



Teacher Portfolio & Preparation Series

TiPPS Sample Interview Questions

Job Interview Questions

(compiled from a TiPPS survey done on TESLJB-L@CUNYVM.CUNY.EDU)

- Tell us about your training (psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, theoretical linguistic)
- Do you have much research experience? In what areas?
- What is your philosophy of teaching?
- Tell us about your teaching experience.
- How would you describe your teaching style?
- Do you have any preferred texts?
- What qualities do you think make a good teacher? Which do you have?
- How do you deal with a large class?
- Describe a problem you have had in the area of class discipline and how you solved it.
- Could you develop individualized instruction packets? Would you? How would you go about it?
- Should "passing the TOEFL" be a driving force in the curriculum?
- Do you have much experience with _____ ? Give us some examples
 - needs analysis
 - curriculum design & implementation
 - materials development
 - testing design & evaluation
- What sort of administrative experience have you had?
- Could you give us an example of your _____ ?
 - organizational skills
 - administrative responsibilities
 - teacher training
- Why did you leave your last (teaching) position? How would you characterize your relationships there with other faculty and administrators? May we contact them for references?
- Have you traveled much within/outside the US?
- Have you experienced culture shock? How did you deal with it?
- How committed are you to teaching outside the US?
- How would you handle:
 - personal relationships with students?
 - authority issues
 - health problems (for jobs overseas)

- How do you feel about working with other teachers?
 - How would you teach a lesson on _____ (insert anything)?
 - How do you feel about sharing your materials with other teachers?
 - From your past experience, what are your strong and weak points in the classroom.
 - What would you do to improve upon your weak points?
 - In the class, how would you handle _____ (insert situation)?
 - NOTE: It is also important to have questions ready for the interviewers: to do research on the particular company or school before you go to an interview. If you show some genuine interest and knowledge, this could just put the ball in your court in times of decision making.
 - If we could offer a staff development workshop in an area of your choosing, what would it be? What would the workshop cover? If you were asked to conduct a staff development workshop in your area of expertise, what would it be and what would the workshop contain?
 - How does your teaching integrate/deal with requirements that will be made on students by any Basic English [i.e. non-ESL English] classes they may take?
 - What are your favorite textbooks?
 - If you could start any kind of ESL program of your dreams, what would it be like?
 - If you were a fly on the wall, what would your colleagues be saying about you?
 - What could you contribute to our program?
 - What is the mission of a community college?
 - What if a student refused to take part in some classroom activity, what would you do?
 - What was your most successful lesson within the past month? Why did it work so well?
 - What was your least successful lesson? How did you decide to change it?
 - What are several ways you foster motivation in EFL/ESL students?
 - Tell me about your worst day teaching.
 - What is something you've learned from your students?
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- First, they will most definitely ask you about your background in ESL (experience, degree).
 - What do you like best about teaching?
 - How would you teach a lesson in (whatever) using (whatever, props, realia, etc).
 - What kind of teaching methodologies do you use in your teaching?
 - What kind of teaching methodologies have worked for you in the past?
 - Do you feel comfortable teaching grammar?
 - Do you believe grammar should be taught explicitly or implicitly?
 - Describe a successful lesson you conducted in the past.
 - Why do you want to be an ESL/EFL teacher? (similar to what do you like best about teaching).
 - Why are you applying for this job?
 - What are your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher?
 - Suppose a student keeps making the same mistake over and over again despite your corrections. What would you do?
 - Suppose a S asks you a question that you don't know the answer to? What would you do?
 - What is your philosophy of education?
 - What level do you prefer to teach?
 - Are there other subjects that you could teach?
 - What is a "false beginner?"
 - How would you approach teaching a false beginner compared to a complete beginner?
 - What activities would you do on the first day of class with students who had absolutely no knowledge of English? (e.g. absolute beginners)?

- What teaching texts are you familiar with? What texts/materials do you like to use or have you used in the past?
- Are you looking to advance your credentials as an ESL teacher (an MA degree, RSA certificate, etc.)?
- Do you have any exposure to second language acquisition? (Have you ever studied a second language?)
- Are you familiar with a notional-functional syllabus?
- What are some differences between British and American English?
- Tell me about the TEFL Certificate program you just completed.
- What are your long-range career objectives?
- What 2 or 3 things are most important to you in your job?
- How did previous employers treat you?
- What are your salary requirements?
- If I were to ask your students about your teaching, what would they say? (if you were one of your students, what would you say about your teaching?)
- If I were to ask your supervisor about your teaching, what would they say? (if you were your supervisor, what would you say about your teaching?)
- Think of an activity you used that you feel was both successful and a good reflection of you as the kind of teacher you want to be. What was it about the activity, and the way you implemented it, that made it so?
- How do you establish rapport in your classes?
- Think of an activity that bombed in the classroom. Why do you think it didn't work? How would you change it and/or the way you presented it? Why?
- How do you go about motivating students?
- How do you feel about grading? How do you go about deciding what grades to give students?
- What do you think are important attributes of successful language learners?
- What do you do for your own professional development? What do you hope to be able to do, as part of your job, for your own professional development?
- What do you think makes an excellent teacher (in general)? an excellent language teacher?
- What are your conceptions of language learners?
- What are you interested in researching, if anything? How does this relate to your teaching?
- What is something you've learned in your study that you would like to try to apply to your teaching?
- How do you feel teachers can get better at what they do?
- What do you think is the most important issue in language teaching today?
- As a language teacher, what are some of your main concerns? What can you do (or what can be done) about them?
- How do you think people learn second languages (successfully)? How does instruction help? How can materials help?
- How do you think people become good at conversation (or reading, or writing, etc.) in a second language? How does instruction help? How can materials help?

"One approach to interview questions that I like are situational questions. I think the type of situational questions asked, especially for an EFL setting, can say a lot about the problems or issues encountered in the environment you're looking at. "What would you do if a student comes to class regularly late?" Now this presupposes a knowledge of the rules of a given institution which a candidate may not have. Rather than address the specifics, e.g., I would say something like: I'd talk with him privately, explain the importance of timeliness, the importance of the first 5 minutes of class when I am setting the stage for the day, and the institutional regulations (if any) regarding lateness, and my personal class rules. This would be especially true overseas when dealing with more conservative societies and they are looking for an answer other than "Well, I'm here to teach and students can come and get it if they like; I don't believe in trying to be a parent." (i.e., the prevalent reaction in the American higher ed classroom). Also, one should have done one's homework about the culture and environment where one is going to live (or hopes to live). There are likely to be questions to probe how one might adjust to local living conditions. Knowledge is power in the case of interviewing, so the more knowledge a candidate has about the institution, country, culture, religion, etc., the better off one will be. You don't want to show off limited knowledge, but you want to be prepared to give reasonable responses."

*TiPPS wishes to thank those who participated in our survey
on the TESLJB-L@CUNYVM.CUNY.EDU listserve.*