

# Preparing for the **CELTA** Course

So, after months or even years of deliberation you've decided to embark on the **CELTA course**. You've heard words like 'intensive', 'demanding' and 'stressful', but do you really know what you're getting yourself into? **Have no fear**, we have compiled the **essential information you need to know**. The truth is, everybody deals with the CELTA course differently for a number of reasons. Unsurprisingly however, on completion of the course trainees always mention those little things they wish they'd known beforehand. **Read, consider and, most importantly, enjoy your CELTA course knowing that you've armed yourself with the key advice and information you'll need to succeed.**

# Before the Application

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The application is where you have the opportunity to make a great first impression on the Tutors. It's therefore important that you think carefully about your options and ensure that you spend time really thinking about the key information you need to provide in order to be considered for the course.

- **Check that you understand what the CELTA entails** and why you are doing the course. There is **a lot to learn in a short space of time**, which makes it a very rewarding experience, but it is not easy.
- Do some research into the **types of work opportunities** you'll have after completing the CELTA course. **The possibilities are endless!**
- **Make sure you have the time and effort to dedicate to the course.** If you think you are already too busy, perhaps now is not the right time for you to do the course.

- Perhaps you don't have the time to commit to an intensive course, so the **part-time course might be more suitable for you**. Think about your options in terms of timing of the course, and how this will affect your other commitments.
- Once you have chosen a date for the course, **make sure you're fully available on those dates**. You won't be able to work at the same time.
- Whether you live or have found accommodation locally or live further away make sure that there is **good public transport connection** – driving is not an option. There are some park and rides on the outskirts of the city but **parking in San Sebastian is almost impossible**. Also, if you are using public transport from places like Bilbao or Vitoria you can still use the journey time productively for reading, thinking about tomorrow's lesson, finishing the assignment that's due in tomorrow...!
- Ensure that your **level of English is high** enough to complete the course. You need to have at least a **good C1 level with strong written and spoken English**. You will be required to produce various pieces of academic writing on the course and it goes without saying that **you need to provide accurate models of spoken and written English in front of students in class**.

# Before the Interview

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The interview is a key element in the application process, it's the time when tutors get to speak to you (whether face-to-face or via Skype) and **assess your suitability for the CELTA course**. There is, however, absolutely no need to be nervous, especially if you follow the top pre-interview tips below.

- **Devote sufficient time to the pre-interview task**; it'll give you a good idea of what tutors will ask you in the interview and is a good indication of the type of analysis you can expect on the course itself.
- Reflect on the types of question the tutor might ask you in the interview and how you are going to answer them. **In the interview you are likely to be asked why you have chosen to do the CELTA, what you already know about it**, your own language learning experience, any previous work and teaching experience you've had, and you'll discuss points from the application form and pre-interview task.

- This is the time to **make sure that your laptop has all the required programmes installed** (especially Microsoft Word) and that you are not going to encounter any problems days before the course starts.
- If your interview is going to be conducted by Skype, then you'll need to **make sure you have provided the Tutor with your Skype name and that you have a strong internet connection**. You'll need to be in a quiet place, free from any distractions.



- **Have a look at some grammar books** (if you have them) **or at online English grammar reference** websites such as this one from the **British Council**. There's no need to read all of the information in detail (you'd be there for days) but it's a good idea to have a quick look at the main areas such as tenses.
- **Think about what you'd really bring to the classroom as a teacher** and also what you'd bring to the group of fellow trainees you'd be working with on the course. Teamwork and support are essential elements of a successful CELTA course and it leads to happy trainees.
- **If you're not sure about an answer, it's not the end of the world.** After all, you're taking the CELTA course to learn how to be a teacher, the interview is meant to assess your current familiarity with the different elements covered on the course. If this happens, just **try to be calm and respond naturally**.



# Before the Course

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Now that you've proven to the tutors that you're ready to take on the challenge of the CELTA course, **it's time to think about what preparation will help relieve some of the pressure once you begin** and get stuck in to the lesson planning, teaching, assignments and input sessions.

- **Make sure your friends and loved ones are aware that you will be otherwise occupied for the duration of your course;** this may mean postponing social events, asking family and friends to ease the burden of some responsibilities and reminding them that **they may need to emotionally support you** when times get tough.
- Take yourself away to a quiet corner and revise the basics of English grammar. It would also be useful for you to **think about what grammar students are taught at different levels as you'll be teaching students with varying levels of English.** You can view a brief overview of the different levels and grammar requirements on various language learning websites. You'll thank yourself for this when you have to teach real students only a few days into the course.

- **Buy yourself some beautiful new stationery**; it will motivate you to stay organised on the course and will ensure that you don't end up drowning under piles of handouts and essential paperwork. **You will have to produce a well-organised portfolio** to be shown to the Cambridge Assessor at the end of the course, so keeping everything organised from day one really is important.
  
- If you are concerned about your knowledge of grammar, **it may be worthwhile signing up for some courses on websites such as [elt-training.com](http://elt-training.com)**. In fact, depending on the result of the interview we might recommend or ask you to sign up for the Grammar for Language Teachers course. **The site also has useful CELTA tool-kit videos** which could come in handy throughout the course, so **keep them bookmarked** for reference.
  
- Some previous trainees have found it useful to **sign up for the 30-day free trial of [scribd.com](http://scribd.com) just as the course starts**. This could save on photocopies and lessen the weight of your bag by getting digital copies of the books on your laptop/tablet.
  
- **Think about the different areas in which you will be developing over the course of the CELTA:**
  - **Learners and teachers**, and the teaching and learning context.
  - **Language analysis** and awareness.
  - Language skills: **reading, listening, speaking** and **writing**.
  - **Planning and resources** for different contexts.
  - **Developing teaching skills and professionalism**.



# During the Course

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**This is where the fun really begins!** Fasten your seatbelts, you could be in for a bumpy ride. **It's time to put all of your preparation into practice** and put on your teaching armbands. For some of you, this is the first time you'll have stood up in front of students, for others with teaching experience, it's about **taking the tutor's input and advice on board to ensure your teaching is the best it can be.** Yes, there will be times when you feel overwhelmed and like it'll never end; but believe us when we say, **it is worth it for the sense of satisfaction you get when you teach that final lesson and hand in that final assignment.**

- **Support your fellow course mates!** You're all going to be going through highs and lows and it is the support and advice of the other trainees that pulls everyone through to the end of the course. You will need to **work with your peers during input sessions and when planning lessons, so it's advisable to get a WhatsApp group together to keep in touch** with each other over the weekends and in the evening. Some trainees have even formed little study groups to help keep motivation high and to avoid distraction from other parts of their lives.

- **You must take regular breaks.** Even if it's just escaping the computer screen for a few hours on a Saturday morning, **your body and your mind need the time to rest and reset before getting back into assignments and lesson preparation.** If you're feeling stuck on something, taking a break (sometimes just the bus ride home) and coming back to the issue later with slightly rested eyes can help you overcome a lot of hurdles.
- **Find a willing assistant to be your designated proof-reader** – when you have been looking at that assignment on a screen for way too long it can be hard to really spot the errors.
- **Make sure you eat well and sleep for enough hours!** Everything is a lot more stressful when you've not eaten or you're tired. Yes, you are going to have a lot to do, but trust us when we say that sleeping and eating are important factors in the successful completion of the course.
- Input sessions may seem like a welcome break from teaching and planning your lessons, and at times it can prove difficult to fully concentrate on the information the tutor is providing. You have so much to take in and think about, it's understandable that sometimes the mind wanders. However, **it is essential to take comprehensive notes during these sessions; the information is invaluable for every other aspect of the course and the sessions themselves are given at particular points of the course to help with assignments to be completed that week.**

- As previously mentioned, **put all of your paper work from input sessions and your lessons in a folder so you can easily locate it and refer to it when completing assignments and preparing classes.** We cannot stress how important this is. Don't let us down.
- Keep reminding yourself that **it's totally worth the effort- try not to lose faith towards the end of the course.** You'll thank yourself for the **continued hard work and dedication** when you reach the final few days and realise you've done your best.

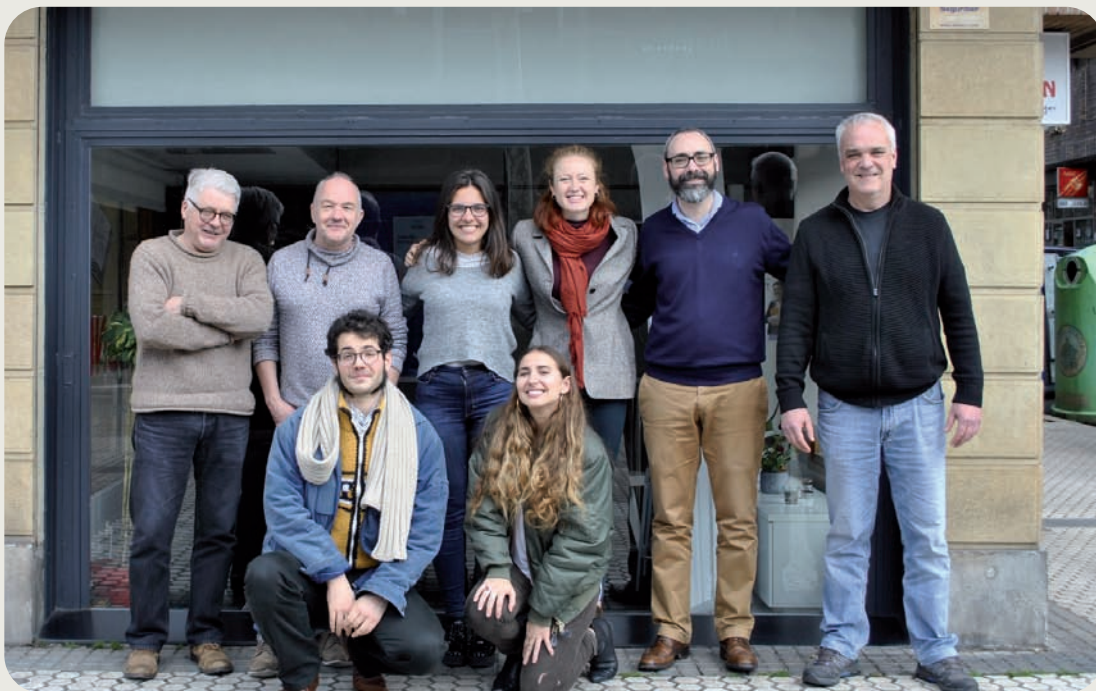


# After the Course and beyond!

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After the course has finished it may take you a while to get used to having some free time again, you may not even remember what life was like prior to the CELTA course. **Don't worry, the period of readjustment shouldn't take too long and soon it will seem like it was all just a very long and tiring dream.** Once you have slept for an entire weekend and have fully recovered, **your thoughts might turn to your future teaching career.** Here are some top tips on enjoying your life and your teaching post-CELTA.

- Reflect on the development you made throughout the CELTA course: **consider your first and last teaching practice lessons, and you'll realise how much you improved.**
- **Think about getting a wide range of teaching experience** early on in your teaching career, this way you'll be able to better assess where your teaching strengths lie and how you want your career to progress.



- **Travel the world!** The CELTA course enables you **to teach across the globe**, so if you have the urge to experience different cultures and see what the world has to offer then **go and spread your teaching wings**.
- **Create a network of teachers in your area.** Conferences and teaching events are a great way of meeting new people, gaining knowledge, developing a support network and getting a different perspective on teaching. **MacMillan ELT, Pearson English, The British Council and IATEFL are some good sources to Google.** If you are living away from home, then other English teachers can become more like family and can be a vital element in feeling settled and at home. **Your tutors and fellow CELTA trainees are a good place to start building up this network.**

- Don't forget to **ask for help if you are struggling**. You may feel like you're the only teacher who has ever experienced certain issues in the classroom, but **you're not alone!** Ask other teachers for advice, they've probably had to overcome the same problems and can be a sympathetic ear when you've had a rough day.

- **Share your ideas with others**; if you've done something in class that's worked well shout it from the rooftops! **Sharing is caring**, and you can make other teachers' lives easier by telling them about websites you've used, activities you've downloaded or created. **Creating an environment in which teachers share their ideas makes everyone's day-to-day life much more enjoyable** and ultimately is much more beneficial for the students we teach. **Happy teachers = happy students.**

There are a multitude of training and development courses you can sign up for online- these include webinars or specific courses on an area of teaching.

**Cambridge English and The British Council are two very good places to start.**

- **Why not come along to 'The Saturday Sessions', a series of teacher development sessions at our Teacher Training Centre in San Sebastián**, aimed at current teachers who want to develop their skills and expand their teaching network.

- If you are looking to progress in to different roles within the world of ELT, then you might like to **think about undertaking the DELTA or enrolling on a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) MA course**. These are both great ways of really refining your teaching knowledge and **equipping yourself with the skills needed to take on more responsibility and move your career forward**. Who knows, perhaps one day you'll be the one training new teachers as a tutor on a CELTA course, and you'll be able to pass on all this information to them. **It's like the circle of teaching life.**