A Quick Start Guide to Teaching English Online
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Thank you for downloading my free ebook. My intention with this guide is to give you a brief overview of what it is like to teach private English lessons online and go through what you'll need to get started.

I'll list the tools that I use or recommend, go through the different stages of getting everything set up, and talk about what you can expect when teaching this way.

But, before we do, I'd like to introduce myself.

About Me

My name is Jack, I live in North Carolina, USA, and I earn my living by teaching English online. I mainly connect with students who want to pass the IELTS exam, but I also give business and general English lessons. All my lessons are one-to-one, and I've been doing this full-time for the past three years.

Before starting my own teaching business, I taught English in Spain. I loved my time there, but the pay wasn't the best and my wife and decided that we wanted to settle in the US. I already had some prior experience teaching online, and decided that I wanted to create something for myself and give it a real go.

Setting up my site (without any prior experience) was a lot of fun, and after initially using a drag-and-drop website builder, I moved over to WordPress. I advertised on Google Adwords, posted in some classified spaces, hustled on forums and social media platforms, and was soon teaching 15-20 hours per week.

I decided to start [my blog](#) because I wanted to inspire other teachers to do the same. I hope that the information both here and on my blog will give you a greater understanding of what it is like to teach online and the knowledge to be able create something similar for yourself.

If you want to know more about me or to connect, you can do so on [LinkedIn](#).

Teaching Online: What to Expect

I want to start by saying that I love teaching English online. It has given me the ability to choose which type of students I want to teach, when I want to teach, and how my lessons are organized. Being in charge of the way that I teach my lessons has been incredibly liberating. It has helped me explore different methods and allowed me to grow as a teacher.

When I first starting freelancing and teaching this way, I felt a massive weight

being lifted off my shoulders; all the restrictions that were so evident in the different language schools where I worked suddenly disappeared.

I quickly saw the opportunities that lay ahead and knew that the potential for growth, both in a teaching and business sense, was huge.

I love connecting with students from all around the world, and I have made some very special relationships over the past few years. There is something incredible about helping learners achieve their goals without having to be physically present with them.

In addition, being my own boss means that I can decide where I ultimately take my business. I feel that one-to-one teaching is just the start of what I want to achieve online. My teaching blog is not only there to help others do what I do, but also to document this teaching journey that I have embarked upon.

Having this blog and connecting with other teachers has helped me in so many ways. When I first started my online language school, there were times when I felt a little isolated. I did everything on my own and I sometimes thought that I was the only one doing this. So, I decided to reach out to others, and since doing this, I now feel that a community of online teachers is slowly building. The vast majority of those that I have connected with speak with great passion and excitement about what they do and where they are heading.

If you are currently working for a language school, teaching online might feel a little daunting at first. But, once you gain a little experience and see the possibilities for you and your students, I'm sure that you'll be glad that you made the decision to get started.

There are many reasons why you might want to shift your teaching online. Here are some of the reasons why I feel it is a great step for teachers to make:

- You are able to live where you want.
- You can set your own prices and earn good money.
- You are free to teach the way you want to teach.
- You can teach the students that you want to teach.

● There is more potential for growth.

Being able to tap into any language learning market in the world allows us as online teachers to branch out and find the perfect students for us. The ability to reach students is no longer restricted by geography; our audience is now the online world - a world where English learners are now seeking new ways to improve their skills and new teachers to help them achieve their goals.

No matter where you currently are in your ELT journey, I'm sure that going online will help you achieve your teaching and career goals.

Initial Setup

Let's now go through the tools and software that you'll need to be able to give one-to-one lessons online. Given that you already have a computer and a good internet connection, this is what you'll need:

Skype, Google Hangouts, or Other Software

I mainly use [Skype](#) for my one-to-one lessons and have done so for many years. However, I have recently started teaching a couple of students on [Google Hangouts](#).

When using Google Hangouts, the audio seems to be clearer and it doesn't tax your computer as much as Skype does. There are also some interesting apps that you can integrate (videos, a whiteboard etc.) that makes it easier to use interactive resources in your class.

I may completely move over to Google Hangouts in the future, especially if new features keep being introduced.

However, the reason that I still use Skype is because I have hundreds of student contacts, and I also feel it is better for branding purposes as most English learners use it already. This means that those looking for online lessons search for terms such as, "English teacher Skype" in Google, and this might come into

The first option is great for students who have already taken a trial lesson with you. You can request money by filling in a couple of fields within Paypal. The invoice will then be emailed to your student where they can easily complete the payment.

Putting a "buy now" button on your website allows you to receive instant payments without any prior communication. This can be used for trial lessons or for lesson packages.

Another option is to use an online booking system. I haven't used one of these for my classes before, but it is something worth looking into, especially if you start hiring other teachers. If you search, "online booking system classes," you'll find lots of options available to you.

A Cancellation Policy

You'll need a good cancellation policy to minimize the amount of lost income from cancellations and no shows.

Keep your policy simple, explain it clearly, and stick to it. Make it fair for both you and your learners, and make sure that your students understand and agree to the policy before you start the lessons.

The best way to minimize cancellations is to teach students who respect your time and are dedicated to their learning. Through experience I can tell if a student is going to cause problems during our initial trial lesson, and I now specifically target students from countries where I have had respectful students in the past.

At times you may feel like you want to be a little flexible with your policy, but be careful as this can be a slippery slope.

A Calendar and Time-Zones

I use Google Calendar to keep track of all my lessons. I always use the student's time-zone when arranging a class as it's easy to calculate the time difference using timeanddate.com.

This brings us to potential problem: time changes. If you teach students from different countries, only some of these countries will have daylight savings time, and those that do might go back when you go forward or vice-versa. It's also worth noting that Europe changes it's time earlier than the United States.

This can be challenging and could potentially cause problems for your schedule. Plan ahead and know what the time difference will be for all your students when there is a potential time change.

A Website

Having a website is a must if you want to be successful and have a schedule full of paying students. Your website will be the center of all your marketing efforts: you will use it to firstly attract visitors to your site, and then to convince those visitors that they would benefit from taking lessons with you.

The following is an example of how, as an online teacher, you can entice students to sign up for your lessons.

- You write a blog post on how English learners can improve their English speaking and publish it on your site.
- You promote this post on different social media websites.
- In the sidebar of this post you include a call to action that explains that you offer private English lessons online. There is a button that says, "For more information click here"
- Upon clicking this link, your visitor goes to a special page where you try to convince them that they should take lessons with you. You also include a video to make a connection with the visitor.
- You have buttons throughout this page that say, "Click here for a trial lesson."
- When they click this button, they go through to a form where they can

enter their details and send payment.
- You receive this information and contact your new student to finalize a time.

This is just one way that you can use your website to fill up your schedule. You'll see more ways that you can attract students to your website later in the marketing section of this guide.

I recommend using WordPress.org as the platform on which to build your site. It is an incredible powerful and easy to use piece of software that allows anyone to build a professional and unique website.

There are so many great themes (templates) that you can use to create your site without knowing code. Your website can be completed for under $100, and it only costs around $60 a year to run.

If building a website sounds a little overwhelming, then you can always get someone to set it up for you. But, don't worry too much, anyone can do this; all you need is a little guidance to help you get started.

Your website doesn't have to be complex, and to help you think about how to approach this, here are some pages that you might want to include on your site:

- Homepage (this is usually an overview of what you offer)
- About Me
- Contact Me
- My lessons (an in-depth overview of your lessons)
- Trial Lesson (this will include a contact form)
- Blog (for learning materials)

This is just one way that you could organize the content on your site. When using a theme that you like, it's just a matter of adding the new pages, tweaking the design, and adding one or two other things (a contact form, paypal etc.)

(For more information on how to create your own website, visit my free tutorial:

How to Build a Teaching Website With WordPress.)

A Pricing Plan

How much you end up charging for your lessons will depend on your income expectations, the type of students that you attract, and where your students are based.

This may take a little time to think things through, but whatever you do don't price your lessons too low. I have spoken to a lot of teachers who feel that they can't charge as much for online lessons as their face-to-face lessons, but I've actually found the opposite to be true. This is because, as mentioned before, when teaching online you can reach students who are willing to pay what you feel you deserve.

For example, there are many online teachers who charge between $30-60 per class, and others charge more still. To get this type of rate you will need to be able to find the right type of students, have a good teaching reputation, and in some cases, have a lot of traffic coming to your site.

You also want to set your base rate so that there is some flexibility to offer discounts. It is wise to offer packages of five, ten, or more lessons. A very common discount is offering ten lessons for the price of nine. Having students sign up for a package makes things much easier for you as you won't have to send invoices every week, and it gives you the peace of mind to know that you have a student signed up for more than just one lesson.

The timing of your lessons is also important. I recommend that you don't make it a full 60 minute class; instead, offer classes that are between 45 to 55 minutes. This makes it easier to teach consecutive hours, giving you a break in between lessons. Even if this break is only five minutes, it will make a big difference in terms of your ability to teach consecutive classes. From experience, teaching four hours straight without a break is brutal!

Many teachers also offer discounted trial lessons. Be careful about offering a

free trial; doing this can attract timewasters. I've found giving a 20 minute trial lesson for $1 to be a great compromise. Having a student pay this $1 ensures that your student is able to send payment online through Paypal and is serious about taking lessons with you.

A Niche/Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

Having a teaching niche is important as it helps you focus your marketing plan, makes things easier for you in terms of planning, and helps you to become a perceived expert in your field.

Deciding what type of lessons you are going to teach and who you want to target might be an easy decision to make if you already have teaching experience. If you are new to teaching, then it will probably take a little time to nail this down, and you may want to start out by offering conversation lessons.

Many teachers offer general lessons that focus on improving speaking skills. This is what most students are looking for, but it is quite a general niche. You can easily narrow this down by making your lessons specific to a country, level, or the type of English being taught.

Additionally, try to find a unique selling proposition (USP - basically, something that makes what you offer unique) to help you stand out from the crowd. If your niche is really focused (for example, teaching male students from Italy who have an upper-intermediate level and need to learn medical English), then this will be your USP.

However, if your niche is more general, a great suggestion is to brand your lessons around you as a teacher by putting your personality into everything you do. This can be a little daunting (I was scared about doing this at first), but it ends up being a lot of fun.

Coming up with your niche/USP might take a little time to finalize. Many teachers don't start with this in mind, and their brand evolves over time. Nethertheless, it is worth thinking about before you start.

A Marketing Plan

Once you have your website and everything else that you need to be able to give lessons, you'll need paying students.

The process of getting students starts with attracting learners to your site. Luckily, there are many ways to do this. Here are some suggestions:

- Advertising
- Posting on classified websites
- Networking
- Getting referrals
- Social media marketing and forum posting
- Videos
- Creating content on your site
- Search engine optimization (SEO)

The strategies that you implement will ultimately depend on your short and long-term goals and on the type of lessons that you are offering.

The first four methods listed above can bring in students right after you implement them. Advertising is an especially quick way of getting students right from the start. The latter four strategies usually require you taking more of a long-term view of attracting visitors as they take more time to come to fruition.

Once you have your students on your website, you will want to convert them into paying customers. To do this you'll need to convince your potential students that they will benefit from taking lessons with you. This can be effectively done by thinking about what problems your students have and how you can solve them, and then tapping into the pains and desires of your audience through your content.

Continue this strategy in your trial lessons: ask what problems your students

have and talk about how you can help them improve. Be sure to let them know that you can help them achieve their goals and that you are the right teacher for them.

When promoting your site and your lessons, everything that you put out there should be of a very high quality. Producing a really helpful video that looks and sounds professional is much better than using the scattergun approach and producing lots of subpar videos. You should try to ensure that you make the best first impression possible with your potential students no matter where or how you encounter them.

Another example of this is when posting on classified websites. Instead of just saying the same thing that everyone else does, take your time and make yours the best. Include pictures, testimonials, and great information that will make your listing shine.

What you ultimately decide to do in terms of marketing your lessons will depend on your long-term goals (more about this later). For example, if you just want to teach for a few hours a week, you probably won't want to take the time to create lots of great videos and lesson plans. Alternatively, if you want to hire other teachers, doing this will help you bring in a lot more students and increase your income.

For more information on marketing, see my post [How to Get Students](#).

Teaching Resources

One of the reasons why I like teaching online is because of the resources available and how easy it is to implement them into my lessons. There is so much that you can do with an online lesson, and creative teachers thrive if the right platform and resources are used.

The type of resources that you will end up using will depend on your teaching style and the type of lessons that you teach. Fortunately, there seems to be something for everyone, with all different types of resources for different levels

and areas of English learning. Content creators are also realizing that there is a big shift towards online lessons, and there are new online courses popping up all the time.

You can search for resources on Google, but there are a lot of hidden gems that don't show up in the search engines. These can be found by connecting with other teachers on social media sites. I was so excited when I found a host of resources that I just didn't know existed, and my lessons have benefited greatly from now having these to hand.

Many teachers like to create their own resources and lesson plans, putting them onto their websites for everyone to use. I have done a lot of this over the years and really enjoy the process. Nobody knows what your students need as well as you do; creating your own lesson plans ensures that your students are learning exactly what they need to learn to make efficient progress.

The content that you create isn't just for your current students. Creating something that is useful and engaging means that your content will be shared, thus attracting more English learners to your site. This will ultimately result in more sign ups.

Long-Term Vision

Before getting everything setup, it is worth thinking about where you want your online teaching business to be in the next one to five years.

The following questions will help you organize your ideas:

Do you want to teach part-time or full-time?
Would you like to hire other teachers?
Would you like to also teach group lessons?
Do you see your website offering more than just online lessons?
Does having a membership site or offering video courses excite you?

Answering these questions helps you set your expectations and gives you an idea of how you can brand your website and set things up initially.

There are so many opportunities for an online teacher; being aware of what these are before you begin will make you prepared for what potentially lies ahead.

Taking Action and Getting Started

After reading the information above, you no doubt have many ideas in your head and will probably want to get things rolling as soon as possible.

While you are going through this process, it is wise to find a student and start teaching. Reach out to ex-students and friends and let them know that you teach online. Offer a class or two, maybe even for free, and see how things go. You'll no doubt get a buzz from doing this and become really excited about creating your website and putting yourself out there.

A lot of teachers suffer from trying to get everything perfectly set up before teaching. The best way to start is to get teaching and let everything else come together in the background.

Whatever way you approach it, I wish you the best of luck, and I hope that I can help you achieve your goals in the months and years to come!

I love to receive feedback and comments, so please email me if you would like to get in touch: jack@teachingeslonline.com.

And, if you have found this guide useful, I would appreciate it if shared my website with your friends and contacts.

Jack Askew

Resources

Here are the resources listed in this guide:

[Skype](#)
[Google Hangouts](#)
[Paypal](#)
[How to Create a Teaching Website](#)
[How to Get Students](#)