raise your voice in anger or frustration at or criticize your students whether they're children or adults.

I've tried it. It doesn't work. It only makes your class and your life miserable.

Just gently maintain control and guide the class, always be on your toes and be in integrity to your commitment to your students and to being a **great** teacher.

## **23. Know What Your Mission and Goals Are as an ESL Teacher and Live In Integrity to That**

Speaking of integrity this last tip is probably the most important one of all. Figuring out what your mission and your purpose is can act as your guide to how you conduct yourself as an ESL professional.

Consider these questions:

- Who exactly are you when it comes to being an ESL teacher?
- What do you stand for?
- What is your purpose?
- What are you using as your guiding light?
- What is your mission?
- Your vision?
- What would you like to accomplish by teaching ESL?
- Who are you for your students?
- How can I be a better teacher?
- How can I add value to my classes, to my students lives, to the school I'm working for?
- Who and what inspires you?
- What can I do to inspire others?
- What kind of person do I need to be so that I *can* be inspiring to others?

I've heard it said that **the quality of your life has to do with the quality of the questions you ask yourself**. You see it isn't always about the answers but about the questions you pose to yourself and living in the inquiry.

Some of our greatest discoveries in all fields come from those thinkers who are always asking new questions, different questions, innovative questions, sometimes absurd questions.

So you might want to spend some time and answers the above questions. You don't need to think about them a lot. Just write spontaneously off the top of

## Teach Abroad Survival...23 Hot Tips

your head and see what you come up with. Also, you might want to come up with some of your **own** questions.

I spend time each week going over my goals. And I periodically go back and review my mission statements.

Ideally it would be great to read your ESL teacher mission statement weekly so you can stay on track with who you are to your school and your students and ultimately to yourself. It's a way to true yourself up and to keep in integrity to who you say you are.

Remember that an airplane flying toward it's destination is off course 90% of the time. It goes off course then instantly corrects, goes off course then instantly corrects.

So realize that you will go off course, you will make mistakes, a lot of them. But making mistakes is one of the best ways to find out what doesn't work. And mistakes aren't really mistakes, they're just devices for learning.

So much of the time you will not be fulfilling your mission statement, you will go off course, you will make mistakes. You will say the wrong thing to a student or not be so good at a lesson, or just have an off day or maybe, God forbid, you'll find yourself losing your patience with a student and raising your voice.

If that happens there's only one thing you can do. Apologize if you have to and just commit yourself again to your mission and your goals, to what your life is about and put the past in the past and go forward.

That is really the only thing we can do.

Dwelling on past mistakes is *not* in your mission statement. **Being of service to your students is.**

You're an ESL professional. Live it, love it, eat it, breathe it. Have a passion for it, love your students, love your job. Love what you're doing to make your part of the world a little better, a little brighter, a little happier, a little smarter and of course a little better at speaking English.

And never forget that you are a representative of your country and your people. So **always** do your best and be the best you can be and live and act in integrity to your mission, your goals and your commitments.

## Bonus Tips

### **-Have fun**

The way I see it, if you aren't enjoying 80-90% of your life then you got your priorities wrong. The reason I don't say 100% is because of those times like your car breaking down in the middle of nowhere, or getting sick or your house catching on fire aren't particularly, well, fun.

But I really do believe that an optimistic attitude is important to enjoying life. And your students really don't want a pessimistic, sourpuss of a person teacher standing in front of their class everyday. Being pessimistic is no fun. How do I know this? I've tried it. Life is just more fun when you're optimistic. You're just more fun to be around. So, have fun with the students, have fun at school, have fun teaching ESL.

### **-Open a Bank Account**

This would be one of the first things I would do when you get to your new city. Find someone at the school to help you open an account if you can't speak the language.

And find out how the banking system works. There will most likely be things that are different than the system in your own country. Can you transfer funds to and from your own bank in your home country? (I would keep your own hometown account open.) Maybe even open a savings account at the new bank and start creating a nice nest egg.

### **-Be Patient**

Be patient in class, be patient at school, be patient adapting to your new surroundings. Things don't always go the way we planned and remember that you are in a different culture that has different values, priorities and relationships to time.

In fact, talking with other teachers about these things may help your transition go a lot smoother. And you don't need to know everything at once. Sometimes the discovery and allowing it to unfold in its own way can be an adventure in itself.

### **-Be Enthusiastic**

This could go under the heading above about having fun but I wanted to give this a separate heading. This word comes from the meaning of being filled with the Spirit or inspiration. (Now, I'm not talking about a religious thing.)

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It's about being filled with life, going for it, being excited about what you're doing and being on the lookout for ways to add value to other people's lives out of the sheer joy of doing it.

Students love an enthusiastic teacher and if you are your classes will move like a rocket. You express enthusiasm in your voice, your eyes, your gestures and the way you get up and move around the room. Of course, this has to come from deep within you out of what we'll talk about in the next tip.

### **-Love Your Job**

Yep. There is nothing more important than this to help you get through the trials and tribulations, the insecurity, the self-consciousness of your new job and living in a foreign country.

Those who **truly** love their work are usually the best at it. And the students know if you love what you are doing or not. It will be reflected in your "fun quotient" in class, your level of enthusiasm, how much you smile and laugh and how patient you are..

I don't think love can be manufactured but you can grow into it. I know I did. Teaching ESL wasn't an instant love affair. But the more I've done it, the more I've seen how fortunate I am. And the more I see how I am adding tremendous value to people's lives the more I love it.

### **- International Driver's License**

This may not be absolutely necessary. Some countries recognize your home country's license. But I still think it would be a good idea. In the USA you can get one of these at AAA for not much money. If you plan on staying for a year or two in a foreign country you might just want to get a driver's license there as well.

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## **Valuable Resources**

### **For Your Professional Development**

#### **ICAL ESL Certification** - Get Ahead of the Pack

Those who have ESL certification sometimes have a better chance at getting the better-paying jobs they want. In my opinion ICAL is one of the best companies to get your certification online and for very little money.

### **The New Professional Image: From Business Casual to the Ultimate Power Look by Susan Bixler, Nancy Nix-Rice**

Learn how to dress and look your best. Employers really do care about how you look and looking good really does make a lasting first impression. (You can get this book on Amazon.com)

### **[The Super Teaching in Japan Handbook](#)**

Craig Desorcy is a successful ESL teacher currently living in Japan. His ebook is just what you need to give a head start. It's got all the latest info on the ins and outs of things like preparing your resume, getting a great job, teaching kids, networking and putting together a lesson plan and other hot topics.

Even if you're not thinking of teaching in Japan this is still a great book to read because it is chock full of valuable information. Just the ideas on how to create a successful free-lance business is worth the price of this ebook 10 times over.

### **[Toastmasters International](#)**

To be a good teacher you need to be a good public speaker. This is one of the best low cost ways to learn how to communicate effectively with an audience. There are clubs all over the world. Check out their website to see if there are any clubs in your area.

### **[Vista Print Business Cards](#)**

Let people know who you are and where you work. If you are a free-lancer business cards are a must. Get premium quality, full-color business cards FREE! An \$85.00 value

### **The Service Sellers Masters Course**

If you want to learn how to market your ESL services this course clearly shows you HOW to create an effective Theme-Based Content Site that WILL generate income. NOTHING has been held back. EVERYTHING you need to know is included in the course.

### **[Amazing Cover Letters](#)**

Having a great cover letter is important, maybe even more important than your resume! The cover letter lets your potential employer know who you are on a personal basis. A cover letter could make or break your efforts in getting a good job. So why not impress 'em from the get go. Other than hiring someone this is the best resource I know for a well-written, impactful cover letter.

## For Your Health

### **Matt Furey**

<http://www.mattfurey.com>

This guy is an expert in physical culture. He has many books and courses about how you can get and stay in excellent condition using nothing more than your own bodyweight. 15 to 30 minutes a day is all you need to achieve good functional strength, weight loss and be stronger than most bodybuilders.

### **Your Body's Many Cried For Water by Dr. Batmanghelidj, M.D.**

Are you drinking enough water? Find out how this Iranian doctor imprisoned for years discovered the many chronic diseases caused by insufficient water intake. Learn how important it is to be well hydrated and what you can do to stay healthy. (You can get this book on Amazon.com)

### **Nourishing Traditions By Susan Fallon**

One of the best books I've read on overall nutrition. It's also a cookbook with great recipes. You'll find new discoveries about the saturated fat scare and why eating fat may be actually good for you and how traditional nutritional wisdom is sometimes the most sound. (You can get this book on Amazon.com)

### **Patient Heal Thyself and The Maker's Diet by Jordan Rubin**

The author contracted Crohn's disease and after seeing 70 specialists was told by doctors to prepare to die. Read how through following a traditional diet he brought himself back from the brink of death and now lives a life of extraordinary health. Learn how you too can implement his health regimen to eliminate chronic disease and become extraordinarily healthy as well.

(You can get these book on Amazon.com)

## Discipline and Classroom Management

### **Changing Course in Midstream: My Experience Teaching ESL to 12 Year Olds in Seville, Spain by Richard Bienvenu**

<http://www.english-teaching-info.com/teaching-esl-for-children.html>

## **NLP and Classroom Management by Maite Galán and Tom Maguire**

<http://www.english-teaching-info.com/nlp-classroom.html>

A fascinating must-read article on how you can use Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) in your ESL teaching. Learning these simple techniques will help you tremendously in maintaining discipline and focus in the classroom.

## **NLP in the Classroom**

Here is another site that provides some great info and resources that can further expand your knowledge of using the elegant NLP technology in your classes.

## **ESL Teacher Advice and Assistance**

### **ESL Teacher Tips Monthly**

<http://english-teaching-info.com/esl-teacher-tips-monthly-newsletter.html>

I am a working ESL teacher. Get my tips every month to your email box right from the “battle zone” so to speak. I impart wisdom from things I learn everyday teaching English and also from other ESL teachers.

### **Teach Abroad**

<http://www.teach-abroad.net/>

This excellent site for the ESL teacher has informative articles and interesting interviews from experienced teachers. A great resource from a very successful ESL teacher living in Japan.

### **Dave’s ESL Café**

<http://www.eslcafe.com/>

Considered the most visited ESL site on the Internet. Tons of information and links for the teacher and student. The site also includes a forum, jobs available, lesson plans, ESL games, you name it. You could spend days here and still not see everything.

## **The Best ESL Books**

<http://www.english-teaching-info.com/best-esl-books.html>

There are loads of books out there for teaching. These are the books I recommend and the ones I teach from because of their comprehensiveness and ease of use.

## **Volunteer ESL Teaching Positions**

Volunteer ESL teaching is a great way to get your feet wet if you are just starting out as an ESL teacher and want to do something altruistic. Or if you're already an ESL pro volunteering in some far-flung corner of the world might be a good change of pace.

## **The Peace Corps**

<http://www.peacecorps.gov/>

## **Peace Corps Alternative**

Work Abroad - Volunteer Overseas Short-Term Peace Corps Alternative

<http://www.crossculturalsolutions.org>

## **Volunteer & Intern Abroad**

Over 120 organizations & projects in the Spanish-speaking world

<http://www.amerispan.com>

## **Volunteer in 20 Countries**

Volunteer in 20 Countries of Asia Africa, and Latin America

<http://www.globalcrossroad.com>

## **Global Citizens Network**

Cross-cultural volunteer travel International service trips

<http://www.globalcitizens.org>

## **For Your Personal Development and Success**

### **Site Build It!**

Learn how to market your services and your knowledge on the Internet with one of the best programs available. Site Build It! takes you by the hand and leads you step by step all along the way. This is the **best program** on the Net and is the same service I use to set up my own site for ESL teachers:

<http://www.english-teaching-info.com/>

### Cybernetic Transposition

Learn how you can to get lots of money for anything fast as well as how to achieve goals quickly and effortlessly. This ebook and the tons of other free material that comes with it explains how certain programs in the subconscious mind prevent us from achieving our very best.

Provides forms and exercises and sound downloads to help walk you through the program and get past the unconscious blocks that keeps you from having what you want.

### **For Your Travel Needs**

#### eBags.com

The largest online store for traveling bags and luggage. Find everything you need for taking your stuff overseas.

### **...and for a good laugh**

#### English is Tough Stuff

We've all cursed written English as capricious and sentenced American Pronunciation Rules as but half-truths at best. This is great for your ESL students. Try your luck at a verse or two of these. Better yet, read aloud with a friend!!

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## C onclusion

Teaching ESL in a foreign country is an exciting and rewarding job. Consider yourself among the fortunate few who have heard the call of adventure and have taken the necessary steps to answer that call.

Your services are needed all over the world by those that recognize that English is a important step in their careers and at landing better-paying jobs. It's a global marketplace and English, other than music and love, truly is the universal language.

There are people who have made very successful careers at just traveling the world teaching ESL. You meet fascinating people, get exposed to different cultures, cuisines and values as well as making many friends for life.

## Teach Abroad Survival...23 Hot Tips

Of course all the challenges and opportunities you will face as an ESL teacher abroad could hardly be covered in a little ebook such as this. Frankly, I don't know what all of them would be and some of these challenges and opportunities will be unique to your situation.

So I've just included what readily came to mind out of my own experience as an ESL teacher abroad plus some things I've learned since then.

An attitude that I adopted many years ago was to be person who is always in training and development. This is an ongoing thing. It's good to realize that there is so much more to learn and it's humbling to know that I can never learn all of it.

The very act of writing this ebook has helped me to see some of my blind spots, it's helped me to appreciate what I have learned and experienced and given me an avenue to be able to reach out and assist others.

I hope that in some way I have helped you make your experience teaching abroad a much more happy and successful one.

### **By the way...**

I'd love to hear how you are doing and am of course open to any questions or comments.

You can contact me at my personal email [rbiennu@aol.com](mailto:rbiennu@aol.com)

**The best of luck and much success to you!**



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I'll end this ebook as we started with this quote:

***A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.  
--Henry Adams***