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OrientNow's...

China Now! Teaching pack and guide

This pack includes:

- Guide to finding jobs on the net
- What pitfalls to look out for
- Meeting friends in China.
- Anything else that we think is useful!

OrientNow Wants to make your time in China a breeze, so follow our advice, let us help you get your TEFL, get your job and enjoy this amazing country

Guide to finding jobs on the net

There are hundreds of jobs available for TEFL qualified teachers in China. In every part of China there is a demand for foreign teachers. So, where do you find these jobs? Here are a few places where you can start

www.eslcafe.com Daves ESL café is the mother of all ESL job boards. Schools have to pay to put an ad up on here, so they have probably had a fair bit of experience with teachers already. Also a decent forum section for ESL stuff.

www.mykindachina.com A website for teachers in China who are looking for both part time and full time work. With regular features on China news as well as teaching videos and news, it is a good place to get keep fresh with teaching news.



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www.eslteachersboard.com A website with hundreds of jobs. Jobs are continuously placed here and have a wider selection than escafe. The unmoderated forums give will give you a chance to see what schools should be avoided.

What pitfalls to look out for

There are sharks in any industry, anywhere. And the ESL business in China is no exception. Still, with some solid research and most importantly a bit of common sense, you will have the time of your life in China.

Before you head off

1. Check out the school. Find out if they are a franchise, or a government school or a kindergarten with 50 kids in a class. A google search may come up with something from a past teachers comments or just posting a message on a chat forum for ESL teachers will come up with something.
2. Speak to the boss in ENGLISH! Generally if you run an English school you should be able to speak English. If the boss can't, then I doubt he would be able to know how to work with a foreigner, let alone prepare an English teaching curriculum and classes.
3. Try to get in contact with another foreign teacher (both past and present) who is at the school and find out about the school/staff etc.
4. Think of the area you are heading to: if you don't like experiencing a completely different way of life then don't go for a small rural town in China. If you hate big cities and pollution then give that job in Shanghai a miss.



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When you are here

1. Come with some money. \$500usd can easily get you by in a small town (and a bigger city if you watch your money).
2. The school MUST pick you up at the airport and organise transfers etc.
3. On your first day NEVER NEVER NEVER give you passport. (read: nightmare schools). Talk to your boss, and make sure every part of the contract is right. Some people get nervous about this but if you want to be completely covered then the contract MUST state these:
4. What days off a week you have: this must be clearly stated.
5. Working hours: what hours a day you must work, what you get paid for, what you much do at school.
6. Penalties: find out what happens if you are sick or late to work. If you are late to class (a few minutes) then you will get penalised. However, you should not get penalised more than an hours salary. We know you are an honest worker and will never be late, but it does happen. Just protect yourself.
7. What holidays and time off you have: the dates must be written down as well as if you will get paid for them. Also, if you don't have classes during holiday time, check to see if you have to 'make up' classes later in the month.
8. Visa: the contract MUST say that the school will pay for your medical test AND any costs relating to your Visa? It will also state when you can get your passport back.
9. A credible school will already have a contract written in clear English stating all the details. If you do feel comfortable with the school but have a few issues let them know. If they think you are good and worthwhile they will help you with these. Remember, the school has done the hard work of getting you to their school, they would be stupid to just see you go.



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And finally: first impressions are usually right. If you arrive at the school and you just don't feel right about it, then something is probably wrong. Keep your negotiations on a friendly level and you will be fine. At worst you can walk away and wait for them to call back. If you start yelling and demanding things from the contract then your Chinese boss will just dig in and won't budge. And you won't win

Beware of:

Agents masquerading as schools. Often agents will pretend that they are an actual English school. They send you a bogus contract, and tell you to buy a plane ticket. Then, when you arrive in China they inform you that the job is no longer available (due to "renovations", natural disasters such as a "fire" or "earthquake" etc.) but not to worry because their best friend, who also happens to be a school owner, also needs a teacher. Yes, it's in a remote region nowhere near the previous job offer, but the salary is pretty much the same and you're sure to love it. Two months into the teaching stint you find the salary sucks, the position is unbearable, and it's gonna be hard enough getting your passport back let alone any remuneration for the work you've already put in.

How to not be a sucker in the above scam: Don't consider contracts that don't have phone numbers on them. If they do have phone numbers, call the school. Any vaguely professional school will have receptionists answering the phone saying, "Hello, Mickey Mouse English School, I'm Jennifer, how may I help?"



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1. Schools that can't offer you a reference from either a current or previous teacher. Of course, it will happen that some schools are getting a foreign teacher for the first time, either because they've just opened or because they've decided to add a foreigner to their staff of Chinese English teachers for the first time. If this is the case then that's information that you need to know. Brand new schools are not necessarily worse than established schools, especially if they have franchised a successful brand. It often turns out that if you're the first foreigner to work in a school then you'll be treated with great respect (mainly because the owners are still naive to the fact that a large percentage of teachers doing the rounds in Asia are simply backpackers pretending to be educators). Note that if it turns out you're being recruited to a newly opened school or a school hiring a foreigner for the first time, it's necessary to make sure that you'll be provided with a one-year working or business visa.
2. Schools with vague, ambiguous or incomplete contracts. Here are some relevant excerpts from the US Department of State's website

Many Americans have enjoyed their teaching experience in China; others have encountered significant problems. Some Americans travel to China under a contract with promises of good salary, bonuses and other amenities, only to find themselves in tenuous situations often lacking funds to return to the United States. The U.S. Embassy cannot act as a legal advisor or negotiate business or personal grievances on behalf of individual citizens. Americans experiencing problems can contact the Embassy's American Citizens Services Unit at telephone (86-10) 6532-3431, extension 5648, 5028, 5609 or 5344, or via e-mail to AmCitBeijing@state.gov to report problems with school employment contracts.



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If you are considering teaching English in China should check that their contracts specify the maximum number of classroom hours per day and per week, maximum workdays per week, and vacation periods. Americans teaching in China, particularly at newly established private secondary schools and private English training centers, have often found their employers unable or unwilling to honor contract terms or to assist in obtaining Chinese employment-based visas and other permits required for foreigners to teach lawfully in China.

Prospective teachers should always ask for references from other foreign teachers who have completed a contract teaching term and have returned to their home country. Prospective teachers should always demand that they receive a contract from their employer rather than from an agent or intermediary. These agents or intermediaries often receive a large portion of the monthly pay promised to the teacher, leaving the teachers without significant financial resources. These "fees" are sometimes not disclosed until after the prospective teacher arrives in China. To date, courts and police in many jurisdictions have refused to intervene in these cases on behalf of foreign teacher

Agents

Agents. Recruiters. Job placement. These words strike fear into nearly everyone who has taught English in China. These are the guys to avoid at all costs.

To enjoy your time in China its important to know who you are working for. Look on any ESL web page and you will come across recruiters. They are easy to spot as they usually offer too good to be true packages. But there is confusion about how the agents operate and what they do.



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There are two kinds of agents out there: **Personal Agents** and **Contract Agents**.

A personal agent (I call them 'easy prey agents') sets up schools/students for the foreign teacher and takes a cut out of their hourly pay.

What they usually do is work on behalf of Chinese primary schools and kindergardens. They will offer part time work, with a decent pay rate.

However, once the teacher starts he realises that its not the case.

Example: an agent comes up to you and tells "Hi, Ive just got a school that needs a part time teacher. Its a well paid part time job, teaching 3 hours a day at a down town school. The pay rate is 150rmb an hour."? That sounds ok, until you are at the school. You will be teaching for 40 minutes, have a 20 minute (unpaid for break) then another 40 minute class, another 20 minute break, then another 40 minute class, then another 40 minute class and another 20 minutes at the gate of the school so every parent can say "wow, this school has foreign teachers!". Then the agent will tell you: 'yes, you get 150rmb and hour for teaching hours. So as you worked 40minutes, that is 100rmb. So in total you will be paid 300rmb for 3 hours, not 450rmb'.

The schools they work for are usually government high schools and primary schools. Classes have about 40 kids who look at you as the substitute teacher. Remember when you were a kid and you had a substitute teacher? Its not fun. Also the hours change easily and close on short notice for classes to 'prepare for upcoming exams'. Or to prepare for 'upcoming police checks'

And if you complain? Well, unless you don't turn up next lesson nothing can be done. They don't have a contract with you, the school doesn't have a contract with you and in the end you wouldn't be bothered taking legal recourse over it.

These guys just go for new arrivals. They will hardly speak any English and will be very vague on any details of your work. They also wonder why they have such a huge turnover rate. Hmmm...



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The Second Kind: **Contract Agents**

I guess they are similar to personal agents. Most jobs on ESL websites are from recruiters/contract agents, who tell about how amazing 'their' school is, how great the conditions are and how life at their school is such a bed of roses. They also give themselves professional-sounding names such as 'China ESL Network' etc. so the foreign teacher comes to China, is met by this 'representative'/agent, taken to the school and suddenly the agent is never to be seen or heard of again. Why? Because the school pays these agents big money to get the foreigner to their school (in some backwater city), the agent receives the money and is off finding the next sucker. And how does the school boss claim the agents fee back? From YOUR salary!! They will tell you that your first few month's salary is reduced because of training etc. RUBBISH! That was the agents cut.

And why the hell would the agent want to help you there? If you leave then the school needs another teacher... and how do they find that teacher? The agent of course!!

Monthly salary

These agents specialise almost exclusively in government middle schools and kindergardens (its illegal to work in a government school) and will give you the crappiest accomodation possible. As you will be working in numerous schools around town you'll spend most of your money on taxis (which would never be paid for), and work for way less than someone in an English training centre.

What's Fair

China is a big country and has a never ending number of teaching positions. You should never feel pressured into signing a contract or hear someone saying 'this position is so great, you got to sign otherwise it will be taken!'.



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In the big 4 cities in China (Shanghai, Beijing, Shenzhen, Guangdong) you should be earning 7000rmb a month, with free accomodation. That should be a 24 hour week (no 'extra' hours). That is the norm and is ok but for a new arrival a contract of 8000rmb a month will put in in good stead. Part time work should be 130rmb and up FROM WHEN YOU START TILL WHEN YOU FINISH!

In second and third tier cities: I think in a very small city 5000rmb is a lot. A small town in woop-woop land, on 5000rmb for 25hrs of teaching would be huge. For a second tier city (Wenzhou, Nanjing, Xi'an, Harbin etc) 5000rmb is also decent, but try to look for 6000rmb. Anything more would be a steal! All of these positions must have free accomodation.

Protect Yourself and Your Income If you really think a school is dodgy, leave it. But if you want to pursue a school here are some good questions to ask:

1. Are you an agent for a middle school?
2. Are you getting a fee for introducing me to this job?
3. What are you paying me per hour?
4. what will I earn for the whole time I am at the school everyday?
5. How long have you been in business?
6. Before I agree to work at the school I need to see a detailed contract in English that I can discuss. Can you provide me with this?
7. During my contract, will I receive my pay from the school or from you?
8. How much will I be paid every month?
9. As a result of my accepting the job are you getting paid every month by the school? If so, how much?
10. How much will I be paid every hour?
11. As a result of my accepting the job are you getting paid every hour by the school? If so, how much?
12. Will you or the school issue a visa/work permit for me?



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Okay, Ive found 2 great jobs. One is teaching adults and one is teaching Kids. What do I go for?

Teaching adults should be a breeze. The idea of leaving the world of screaming kids sounds great, but its not until you have taught picky, demanding, boring and outright rude adult students that you realise that those screaming kids are really quite cute.

But, you have started teaching adults. The first month is a bit daunting. If you work for a large school (think Web, Only etc) you would have a set classplan so you dont need to follow this advice, but here is a rundown for anyone doing private classes or teaching business.

1. Your students dont go out on weekends. Dont even bother asking them what they did on the weekend. You will get a universal "I stayed at home" and a look that tells you "I really dont want to do this class but my company is telling me to."
2. No matter how much effort you put in, you will be criticised. This can be good, as you need to know how your students are going etc. Its just that creative criticism is usually drowned out by sheer criticism.
3. Some people just dont want to learn English. Teach Business English and you will have this problem. No matter how much energy you put into a class there are always students (and classes) that just dont like you. You will soon pick this up and my advice is: dont take it personally. Match their interest level and just talk to the whiteboard for an hour.
4. You dont really know what to teach. Kids are easier this way. If they at grade 4 level you teach them grade 4 English. They are always grouped in age or ability. Adults generally go in and out of classes so its hard to get a class dynamic. With time you will start getting this ability.

Dont get me wrong, teaching adults is good, but I do like teaching kids also.



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Here are some pointers to help you out.

1. Keep the class interesting. Get students to talk about some topics about work (RE: Their company's website, how to improve it etc), then something a bit fluffy (EG: Give a marketing speech on any product you wish you could invent) and then finish off with some 'Modern English'. Maybe watch a part of a US sitcom/TV show and discuss any useful words and phrases.

If you have a smarter, more vocal class, debates are great. But as mentioned before its hard getting people to talk.

2. Stay with what you think is right. Take some constructive criticism (it can be useful) but know when students are having a whinge. If you keep at what you want and think is best the majority of students will enjoy your classes and improve their English. Classes need structure and that means they need a strong teacher!

3. Stay fresh. Keep changing your classes. Use powerpoint, the internet etc.

4. Start making friends with the blackboard because there will be some classes were it will be the most vocal contributor!

5.

Meeting friends in China

You've got the job, done your research in the city you will call home for the next few months (at least!!), but you are worried that you wont make friends with anyone.



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Simply put, if you think you won't have any new friends then you won't have any new friends!

Being thrown into any strange situation means you will be one of two things:

1. Very lonely or 2. Meet the most amazing people in your life. Get out there and meet people. The best thing about China is that you meet people from all walks of life (both locals and foreigners) and it's the people that embrace everyone that is different that will have the best experience in China.

OrientNow!'s role post TEFL

So your TEFL qualified and we don't want to deal with you ever again right? Wrong! We have been in China for over 8 years and have seen fellow teachers who have succeeded, failed or at least had the best time of their life. Most are still here somewhere! Unlike most TEFL training programs who say "Thanks for your tuition, now your on your own, OrientNow! Provides:

- ✓ Contract review and independent analysis: Received a good contract but need someone to comb over all the fine details and give a fair comment on that school/position? Your TEFL trainer will review any cases and concerns you have and answer any questions that remain.
- ✓ School reviews and comments: Not sure about the school you are going to? OrientNow will answer all your questions regarding schools in China. It's a big country, so we might not know every school, but we will give you comments and feedback that we know either first hand or from trusted sources.
- ✓ Why trust us? OrientNow is a TEFL training centre. We specialize in TEFL training for teachers in China. That's our goal, that's our mission and that's what we do best. All our resources go to our training services and support. WE DON'T RECRUIT for schools/agents. We provide as much assistance to you as an independent source. We are proud of our independence and our dedication to TEFL training and support.



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Remember: No matter how long after you finish our course, keep checking our site for teaching updates, news and more fun stuff!