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Michelle Maxom

English as a Foreign Language teacher
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*Teaching English as a
Foreign Language*

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Foreign Language*

FOR
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by Michelle Maxom

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About the Author

Michelle Maxom began teaching part-time in 1997 after doing an intensive Trinity TESOL certificate. She later moved to Italy where she furthered her studies in EFL and honed her skills working with students of all ages and from a wide variety of backgrounds. She toured secondary schools and gave seminars in Caribbean literature and Britain's multi-ethnic culture showing how the English language can open doors and minds. On returning to the UK she took on the post of Director of Studies at a central London EFL school, bringing it to accreditation by the British Council for the first time and learning how to work behind the scenes in the industry. She has made an instructional film for Thomson ELT and become a specialist in one-to-one courses. Since becoming a freelance teacher/trainer Michelle has delivered work experience programmes for trainee TEFL teachers, taught on intensive TEFL courses in person and tutored those taking distance learning courses. She is a member of the College of Teachers.

Michelle loves voluntary work, finding out about other languages and working at home by the river Thames.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Mrs Keturah Samuels, her children past and present and all my family members who approach life with such faith, courage and grace.

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Introduction

The English language is officially big business. There could be as many as a billion students learning English around the world at this time and that is reason enough to consider moving into Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). However, when you combine this with the freedom the job gives you to move around the world and earn your keep, the case for TEFL gets even stronger. While English speakers move out to different lands, students of English migrate to other parts of the globe in search of a better life and new horizons.

Teaching English is something people do when they are ready to change their lives and this book gives you some of the basic tools you need to make that happen.

Most people who speak the language well can teach others to some degree. We do it all the time with children and with foreign friends. We explain words and concepts to each other on a daily basis. TEFL is an extension of what we do naturally and this book helps you zoom in on your language skills and structure them. People often surprise themselves by discovering that even without attending months and years of language study, they can teach. You are probably no different.

About This Book

I have been teaching English for many years now and I have found it an entirely rewarding experience. I have met the most fascinating people and had a hand in helping others reach their goals. My goal in this book is to help you enjoy TEFL too by giving you the confidence and know-how to get a job and deliver effective, engaging lessons.

You could read the book from cover to cover before deciding whether TEFL is for you. If you do, you will have a solid overview of the skills involved in teaching English well. On the other hand, you could use it as a resource that you dip into whenever you need some input because your lessons are falling a bit flat or you are short of ideas. The table of contents will point you to specific areas of concern or maybe even areas you have never thought about but should have.

A book of this size can't cover all the different ways of planning and delivering a lesson. There are probably as many teaching techniques as there are

TEFL teachers, so I have chosen to present the tried and tested path to solid courses. If you do come across other effective ways to help students don't discard them because they are not included here. Use *TEFL for Dummies* as a starting point. Hopefully it will inspire some great ideas of your own.

I should also mention that this is not a photocopyable resource book with ready made lesson plans. The aim is to show the kinds of activities and techniques you can use with your classes, adapting them to your own situation.

This book is not strictly applicable to teaching in language schools which have their own trademark methodology and materials. In such cases the schools will expect you to teach in very defined ways with little room for other techniques.

Conventions Used in This Book

Throughout this book I use a few conventions which you need to know about up front:

- ✔ I use the words *student* and *learner* interchangeably.
- ✔ Presentation, Practice and Production written with capital Ps refer to specific stages of a lesson, not general concepts.
- ✔ *English* refers to whatever is normal in most English speaking countries not just England. There are so many countries where English is an official language that I have chosen to keep it simple in this way.
- ✔ Web addresses appear in the book in monospace type, so they stand out.
- ✔ Sidebars – boxed text on a grey background – are chunks of material which you might find useful as background knowledge, or as enhancements to the techniques you read about in the main text. Fun and helpful, but not essential reading: skip them if you want.

Foolish Assumptions

I wrote this book with the intention of helping people who want to teach English for the first time, or who are inexperienced at the job and need some tips to improve their teaching.

I assume these things about you:

- ✔ You are a native speaker or proficient in speaking English.
- ✔ You are not a fully qualified TEFL teacher although you may have an initial qualification.

- ✔ You want to do a responsible job in the classroom and give students value for money.
- ✔ You are more interested in the mechanics of teaching than the methodology behind language learning.
- ✔ You are not enrolled on a full TEFL course leading to a diploma or MA.

Please note that this book is not for you if you just want to improve your own English. The focus is on how to explain language points to students not simply to you, the reader.

How This Book Is Organised

This book is organised into six main parts, and two Appendixes. The parts cover the TEFL industry, putting together lessons and their content, and then to the courses as a whole.

Part I: Getting Started In TEFL

In this first section of the book I cover the information you need to know about the kind of people who go into TEFL and what the job can do for them. I help you to decide whether to only teach for a couple of summers or as a career, by explaining what the job entails. I tell you what the students expect from you too. You find out about the qualifications and training you need, if any, as there are different kinds of courses you can enrol on. As well as this, I include the points you need to keep in mind if you are moving abroad to teach. This is an introduction to the industry as a whole.

Part II: Putting Your Lesson Together

For most people who are new to teaching or have never done it before, the task of finding a point to teach and then working out how to package the information into an effective lesson is rather overwhelming. In these chapters I break the lesson down into different stages, known as Presentation, Practice and Production so that there is a clear structure for learning. There is also advice on how long the stages should last and who should be doing the talking. I include lots of examples and suggestions for classroom activities, whether you use a course book or design your own materials. You find out when and how to correct the students' errors and keep them in check during the lesson through good classroom management.

Part III: How to Teach Skills Classes

In language courses there are four main skills which need to be included to make students truly proficient. These are listening, speaking, reading and writing. In this part of the book I take a look at each skill in isolation, showing you how to put a lesson together which is dedicated to one skill. These lessons have a slightly different structure from grammar and vocabulary ones. There is also a chapter on pronunciation which is so vital to good communication that there are phonetic symbols and particular techniques for assisting students to speak clearly.

Part IV: The Grammar You Need to Know – and How to Teach It

Grammar for foreign students is the topic of this section. It is the area which so many native speakers dread teaching, not having done much of this at school themselves. Although this book is not an exhaustive reference on the English grammar, here I cover most of the questions you need answered in order to hold your own in the classroom. You can use this part of *TEFL for Dummies* along with your dictionary and reference works if you want to go deeper. So, you review the way sentences are put together with subjects, verbs and objects. Then you find out how to improve your students' sentences with adjectives, adverbs and conjunctions. I present each tense explaining what it does and what it looks like. Finally there is a chapter covering modal verbs, phrasal verbs and conditional structures. There are lots of suggestions on practising grammar too.

Part V: What Kind of Class Will I Have?

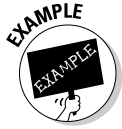
First in this section I provide advice on using tests to get students in the right class and how to use testing progressively during the course. Following this there are sections on different kinds of courses and advice on handling them. You learn about one to ones classes, business English, teaching young people from small children to adolescents and exam classes. Finally, I compare two kinds of classroom situations. The first is the class with students who all speak the same language and the second is the class with students from all around the world. I take a look at one nationalities of students in detail. As a TEFL teacher you need to be ready for anything!

Part VI: The Part of Tens

Part VI is the part of tens which gives you ten tips each on a couple of TEFL issues. The first offers suggestions on making your lessons more lively and the second one looks at resources you can use to improve your teaching skills.

There are two appendixes offering you extra information. Appendix A gives you templates which help you plan, observe and assess lessons. Appendix B takes a brief look at popular locations around the world for TEFL teachers and gives you an idea of what to expect from the country and the job.

Icons Used in This Book



When you see this icon, you know you'll be getting a real-world illustration of a language teaching idea or situation to help you grasp what's going on.



This icon draws attention to points you should try to lodge in your memory.



This icon highlights helpful ideas for making your lessons run more smoothly.



If you want practical suggestions for how to go about teaching a particular point, look out for this icon.



This icon alerts you to common mistakes among newer teachers and suggests pointers to help you avoid problems.

Where to Go from Here

If you have never taught English before but are considering it as a source of income, the best place to start is probably Part I. That way you'll know what the job is before you start digging deeper. For example Chapter 3 tells you about who is eligible to teach.

If you are living abroad and have already examined the local demand for English lessons you probably know who your prospective students will be. In that case, take a look at Part VI as you can start finding out about specific teaching situations. You could browse Chapter 19 on business English, for example.

Existing teachers should already know something about their shortcomings, be it explaining grammar (Part IV) or correcting students (Chapter 7), so you can find individual chapters which deal with your weak points. Perhaps your boss has just given you a new kind of course which is making you nervous and you want to know the best approach: Try Part VI.

Be confident as you proceed. There are many things in your favour:

- ✔ You already know English. You have probably been learning it since infancy.
- ✔ You have probably taught someone something before and seen them apply what they have learned.
- ✔ Most people who start out in TEFL are not academics. They just enjoy travelling and like people but they manage to pull off great courses. You can too.
- ✔ If you gradually go through this book you will have all the information you need to get started.

Part I

Getting Started in TEFL

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"Of course I've had experience teaching English as a foreign language. My corgi understands over 20 commands."

In this part . . .

This part covers the TEFL basics. Here's where I tell you all you need to know about why TEFL is a great idea and what the job can do for you, whether you want to teach whilst travelling round the world, or as a full-time career.

This part tells you what to expect in the TEFL environment and what the students expect from you, too. You should also dip in here to find out about the qualifications and training you need to meet your requirements and those of prospective employers. I also include the points you need to bear in mind if you're planning to move abroad to teach.