TESOL online: A step-by-step guide to online tutoring
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Introduction

Since the 1990s which marked the upsurge of Internet use, the World Wide Web has become an indispensable part of our lives. Many of us depend on using our computers and internet connections as a means to accomplish our daily activities and increase our interaction with others. Getting information is much easier now too, with just about anything and everything made accessible at the click of our fingers.

The field of language education is no exception. Nowadays, many students find online tutorial sessions very practical as compared with going to traditional classrooms to learn their English lessons. Learning has never been this easy and convenient for students – studying at a more flexible time and space.

During an online class, the student and the instructor do not meet each other face-to-face. Instead, they use a web application that allows for communication between the teacher and the student. An example of this is a Korean student talking to a tutor in Australia through Skype. Conversation transpires between them wherever they are, giving an added advantage for both parties to learn about different cultures and a chance to break down any cultural barriers.

If you want to be a freelance online ESL tutor, this manual would be very helpful for you. In one way or another, you already have an idea how to teach English. This manual provides a step-by-step guide to walk you through the process of effective tutoring online. We would like to provide you some ideas on what to use in an online class, which web applications are great, and some proven first-hand online teaching techniques to assist you in venturing in this field.
What is online ESL teaching?

Studies offer us a simple definition of online teaching:

“Teaching online means conducting a course partially or entirely through the Internet” (Ko and Rossen, 2004). Lisa Dawley (2007) talks more about this, saying that successful online teaching promotes the achievement of learning objectives by facilitating engagement to empower students as life-long learners.”

There are two types of online learning: asynchronous and synchronous. *Asynchronous* means that the teacher and student do not have to be online at the same time. Learning materials are given and responded to online via communication tools such as emails and web forums.

Because of the need to practice spontaneous communication, the online teaching of ESL is usually *synchronous*. It means that the teacher and the student do not meet face-to-face. It does not require physical appearance. They use the computer, the internet, and a web-based application to make real-time communication possible. A successful discussion, therefore, heavily depends on the audio quality – including both the line and the teacher’s voice, video quality if a webcam is used, and the quality of learning materials on-screen.

Online ESL learning is distinct from classroom teaching in many ways. How these differences may be advantageous or disadvantageous depends heavily on the awareness and readiness of the teacher upon teaching. The following are a few things that online teachers can expect in a virtual learning environment:

- both parties must be comfortable using technology tools; teachers must help students in using these tools
- one cannot use classroom presence to get important points across
• teaching effectively means mastering the absence of visual cues and eye contact

• improvising on the spot with behaviour problems or difficult concepts may be a challenge

• interactive learning is crucial; active participation is a must

• instructions and procedures must be explicit and clear

• there is a shift from traditionally being a content provider to a content facilitator

• there is increased need for learner autonomy, self-learning, discipline, and independence
What is the demand for online ESL teaching?

ESL schools traditionally market their services to students in institutions such as academies, colleges, and universities. Later, the high demand for ESL teaching made online tutoring service effective to a wider range of students. This may be done by targeting the top non-English speaking population in the internet including the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Another way is to target those countries with reliable internet connection and the most numbers of internet usage. According to the International Telecommunication Union’s list in 2010, these are:
Places where there are high numbers of online ESL learners include France, Germany, Japan, Taiwan, China, and South Korea. Reasons vary from age group and culture, but in general, the widespread use of the English language in schools, business, and travel all account for the increased demand in ESL teaching in the next decade.

The demand for teaching ESL online urged many to provide services in this industry. Organisations and individuals alike are setting up their own tutorial services, so there are many options for an aspiring ESL instructor to teach online.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Rank</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Internet users</th>
<th>Percentage of population</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>456,238,464</td>
<td>34.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>United States</td>
<td>243,542,822</td>
<td>79.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>102,063,316</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>India</td>
<td>87,983,101</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>81,748,504</td>
<td>40.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>66,825,986</td>
<td>81.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>59,937,788</td>
<td>43.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>52,996,180</td>
<td>85.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>51,879,480</td>
<td>80.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>45,944,229</td>
<td>28.43</td>
</tr>
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Why teach ESL online?

**Advantages**

- It’s more convenient and cheaper because both parties don’t need to travel. Classes may be conducted wherever, whenever. Absences are minimal.

- It’s easier to have resources online (dictionary, pictures and videos). Access to information is unlimited.

- It is much easier for teachers to prepare and reuse learning materials such as e-books, PowerPoint files and websites. Realia is generally unnecessary.

- One can never predict where the discussion will go because of the interactive nature of communication; the unexpected often results in increased incidental learning.

- Since it is a one-on-one class, the student won’t be too afraid or shy of talking or making mistakes unlike in a classroom where other students could hear them.

- Basic grooming is enough; there is no need to invest too much in dressing up or putting on makeup.

- As a job, you are in control of your time. Setting your available schedule for class is more flexible.
Disadvantages

- There’s a big possibility of missing the emotional bond that builds more quickly in a face-to-face environment. Rapport depends heavily on verbal communication and trust.

- Without facial expressions and gestures or the ability to retract immediately there's a risk for misunderstanding. Cultural differences also play a big role in this aspect and must always be considered.

- There would be less physical activities which would mean that lessons might not be as effective for kids. Children are naturally very active and need to develop in all aspects, not just intellectually.

- The use of realia is very minimal. Students whose learning styles are not visual or auditory may find it quite difficult to adapt to the setting.

- Slow or unreliable internet connection and computer problems can be frustrating. Addressing basic technical issues must be part of teacher and student skills.

- It’s difficult to have some writing activities. Although it could be done through chat, it is limited. The focus skills are almost always speaking and listening with reading in the background.
Who can be an online ESL teacher?

There are a few personal requirements in teaching ESL online. The effective online teacher must be:

- able to sit in front the computer everyday;
- comfortable in one-on-one interaction;
- flexible in teaching approaches and willing to experiment; and
- prepared to do computer activities such as typing and chatting.

These simple but essential requirements mean establishing a routine of being regularly online, keeping in mind that the student will be expecting classes of regular intervals. This is also important in making sure learning goals are achieved. Passion for teaching and the subject matter involved is another requirement, qualities that are assets for all teachers to possess.

Other useful skills and experiences for an online ESL teacher include:

- convenient (home) access to computer/internet;
- comfortable use of tools/system to be used to teach online; and
- first-hand experience as an online learner.

If you are uncertain whether you have the skills for online teaching, you may take the self-assessment test in the following page to evaluate how suitable you are for this kind of job.
Self-Assessment

Source: http://www.onlinetutoringworld.com/tutoringguide/teachingenglishonline.htm

Make sure that you give yourself an honest score for each question. Always remember that you should not assume any test to be accurate and authoritative - including this test. Instead, the goal of taking any test is to give you suggestions and options, and to help you find out more about your personal preferences. In the end, use your intuition and common sense to decide if teaching English online is right for you.

Self Test: Teaching English Online Questionnaire

For each question below, give yourself a score between 1-5:

(1) Very Poor (2) Poor (3) Average (4) Above Average (5) Excellent

1. I enjoy reading, thinking or talking about teaching ESL in general.  
   [Score: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

2. I enjoy using skills that allow me to empower others through teaching, training and mentoring.  
   [Score: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

3. I enjoy teaching regardless of the subject.  
   [Score: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

4. I like to share news, ideas or bits of trivia with others.  
   [Score: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5]

5. I enjoy interacting with other cultures?  
   [Score: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
6. I enjoy working as a team. [Score: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ]

7. I have the patience to keep communicating, especially with non-native speakers, until my opinions are understood? [Score: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ]

8. I feel comfortable using computers and the internet in general. [Score: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ]

9. I am comfortable searching, gathering information and making up ESL lesson plans using the internet. [Score: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ]

10. I have used, or I am currently using VOIP software such as Skype, Yahoo or MSN Messenger to communicate online. [Score: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ]

11. I have used other VOIP telephony software with features such as voice and chat. [Score: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ]

12. I have used basic video conferencing software to communicate with others. [Score: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 ]

Total Score:______
What your score means

If Your Score is Between 1 - 20

You may need to understand and empathise with how non-native English speakers communicate, or become more technologically savvy, or both. At this stage try to learn more about how technology is used for online English tutorial. Read through this online English teaching guide. Read the sections on VOIP Overview and Web Conferencing for online Tutors. Experiment with using VOIP, blackboards, chat and other online teaching tools. Learning new technology can be difficult - you learn best by reading, experimenting and making mistakes - there is no shortcut to this process. Get involved in a few ESL/ESL forums, ask questions and try to help foreign students with questions about learning English.

If Your Score is Between 20-40

You generally understand how to use the internet, and you may have taught other subjects including ESL or English As a Second Language to non-native speakers. If you are serious about becoming an Online ESL tutor, run a few free tutoring sessions using the teaching tools covered in Comparison of Free VOIP Providers and Choosing A Web Conference Provider reviews. Get used to communicating over the internet with VOIP. Read and concentrate on the technology that you find challenging. Understanding online tutoring technology will help you to become more effective in your teaching. It will help you to understand basic distance communication technology; and, inevitably with the knowledge of troubleshooting them when you start to tutor online.
If Your Score is Between 40-60

You seem to have a good balance with understanding distance communication technology and an interest in teaching English Online. The next step to take - if you haven't done so - is to skim through the pages on this website, and see what areas you need to learn more about. If you feel you need more practice, offer some free tutorials to get a feel for what it’s actually like to be an online tutor. Advertise yourself on a few ESL websites such as ESL Teachers Board as an online ESL tutor - see Find An Online ESL Language Tutor. Many students regularly scan these postings and will directly contact you to ask you about tutoring them. See the links in Find Work As a Tutor for a list of companies that employ people to work as private tutors or as online tutors in any subject fields. Even better, promote your services by building your own website and posting your credentials and experiences. Upload your photos, include your fees and contact information. This is more professional and you will stand a better chance of getting more students than giving away your hotmail or yahoo email addresses. See the section: How to build your own Online Tutoring Website for more information about building a website.
What are the qualities of an online ESL teacher?

Teacher competencies

- **Gathering information** - The process of researching and gathering lesson plans for classroom use is the same process when teaching online English - only the materials will be tailored to be delivered to an online audience.

- **Planning** - Evaluate students’ learning performance. Teachers need to adjust their teaching curriculum or provide additional exercises to help target weak areas.

- **Teaching** - Some online tutors prefer using the available materials around them. These include step-by-step teaching instructions, useful teaching tips and optional games and activities. Some tutors like to design their own curriculum, test it, refine it and continue to make improvements to the material.

- **Organisation** - Online tutors spend much time creating new ideas, planning, and presenting information in a way that will help students learn better. Most of these lessons will be sitting on the computer, so working to organise lessons on the desktop is necessary.

- **Innovation** - Constant exposure to new technology and equipment - such as VOIP and web-conferencing is important. Learning and even testing new equipment and ideas must be enjoyable.

- **Empowering** - Mentoring and coaching of online ESL learners are very important. Sometimes empowering students can just mean giving words of encouragement every now and then.
How can you be an online ESL teacher?

Things to prepare in advance

To get started, you already know that you need a computer, microphone or headset, a webcam, and internet connection.

Before you find students, you should prepare some other important things first. Some of these are:

- **Introduction file** – you could make a PowerPoint file with your picture (optional), pictures and details about you, your family, job experiences, travel experiences, hobbies, country, and other things you find important to share with your students. Then you can email this to your student and discuss this on your first meeting. The first meeting is usually just an introduction class or getting-to-know each other. You should also prepare a list of questions that you could ask the student and this will also help you gauge the student’s level.

- **E-books** - There are many websites where you can download e-books for free. If you have ESL books in your collection, you can just scan and compile them. You should try to compile as many learning materials as you can because your students may vary in age and level. Here are some websites that offer free downloadable e-books.

• **Payment account system** – You should set up a payment system and inform your students to have one as well. Check with your students what the available payment systems in their country are. PayPal has been proven safe and effective.

• **Attendance Record** – You should make a file for your students’ attendance both on paper and disk.

• **Download the web application you will use** – You could download Skype or Google talk because they are the easiest to use. More discussion about these will be tackled as you read on.

**Online support during classes**

Although online ESL classes are generally one-on-one, teachers and students don’t have to be and should not feel alone and isolated within the duration of the ESL program. Depending on the setup chosen by the teacher, many people can provide the range of support necessary to make the ESL class more successful. This support can include:

• technical assistance,
• administrative assistance,
• instructional design assistance,
• counselling, and
• help for special needs.

A well organized distance learning program will have properly trained staff to handle each of these types of support. This will not only assist the teacher to in easily carrying out the class, it will also prevent the student from being lost in this relatively new experience.
Who is the virtual student?

Finding students

The big question: How do you start? Finding your first student would not be as easy as you think. It would take some time and patience to be successful with it. Here are some tips on how you could find students:

- **Post ads on internet sites** telling about your experience, qualifications and contact information. There are some sites that allow you to post ads for free. Here are a few of them:

  - [http://teachers.net/classifieds/tutorswanted/](http://teachers.net/classifieds/tutorswanted/)

- **Register to websites** where you can post your resume and possible students would see it. Some examples of these are:

  - [http://ontue.com/](http://ontue.com/)
  - [http://www.worldwideworkathome.com/teaching.html](http://www.worldwideworkathome.com/teaching.html)
  - [http://www.tutor.com/apply](http://www.tutor.com/apply)

- **Volunteer teaching for free**. There are some websites that give way to free online teaching. If the student would like you, he/she may offer you a paid teaching job or even refer you to his/her friends or relatives.

  - [http://www.teacherjames.com/](http://www.teacherjames.com/) is an example of a site where you can teach as a volunteer.
• **Post on Social Networking Sites.** Since it is very easy nowadays to get connected to almost everyone, you can use social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, and others to broadcast that you are looking for a student and that you are TESOL certified. Through some connections, you might just get a chance to reach someone who needs an English teacher.

**Your first meeting with students**

A cardinal rule that expert educators will always say is *Know your students.* Online teachers need to remember the importance of involving students in any lesson preparation. Ultimately, helping students learn English effectively by keeping their learning styles, goals, and interests in mind is what every teacher must keep their focus on.

The best way to get input from your students is by taking a survey, or preparing a questionnaire for your students to fill out. Keep the questionnaire simple and focused. Here is an example:

1. What are the students learning goals?
   - What are the learning goals and expectations of student(s)?
   - What specific subject areas do they need help with? Some examples includes filling in forms, ordering from a menu, or asking for directions.
   - What specific parts of the four language skill do they need help in most? Reading, writing, listening or speaking?

2. What teaching approaches work best for your students?
   - Do students learn best through dialogue, oral presentation, debate, grammar analysis, group work etc?
- How long can they spend on their homework, and what can you do to provide support?

You can administer these questionnaires as a form for your students to fill out, or you can fill in the questionnaire as you get to know your students on their first day of class.

Ignoring this initial step is not recommended. Without spending time getting to know your students, you will not be able to establish rapport with them. Students also tend to find it difficult when disclosing information about themselves or the problems they are struggling with if a foundation of trust is not first created.

Here are some suggestions for one-on-one introduction:

- You should begin by briefly introducing yourself and your educational experiences. You can even guess as to how these experiences can help you relate to and even help your student.

- Share you work and personal experiences, your peers, volunteer activities you have participated in, business ventures, travel experiences and so on - any "real-world" experiences that you think relates to your student or to the subject you are tutoring.

After letting the student know a little about you, ask questions about the student and his or her background. If possible try to relate what you learn about your student and use it in the tutoring session. When explaining a concept for example, you could give examples from what you learnt of the student’s favourite sports or hobbies. Relating the material builds trust and shows that you are interested in knowing your student personally. A foundation of trust also builds confidence that may even help your student to increase his or her rate of learning comprehension.

Here are some possible starting questions:

- Who is his or her favourite teacher?
- What is his or her major or favourite subject?
• Who are his or her peers at school?
• What are his or her favourite activities, hobbies, likes and dislikes?

When getting to know your student, it’s also important to leave time, either in the beginning or towards the end of the tutoring session to ask your student about his or her concerns and questions. This will further aid you in preparing a focused lesson plan for your next tutoring session.
What are the tools for ESL teaching?

**Skype** is the most convenient web application to use as of the moment. It’s free and easy to use. You can also use the web cam and screen sharing which is very helpful especially for kids.
**Tips in using Skype:**

- Uncheck the “Start Skype when computer starts” before you log in so you would just be online when you need to.
- Change your status to “Do not disturb” if you are engaged in a class.
- If you typed something wrong in the chat box, you can edit it or remove it by right-clicking on your message and choosing “edit message” or “remove message”.
- Call the echo/sound test service first before beginning your class to check if the audio is in its proper setting.
- Messages won’t be seen unless both parties are online at the same time. So don’t send messages to your students if they are offline and also advise them the same.

**Google talk** is also a good tool to use in your online tutoring. This could also be your next resort if Skype would have some problems. You could also use the webcam in this application but the screen sharing would have some fees. If you would like to have screen sharing in G Talk, you would have to download “Yuuguu”. You can check out their website to see their pricings and promos.
Tips in using G-Talk

- You should have a Gmail account.

- Video call is not available in the Google talk software. If you would need to use the webcam, you should log in to Gmail and sign in to chat from there. You should see a video icon next to your name and your student’s name which means both are ok for video call. If you only see a green dot and not a video icon, then you can’t use the webcam.

- Unlike Skype, you cannot send files in G-talk so you just have to send files by email.
What are the strategies for effective ESL teaching?

Your responsibilities as an online tutor

What you’ve learned so far in this TESOL course – choosing topics, setting measurable objectives, formulating tasks, creating relevant assignments – all apply online. The essential competencies you need to develop particularly involve adapting lifelong familiar teaching habits to a technologically immersive environment. All these take time, energy, patience, and a willingness to try new teaching strategies and new tools. Since you will be teaching virtually, it is necessary that you know what your responsibilities are as well as the Do’s and Don’ts in this field.

1. Be present and punctual at all times. Try not to be absent as much as possible because students might lose interest and find another teacher if you have an attendance problem. It would also help if you know your students’ contact details so in case you can’t meet them or you’re running late, you can send them a message beforehand.

2. Develop a set of expectations. It’s good that you tell them your own expectations about their attendance and participation in class. But don’t make it sound like you are implementing strict rules. Although we have to be authoritative, students should still feel comfortable with us and don’t feel that we are being authoritarian. It also pays off to know your students’ expectations in the beginning of your class. This will help you in dealing with them and in choosing the right lessons for them.
3. **Use time wisely.** Most of the students will base their payment per 10 minutes. Some study for 30 minutes, an hour or even an hour and a half. Every minute counts so don’t waste a single bit of it. Some students would just want to have free talk but be sure that the student still talks 80% of the time. If the class is just for 20 minutes, be sure to include an activity that they could finish in one class.

4. **Ask for informal feedback.** In schools, universities, or teaching centres, the administration would know how well the teacher is doing based on the evaluations given by students. If you will be teaching online as a freelancer, you’d have to ask your students yourself after a few sessions. You could ask if they have any suggestions or comments about the way you teach, if there’s anything they’d like to change or improve or if there’s anything that they don’t like at all. Transparency is a key factor in developing good relationships with your students.

5. **Prepare.** Students know if you’re not ready by the tone of your voice and if you are digressing. It is a mortal sin for any teacher to come to class unprepared. In extreme cases, if you were not able to prepare your lesson, you should think fast of an activity that they could do to accomplish something by the end of the class. It could be a speaking activity about their weekend, about the news or about their family or job. If your student is a child or a beginner, a simple game would do.

6. **Give feedback.** Students would love to hear how they are doing in your class – if they are indeed improving or not. Always try to give positive feedback to your students especially to the young ones but don’t over praise them. For adults, they already appreciate constructive feedbacks. One way of doing this is sending an email after the class and telling them how well they did in the class that day and also reminding them of your corrections or the vocabulary/expressions they learned.

7. **Assist them.** Some students would study online because they are working, studying or applying for a job. As facilitators of learning, we should assist them in any field where they need our assistance. Some
students would need help in interviews, taking exams, travelling or even business meetings. We should do some research, find helpful e-books and discuss them in class.

8. Assess them. Before the class ends, be sure to give your reminders to your student (grammar corrections, new vocabulary words learned, new expressions learned and the words that they need to practice pronouncing). While the class is ongoing, it helps to have a notepad ready so you can just type your reminders there which could be given as a wrap-up activity. The next day, ask them again about these reminders to check if they remember. Every Monday, it’s good to review all the reminders from the past week. For kids, the review could be done every end of the month. Prepare a PowerPoint file or pictures in Paint with almost all the important lessons from that month. Be sure to make fun activities as children don’t feel so good when taking tests.

9. Make your students happy. You might wonder why this is considered a responsibility. If your students don’t feel happy and satisfied, what do you think will happen? Although not all of us are born with a funny character, we could still make our students happy by making the class lively as much as possible. We could also make them satisfied by meeting their expectations and helping them with their goals. In fact, if a student is happy with the way you teach, there’s a huge possibility that he/she will refer you to a friend or a relative. This could lead to having more and more students as time goes by. Studies also show that the probability of faster and more effective learning occur when students are not stressed.

10. Keep your students informed. Having a record of your students’ attendance and payment is very important. Some of your students would be too busy or uninterested to have a record of their own. An excel file could be very useful for tallying your students’ attendance. At the end of every month, be sure to send them a copy of it so they know how much they should pay. Some students would pay in advance and some would pay at the end of every month. It’s also important that you keep a printed
copy of your records, a notebook for instance, just in case something bad happens to your computer files.

You should also inform your students regarding your attendance policy. Absences are inevitable so we should set some rules for our students. Be sure to inform them of these at the beginning of the class and email it to them so you have a proof that it is agreed upon. Keep a record and update them regularly.

Students also have the right to know about situations that may affect your lessons such as your health, family, educational background and other responsibilities. These would help them know you better and understand you in case something unexpected happens.

**How to teach effectively**

The following behaviours are associated with effective online teaching:

- providing timely and meaningful feedback,
- creating learning activities that engage students,
- keeping students interested and motivated,
- ensuring students interact with each other, and
- encouraging students to be critical and reflective.

These are usually the criteria for evaluating online teaching. For each criterion, you should define the minimal acceptable performance as well as exemplary performance. Keeping these in mind will help the online teacher do well in every class.
**Online teaching strategies**

Certain teaching strategies are associated with effective online courses. These include:

- student-centred activities,
- facilitation and moderating,
- problem-based learning,
- collaborative learning, and
- peer evaluation.

While some teachers may be familiar with, and use these methods in their classroom teaching already, for many teachers these are new approaches they need to learn. However, before they can use them well in online teaching, they need plenty of opportunity to practice the strategies. Facilitation, or getting students to interact with each other and the content, is probably the most important strategy that online teachers need to employ.
What is the online ESL program like?

**Online syllabus**

A curriculum framework provides instructors with clear goals and measurable objectives for making creative, focused and results-oriented syllabi and lesson plans that improve learning. A great curriculum framework is a powerful tool for student retention.

Individual lesson plans should be made on the syllabus for each course. Taken together, the framework, syllabus and lesson plans *are* the curriculum.

**Sample Course Syllabus**

COURSE TITLE: ______________________

DESCRIPTION:

Instruction has been designed to provide students with challenging instruction, practice and homework. We will use the assigned text books listed below in the course outline. Instruction will focus on enhancing and integrating student reading, writing, speaking, listening, and vocabulary skills.

STUDENTS WILL:

- Increase vocabulary
- Raise reading scores
- Expand writing skills
- Develop speaking and listening skills

REQUIRED TEXTS:
Online teaching materials

The materials used in online courses can be provided or developed by teachers themselves. Even if there are thousands of available materials online, teachers should customize or supplement them based on their students’ needs. The following are some of the considerations:

- Creating online materials is very time consuming and usually requires specialized design skills and use of authoring tools,
- Ownership or copyright of materials usually resides with the institution not individuals, and
- Online materials need to be matched to curriculum standards and state/federal requirements.

For these and many other reasons, it is probably unrealistic for teachers to develop their own online teaching materials, although there are certain aspects, such as lesson plans or student handouts that may be done by teachers themselves. There are extensive collections of course materials available online that teachers should become familiar with during their training and encouraged to use in their teaching activities.
Adapting Lesson Plans

When teaching English on the internet, many online tutors usually tailor their curriculum and lesson plans to meet the needs of their students. If you find that you have to follow a set textbook, there may be times when you have to tweak and adapt the textbook lesson plans to meet the needs of your students.

Following an approved textbook may be an easy way to conduct classes, it may be on par with set policy, but it may fail to meet the student’s actual learning needs and goals. In addition, it places unnecessary restrictions on teachers from exploring and developing their unique teaching style - teaching styles that may be based either on personal preferences or on current research and educational beliefs.

Spend about 30 minutes to 1 hour before class reviewing what the learning needs of your students are. It is important to do so to be effective in teaching English on the internet. Think about your student’s interests and language learning goals, and how you can adapt what you have towards meeting these needs.

Incorporating materials that target the four language skills - reading, writing, listening and speaking – is also essential. While in an actual classroom setting it is easy to simultaneously combine the four language skills, it is more difficult to do so when teaching online. One way to include these skills is to incorporate them into your agenda so that you can focus on them.

Teaching English in an online learning environment stimulates the student’s visual and auditory senses, making learning and retention a more efficient and productive process. Writing tends to disrupt this process. Listening, reading and speaking on the other hand can be easily integrated into an online class.
How can I enhance my online ESL lessons?

Activities to use in online tutoring

Even though we are not physically present with our students, there are still many activities that could be done. Games are also very helpful in letting the students enjoy and to pass the time if in case you have no planned lesson. Check the internet for millions of resources that you find suitable for your students. The following are some activities that have been proven to be effective in an online class.

Listening activities

1. Cloze activity – Songs

Level: intermediate and above

Preparation: Download mp3 songs; get a copy of the lyrics; change some words into blanks. Send the mp3 file and the lyrics sheet with blanks to the student via email before the class.

In-class: Let the student listen to the song and instruct him to pause the audio file after every line. Only 1-2 blanks are advisable per line. Praise the student for every correct answer.

2. Comprehension activity

Level: Upper intermediate and above

Preparation: Open the site http://esl-lab.com/
Choose the story that you think would be best for your student.

In-class: Click the play button to let the student listen to it. Be sure to discuss the vocabulary words first so in case the student doesn’t know some, you could teach them first. You could also let the student listen to the audio file again with the script. Click the “Quiz Script” above and send the link to your student so he could listen while reading if he likes. You could also use the questions in that site to test the comprehension of your student.

3. Dictation activity

Level: any

Preparation: Have a list of words (or sentences if your student level is high).

In-class: Read the list of words or sentences aloud once and ask the student to type whatever he heard in the chat box. This would allow you to assess the listening and spelling skill of your student.

Speaking activities

1. Related words

Level: intermediate and above

Preparation: word categories

In-class: Think of a category or any word where there could be many related words. e.g. Food, woman, birthday. You and the student would take turns in giving a related word for the chosen category. E.g. (Food – apple, banana, delicious, plate, etc) (Woman – mother, pretty, shoes, etc). Each of you should give an answer within 5 seconds or else the other one gets a point. Also, if a word was repeated, a score will be given to the other one. Tally the scores.
2. Picture description

Level: intermediate and above

Preparation: Choose a picture from the internet. Be sure that it is not offensive and clean.

In-class: Show the picture to the student by sending the URL to him or showing your screen. Ask the student as many sentences/verbs/adjectives that he can give based on that picture. It will actually depend on the lesson or activity. If you prefer to focus on vocabulary, you could take turns in giving nouns/adjectives about the pictures and if one can’t give a word within 5 seconds, the other should get a point.

3. Hangman

Level: Beginner-Upper beginner (kids)

Preparation: Paint program

In-class: Your topic will be the category. If your topic is about parts of the house, then you could think of anything that can be found inside the house. Share your screen to your student and draw lines corresponding to every letter of your word. Your student will guess the first word and tell him to ask “Is there a letter ___?” For every incorrect letter, write it down and draw one part of the hangman.
What must I do after my lessons?

Evaluating your lessons is an essential part of the teaching and learning process. It is advantageous on both the part of the teacher and the student. In general, evaluating your classes every so often provides an idea on how effective you are as a teacher and how much you have helped your student achieve his or her learning goals. It provides a continuous guide to handling your classes in the future and is a great tool towards your own professional development. The following are some of the goals:

**For the Teacher:**
- To have a better sense of what’s happening in the students’ lives so that we can build on that in class
- To know which activities engage them
- To address short-term problems
- To understand each student’s measure of success.

**For the Students:**
- To see the collection of activities
- To recognize how and when English is used outside of class (and how to extend those activities)
- To separate personality (notably the teacher’s) from class work, to be able to critique the activities without anyone feeling defensive
- To help determine the direction of the class
- To isolate problems so they become workable
- To identify individual growth and successes
- To learn to set (and articulate) short term goals.
What are some tips in online ESL tutoring?

Most of the things you’ll need to know about starting out as an online ESL tutor have been discussed in this manual. However, experienced online teachers will often agree on the cliché saying that Experience is the best teacher. That’s why it is very important to keep yourself in constant communication with those who have been in this industry ahead of you. The following do’s and don’ts are just a few of what we as experienced online teachers would say about teaching ESL online:

Do’s:

- Make sure your internet connection is stable; your computer is in good condition and your microphone/headset or webcam are all working properly.
- Speak clearly – not too fast nor too slow.
- Use simple/common English words (depending on the level of the student).
- Check the websites before showing them to your students
- Open the materials you will use before the class starts (e-book, websites, attendance details, notepad for corrections)
- Open dictionary website or Google translate to help you better understand your students and vice versa.
- Make sure that the place where you will teach is quiet and has good lighting if in case your student wants to have a webcam involved.
Don’ts:

- If the student can’t understand you, don’t make your grammar wrong just to be understood. Try to show pictures on the website or Google Translate if they really can’t understand.

- If your student is using a webcam, don’t take a snapshot unless he/she permits so.

- Don’t divulge private information about your students to others especially to your other students, even if they don’t know each other.

- Don’t correct every error especially when they are talking continuously for it would break the momentum.

- Don’t force your student to have an English name in case he/she doesn’t have one yet.

- Try not to sound that you are tired, weak or sleepy even if you really are. The students might not see your face but if they hear it from your voice, they would feel that you are not interested in teaching them. Try to still sound lively as much as possible.

Congratulations! Now you’re all set to start tutoring online!