

# Practicum Overview

## A Comprehensive Guide to The Practicum

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The practicum is an essential component to a teacher's training process, as it provides valuable insight and experience prior to obtaining independent teaching positions. International TEFL Academy requires that all students accumulate 20 hours of practice teaching, observing, or tutoring to complete the TEFL certification.

**Practicum hours can be achieved through:**

- [Observation](#)
- [Tutoring](#)
- [Student Teaching](#)

Or a combination of 2 or 3 of these in an ESL/EFL setting in which non-native speakers are learning new English language skills.

Students may not complete their practicum hours solely through observation. A minimum of six of the 20 hours must be completed through student teaching or tutoring.

Any hours completed in a foreign language, math, science, or any other classroom or environment which is not comprised of only non-native English speakers learning English as a second language will not count toward the 20-hour practicum requirement.

**Your practicum experience must meet the following requirements:**

- **You must be working with ESL students exclusively.** If you work with a group that is mixed with native English speakers and non-native English speakers that time will not count.
- **You need to be working on the acquisition of the English language.** Subject learning (math, history, etc.) in English does not count towards your practicum.
- You can use a **combination of observation, student teaching, and tutoring** to complete your hours.

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- You must have at **least 6 hours** of either **student teaching or tutoring** and can complete a **maximum of 14 observation hours**.
- **You can't do all 20 hours as observation.** However, **you can do all 20 hours as tutoring or teaching**, should you wish to. **Observation hours are not required.**
- **Your hours must be live** - you cannot watch previously recorded videos for observation or complete your hours via email or texting - you must be working with your ESL student(s) live, or be observing another teacher live. These hours can be completed in-person or remotely.

Hands-on experience with English language learners provides an opportunity for teacher trainees to apply teaching principles to real-life situations, build confidence in their skill and pedagogical style, gain exposure to various learning styles and classroom situations, and acquire valuable teaching experience. These components will assist a teacher in feeling more prepared, as well as add a competitive edge during the job search and interview process.

## Practicum Steps

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**Below is an outline of the steps to follow to successfully complete your practicum hours:**

1. Find a location – To find a practicum location, you will need to research different schools, organizations, and community centers in your area. Alternatively, you can privately tutor someone in your community who is a non-native speaker of English. Be sure to review the practicum requirements before beginning your hours. ITA has many resources listed throughout the Practicum course in Moodle to help you find a location to complete your hours.
2. Contact a location or potential students – Once you have done research on different practicum locations in your area, it is time to being contacting them. Refer to the page titled “Contacting Potential Practicum Sites” below for advice on contacting the locations.

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3. Schedule your hours – Some locations may not be able to offer you a total of 20 volunteer hours. This means that you may need to split your practicum hours between more than one location. Create a schedule with each organization once you begin volunteering to ensure that you will have 20 practicum hours completed by the scheduled [due date](#).
4. Keep track of your hours – Throughout your practicum you are required to keep track of your hours. You will be asked to submit information regarding the time you spent teaching English in the [Practicum Completion Form](#). If you'd like a document to use to track your hours, download our handy [Practicum Time Log](#), which can be used to note your hours. This time sheet is for personal use only and should not be submitted to ITA.
5. [Practicum Experience](#) – Write at least a 550-word write-up of your practicum experience. Your practicum experience will be added to the body of your [forum post](#). In your write-up, include where you completed your practicum, what type of practicum you completed (tutoring, observing, student teaching) and what your overall experience was like.
6. Complete the [Practicum Completion Form](#) – In this form you will fill in information regarding the location(s), student(s), hours, subjects, and topics taught during your practicum experience.

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## Additional Tips and Resources

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International TEFL Academy online TEFL students are required to find and contact their own location to complete their practicum hours. A few suggestions for finding your practicum location are offered by ITA, including locations online, in the United States, and internationally located. These are lists of different locations where ITA students have completed their practicum in the past, and who are willing to accept volunteer teachers from ITA:

- [Preferred Practicum Locations – USA](#)
- [International Preferred Practicum Locations](#)
- [Online Preferred Practicum Locations](#)

In addition to our recommended practicum locations, we also suggest doing a web search for English language classes offered in your community. You will find that many different organizations will offer English classes to non-native speakers. Some examples of class sites are language schools, community centers, community colleges, park districts, local libraries, and faith-based organizations such as churches or synagogues. You may also find a non-native English speaker to whom you can offer [one-on-one tutoring](#).

## Contacting Potential Practicum Locations

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When contacting a potential practicum site, it is important to be clear in what you are looking for. Make sure to be upfront about the practicum requirements as well as what you are hoping to get out of your experience. International TEFL Academy provides [this letter](#) that will help communicate the requirements of the practicum.

### Community Centers and Organizations

First, ask to speak with someone who oversees hiring volunteers. If nobody is available, ask if there is someone else you can speak with to get more information about becoming a volunteer. If you still are unable to speak with anyone, leave your name, phone number, email address, and a message stating that you are interested in ESL volunteer opportunities.

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It is important to note that most of the staff at community centers typically do not work full time. If you leave a message and don't hear back from anyone within 2-3 days, contact the community center again. You can also try going to the community center in person to increase your chances of speaking with someone.

Once you are in touch with someone in charge of hiring volunteers, explain who you are and your goal. Be prepared with your schedule and availability.

## Possible dialogue:

"Hi, my name is Kristen and I am interested in volunteering with your ESL classes or students. I am currently training to become an English teacher and would like some exposure in ESL classrooms here in the United States. As part of my training, I am required to work with ESL students for a minimum of 20 hours. I can observe classes, tutor students one-on-one, or lead ESL classes. I can also do a combination depending on the needs of your organization."

## Language Schools

Language schools are a great way to gain some observation hours. Most language schools that pay instructors to teach will not be open to having volunteers teach an ESL class. They will be more likely to have you as a guest to observe a few classes. When you contact a language school, ask if there is someone you can speak to about observing ESL classes. If you are not able to speak with anyone, leave your name, phone number, email address, and a message stating that you are interested in ESL observation opportunities. It is important to be persistent and proactive in your search. If you don't receive a response within 2-3 days of leaving a message, either call back or go to the language school in person. Be prepared with your schedule and availability.

## Possible dialogue:

"Hi, my name is Kristen and I am interested in volunteering with your ESL classes or students. I am currently training to become an English teacher and would like some exposure in ESL classrooms here in the United States. As part of my training, I am required to work with ESL students for a minimum of 20 hours. I can observe classes, work one-on-one with students or lead ESL classes. I can also do a combination depending on the needs of your organization."

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