

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS PROGRAMME SPAIN 2020/21

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NOTES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS APPOINTED TO SPAIN IN 2020/21

This document is version 1 Spain Country Notes for the 2020/21 English Language Assistants Programme. Any country notes relating to previous years should be ignored for the 2020/21 academic year.

FOREWORD

Congratulations on your recent allocation to a post as an English language assistant in Spain. Every year, around 2,500 language assistants from the UK support the teaching of English in 14 countries around the world. Every language assistant is taking part in a programme that traces its heritage back to 1905. It began as an exchange programme to allow graduates from France to help English students learn French, with 'young Masters in English secondary schools' heading to France to perform a similar role. Shortly afterwards, a similar agreement was reached with the government of Prussia.

Since those early days, the programme has endured major global events, two World Wars, and the Great Depression, to name a few. But while the global political, social, and economic landscapes may have changed over the years, the language assistants initiative has remained committed to increasing language skills across the world.

This document contains important information and advice regarding a variety of practical and administrative matters affecting UK assistants in Spain. This document should be read carefully, retained for reference, and considered in conjunction with any papers issued by the Spanish authorities. It is important that you have access to this information whilst in Spain in order to be able to consult it at all times when problems/questions arise.

If your permanent (UK) home address, personal e-mail or phone number changes, please inform us immediately by sending an e-mail to LanguageAssistants.UK@britishcouncil.org. We may need to contact you during the year with urgent messages, invitations to events, or to add updates to these notes, so please ensure that you have given us the correct contact details.

We hope that you find the following information useful and that you enjoy the year ahead.

Best wishes,

The Language Assistants team

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1. CO-OPERATING PARTNERS

1.1. BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of [arts and culture](#), [English language](#), [education](#) and [civil society](#). Each year we reach over 20 million people face-to-face and more than 500 million people online, via broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

Our work in English aims to bring high-quality language materials to every [learner](#) and [teacher](#) across the world. In developing and post-conflict countries, we teach English and train teachers through radio, web, and TV broadcasts. We offer more than three million UK [examinations](#) worldwide, helping people gain access to trusted qualifications to support their career and study prospects.

Our work in [education](#) and [society](#) helps to transform national education systems, builds more inclusive and open societies, and increases opportunities for [young people](#). We encourage international students to come and study in the UK and help British students to gain experience abroad. We bring [schools](#) around the world together, so young people and teachers from different countries can learn from each other.

Our work in the [arts](#) involves the very best British and international artistic talent. We help increase audiences for international work in the UK and for UK work globally. We bring artists together and support the development of skills and policy in the arts and creative industries. Through this work, we ensure that culture in its broadest sense plays a vital role in connecting with others and promoting friendly understanding.

1.2. PARTNERS IN SPAIN

Language assistants are either employed by the Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional (MEFP) or directly through the local education authorities (Comunidad Autónoma). It is important that you understand if you belong to the Ministry group or the Comunidad group so that you know who to address for information or queries. You can find out in your regional allocation email if you are part of the Ministry or the Comunidad group.

Ministry Posts

E-mail: auxiliares.conv@educacion.gob.es

Subdirección General de Promoción Exterior Educativa
Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional
Calle de Alcalá, 34, 28014 Madrid, Spain

Tel: +34 91 506 5594

www.educacionyfp.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano/catalogo.html

Comunidad Posts

Please note that all those posted to cupo Comunidad posts should contact whoever has contacted them from the local education department in relation to the post.

2. ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE ASSISTANT

The role of a language assistant is a very important one and one that we hope you will enjoy. Please remember that you are considered a **member of staff** with the responsibilities and required professionalism that this role entails. Please refer to [our website](#) for more information on your role as an English Language Assistant.

As a language assistant you are also an **ambassador for the UK and its culture**. The way you behave will influence how those around you view the UK and you should endeavour to set a positive example. If you set a bad example, you could damage the reputation of the programme and adversely affect the experience of future assistants.

“Realise that you are going to work, and not be on holiday. Certainly some tourism is understandable but often school years run from autumn to spring when your neighbours and peers will not be sightseers but rather ordinary working people and not tour guides.”

Your first-hand experience of life in the UK is an excellent resource and you should draw on this during your lessons. We provide a lot of advice

to help you incorporate cultural content into your lessons in chapter 10 of this document.

“It would also not be a bad idea to prepare some presentations/activities about your home country before leaving.”

2.1. TEACHING ENGLISH

It is important to be resourceful and use your initiative. If you do not think that you are being used sufficiently, make suggestions of topics that you could discuss with the students or activities that you could get involved with. This document contains a whole chapter about teaching English, but the following links are useful for starters:

- [Teaching English - Language Assistant Resource Book](#)
- [Teaching English - Learning Resources](#)

It is also important to familiarise yourself with the education system in Spain as it will help you know what to expect when you start teaching at your school(s). Please see the [Euraxess webpage](#) for specific information.



3. POSTING INFORMATION

Each region differs as to when they organise appointments and send out information. The British Council is involved in allocating assistants to a region and sometimes age group, but has no control over choice of town, size of town, school environment, or when information is sent out. We encourage each region to send information out as early as possible. You should also write immediately to your school(s) confirming acceptance of the post. If you do not receive a reply by mid-September it is a good idea to ring the school(s) to discuss your placement and give them an idea of your anticipated arrival date.

You should ask them for information about the school(s) that you will be working in. For example, it may be useful to know the age range of pupils, the average class size, the general level of ability, the social background of pupils, the facilities available, and if you should bring any specific materials from home. It is also important to enquire about the dress code for teachers and any other general school information.

3.1. SCHOOL ALLOCATION

The maximum number of schools to which you can be appointed is three. Please contact us if you have been appointed to more than three schools. If the different schools are several miles apart and you must travel between two on the same day, you are entitled to ask for help towards travel expenses. Under no circumstances should an assistant be required to buy a car just to get to their schools. If following contact with your school, you establish that there is no regular public transport serving your school(s) and there are no lifts available to your school(s), please inform us of the situation. Please do not contact us without contacting your school first.

3.2. DATES OF APPOINTMENT

The period of appointment for UK assistants in Spain will be **01 October 2020 – 31 May 2021**. The only exceptions are appointments to cupo Comunidad posts in Madrid and some postings in Valencia which run from **01 October 2020 – 30 June 2021**. You should check the details in your own *Nombramiento*.

Please note: Due to Covid-19, you may be able to negotiate a slightly later start date with your school based on your own circumstances. You should communicate closely with your school on this and aim to arrive in October or November if possible.

Most assistants are expected to work 12 hours a week. Some, but not all, posts in Madrid, Galicia, Extremadura, and Valencia are 16 hours, and some posts in Murcia are 15 hours.

Those who have been appointed to more than one school will be asked to divide their time between the schools concerned. You can request information regarding how your timetable will be arranged from the head of the host school, which is usually the first one mentioned when you are sent details of your posting in the *Nombramiento*. If you have been appointed to two or three schools, you should write to all of them confirming your acceptance of the post.

3.3. HOLIDAYS

Assistants are entitled to the usual school holidays. You should be able to obtain the dates from the school secretary or your mentor teacher. You should not be absent on other occasions without prior permission. Attending the induction course does not give assistants the right to take leave at a later date.

4. PRE-DEPARTURE INFORMATION

4.1. FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Before travelling to Spain you should ensure that you check the Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) travel advice pages (www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and ensure that you have subscribed to updates so that you receive any important changes to the FCO's advice. During a crisis, advice for British nationals will be published on the travel advice website and updated regularly, so by subscribing you will ensure that you are aware of any updates. You can register for emails using this link: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/spain/email-signup.

A note regarding Brexit:

The UK Government has launched a new [website](#) to help businesses, organisations, individuals, and families check what they need to do to prepare for the UK leaving the EU. The section for UK nationals living in the European Union contains specific advice for British Nationals living in Spain. Language assistants have a responsibility to keep themselves informed of changes to the Government's advice on Brexit and the impact these changes may have on British nationals living in Spain.

The website contains links to sign up to email alerts on different topics relating to Brexit. We recommend that assistants sign up to these alerts and continue to check the Government's website for any updates.

4.2. PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Assistants must be in possession of a standard 10-year passport before leaving the UK and are advised to ensure that it will not need to be renewed before **October 2021**. Those who are not in possession of a passport, or need a new one, should complete the application procedure as soon as possible either through a regional Passport Office or online at: www.gov.uk/browse/abroad/passports.

Holders of a UK passport and nationals of other EU countries do not currently require a visa to enter Spain. Holders of UK passports should keep informed of Government advice on the status of British citizens in Spain in case there should be any changes after the Brexit transition period has ended. If you have dual nationality with another EU country, you may consider using this passport while travelling in Spain as it may help to avoid complications with paperwork and other administrative processes on arrival. You should discuss any changes to the passport you are using with the Comunidad/Ministerio before arrival.

This does not apply if one of your passports is Spanish. Assistants should always carry photocopies of their passport as a form of identification but ensure that this information is kept safe and out of sight.

4.3. TRAVEL TO SPAIN

“Travel around Spain is cheap - buses and trains all good price, but some timetables are not frequent. Avoid travel on a Sunday.”

You are responsible for the cost of your own travel and any travel to and from your place of appointment during the year. Booking in advance for all forms of transport is highly recommended. Past assistants have warned to check the baggage allowance for outward and return journeys when travelling by plane as sometimes cheaper airlines have quite a low baggage allowance.

The following websites may help you when booking your travel:

- www.skyscanner.net
 - www.eurostar.com
 - www.raileurope.co.uk
 - www.directferries.co.uk
 - www.eurolines.co.uk
 - www.britishairways.com
 - www.easyjet.com
 - www.tui.co.uk/flight
 - www.opodo.co.uk
 - www.expedia.co.uk
 - www.ryanair.com
 - www.interrail.eu
 - www.iberia.com/gb
-



4.4. TAKING A CAR ABROAD

You will need to research the laws on driving in Spain, including adapting your head lights for driving on the right. The website www.gov.uk/driving-abroad provides useful information about motoring abroad.

If you plan to take a car to Spain for the period of your assistantship, please ensure that you take out adequate insurance for the full period and **be aware that many insurance companies will only insure you for periods of up to 90 days.** Past assistants have advised looking into insurance well in advance in order to have the time to shop around for a suitable policy. All UK motor insurance policies offer the minimum legal protection required by EU countries and Switzerland. This gives third party cover for bodily injury or damage to property. The British Council is unable to recommend specific insurance companies.

Many insurers offer 24-hour UK telephone numbers in case you need help in an emergency. Make sure you have these details with you when you travel abroad.

The website of the Association of British Insurers (www.abi.org.uk) has general information on driving abroad, including useful information on motor insurance cover and Green Cards. A Green Card is an internationally recognised document that provides evidence that the policyholder has minimum insurance cover.

If you require information on driver licensing you should contact: Drivers Customer Services Correspondence Team, DVLA, Swansea, SA6 7JL (Tel: 0300 790 6801). Information on vehicle licensing or registration can be obtained from Vehicle Customer Services (VCS), DVLA, Swansea, SA99 1AR (Tel: 0300 790 6802). There is also information on the DVLA website at www.gov.uk/dvla. UK licences are recognised in all EU countries plus Switzerland, for as long as they remain valid.

4.5. TAKING PETS ABROAD

There are a variety of rules which assistants must follow to ensure that they are compliant when taking pets abroad or returning them to the UK. Please check the FCO and Spanish Government websites below for more information. You may also wish to consider pet travel insurance to ensure that any pets are covered for emergency treatment whilst in Spain.

- www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad/pet-passport
- www.mapama.gob.es/en/
- www.mapama.gob.es/es/ganaderia/legislacion/animales-compania-normativa-zoosanitaria.aspx

4.6. GRADUATES WITH STUDENT LOANS

If you will be overseas for more than 3 months, you will need to let Student Finance know. Complete an **Overseas Income Assessment Form** to enable the Student Loans Company to calculate how much you need to repay. On the Overseas Income Assessment Form you should provide them with details of your circumstances and prospective income.

Whilst in Spain the money you receive is considered a monthly allowance or grant, rather than a salary. This means you are officially taking part in a grant-funded mobility programme rather than formal employment. Last year assistants who declared their language assistant role as formal employment rather than a grant-funded mobility programme faced challenges with the Student Loans Company, who requested copies of employment contracts. Your Nombramiento is a contract of enrolment in the programme, not an employment contract.

You will be required to provide evidence of income or means of support. They will then send you a repayment schedule showing how much you need to pay each month. Your monthly payments will be based upon the earnings threshold for your destination country. More information can be found online [here](#). Please note that the British Council cannot advise further on Student Loans matters.

4.7. INSURANCE

The British Council will not be responsible for you while you are in Spain, although we will offer support when necessary. You are therefore required to take out comprehensive insurance to cover you **during your whole time abroad**. We recommend you research the various options available and consult other/former assistants before purchasing a suitable policy. However, any insurance you purchase should include cover for emergency treatment and repatriation. Please note that it is unlikely that insurance companies will cover you in the event of a natural disaster or the outbreak of war.

Whilst it may seem like an inconvenient cost at this stage, **it is highly recommended to take out appropriate insurance for your time abroad**. You will not be insured under the Spanish National Health system because you will not be paying contributions from your monthly allowance. When choosing cover, please think carefully about what you would like to happen in the event of sickness / accident / death. It is also advised to discuss insurance options with partners, family members or a close friend.

Insurance whilst in post

You are strongly recommended to take out Personal Accident Travel insurance for the period between leaving home and taking up your appointment, the **time during your appointment**, and also the period between ending your appointment and your return to the UK. This should include the following standard elements of cover:

- Medical costs for treatment in case of illness (including Covid-19) or accidental injury
- Benefits for permanent disabling injuries, e.g. rehabilitation and living costs
- Benefits for death and costs of repatriation
- Cover for loss or damage to your personal belongings
- Cover for cancelled flights, e.g. if the airline goes out of business or on strike
- Personal Liability cover. This provides legal support and covers financial costs if you

cause injury or property damage to others and are found personally liable

- 24-hour emergency assistance helpline

Many policies also have legal expenses cover, which is recommended in case you need legal assistance while overseas.

Further information on insurance is available on our [website](#), including a link to our podcast episode on insurance. However, the British Council is unable to advise on private insurance packages. You are recommended to consult an insurance broker for professional advice and to check whether you are covered by your parents' or family's insurance policy. Undergraduate assistants may find that a "study abroad" policy purchased online is an option. Please be aware that some insurance policies, usually 'backpackers' insurance, do not allow for trips home during the year and it is important to check the small print of your policy to make sure that you are covered.

Personal Accident Travel policies are readily available on price comparison websites, or by using a search engine to search for 'travel insurance'. The UK Foreign & Commonwealth website offers additional advice on taking out Travel Insurance: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-insurance.

Any package should cover medical expenses, air ambulance, repatriation, personal accident & civil liability, luggage & valuable items, and cancellation in extreme cases. **Please note that you should organise your insurance before you leave the UK.**

It would also be wise to consider insuring your personal possessions. You should check your parents' household insurance as this sometimes covers possessions away from home.

Furthermore, cover for personal liability is often overlooked but it is extremely important. If you were the cause of an accident of any kind – e.g. cycling on the road – the resulting costs, practical and legal, could be prohibitively high.

Insurance for travel outside of Spain

“Remember that normally your health insurance only covers you within your host country during your allocated time there, therefore if you travel outside that country during or after that period, you may need additional insurance” (Former ELA in Spain)

Experience from previous language assistants has told us that holidays provide the possibility for travel around or outside of Spain. If you do leave Spain at any point, it is highly advised to take out insurance for the country / countries that you visit.

5. HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Please see the Foreign Commonwealth Office website for more information regarding healthcare in Spain: www.gov.uk/healthcare-in-spain.

There is also a short video highlighting the importance of [thinking about healthcare before moving to Spain](#).

You will be able to use your EHIC card while in Spain (full information below). However, **it is highly recommended to take out appropriate private insurance for your time abroad too**. You will not be insured under the Spanish National Health system because you will not be paying contributions from your monthly allowance. For full information on **insurance** please see section 4.7 of this document.

5.1. EHIC CARD

Please note: Until 31 December 2020, you can use your UK-issued European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) in Spain. Once details have been confirmed, you will receive further information about your access to healthcare in Spain after the end of the Brexit transition period.

Information on applying for an EHIC can be found at the following link: www.gov.uk/european-health-insurance-card. You can also obtain an application form from the Post Office. If you're planning to go abroad as part of your university degree, you can apply for a time limited student EHIC. More information is available online [here](#).

The EHIC gives you access to medically necessary, state-provided healthcare during a temporary stay in Spain. When you show your EHIC, you will receive treatment under the same conditions and at the same cost as people insured in Spain. There is a short video explaining [how to use the EHIC card in Spain](#) and further information is available on the [Healthcare in Spain website](#). The EHIC will also be useful for any trips to other EU countries.

Residents of the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands are not eligible for the European Health Insurance Card. Residents of the Isle of Man need to take out fully-comprehensive insurance (which should include repatriation by air ambulance) before travelling to another country. Applicants from Guernsey should contact the Health and Social Services Department for advice. Applicants from Jersey should contact the Employment and Social Security Department for advice.

You will need to take your National Insurance Number. Language assistants in Spain have **student status** and the money you receive each month is referred to as a grant or *beca*, rather than a salary.

“A simple thing like carrying your EU health card with you at all times. I was away one weekend and sprained my ankle and luckily had my health card with me but if not it could have caused some complications.”

Be aware that each country’s healthcare system is different. Services that cost you nothing at home might not be free in Spain (for example, prescriptions).

Please note: the EHIC is not an alternative to travel insurance. It does not cover any private healthcare or costs such as a return flight to your home country or lost/stolen property. Assistants are therefore strongly advised to take out private insurance before beginning their placement.

5.2. MEDICATION

If you take regular medication, please ensure that you have a supply before you leave. It is also important to find out where your nearest doctor, dentist, and hospital are as soon as you arrive. You should ask your school for information about the facilities in your area and always advise staff and your landlord of any medical conditions.

“Bring medicines that are hard to get in the place you're going to (e.g. your specific contraceptive pill, branded things like Day Nurse / your preferred hay fever tablets - the brands I wanted were unavailable)” (Former ELA in Spain)

5.3. MENTAL HEALTH

Although working abroad can be enjoyable, it can also be challenging. A lack of familiar support systems, disrupted daily routines, language barriers, culture shock, and unexpected situations can intensify stress levels rather than alleviate them. We discuss this in our [podcast](#) which suggests useful ways to manage your wellbeing while abroad.

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. **It is advisable to read this information even if you are not currently suffering from mental health problems.**

The Foreign Commonwealth Office provides information about mental health and travel via the following link:

- www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-advice-for-people-with-mental-health-issues

The leaflets hyperlinked below also contain guidance on travelling abroad and mental health, as well as information about how the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) is able to assist British nationals with mental health needs abroad. The leaflets detail the type of assistance you may find in the country. They also explain some of the differences between UK law and practice and that of other countries.

Mental Health: Travelling Abroad

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/466424/FCO_MentalHealth_DL_071015web.pdf

Mental Health: Travelling Abroad Checklist

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/466425/Mental_Health_Checklist_-_Final.pdf

6. ARRIVAL

6.1. INDUCTION MEETING

Induction courses are organised by the Ministerio de Educación y Formación Profesional or the local education authorities at the *comunidades autónomas*. The induction you are invited to will depend on who your post is funded by. If you are unsure, please check to see which organization issued your Nombramiento to you.

It is likely that induction courses will be held online this year, but this may vary from region to region. Please follow any information and advice that is given from the Comunidad/Ministry about your induction course, including their instructions on how to confirm your place. If you do not confirm your place before the date stated, you may not be able to attend. Please **do not** send your confirmation to the British Council.

While these courses are not obligatory you are strongly advised to attend. You will receive essential information regarding your assistantship and also meet other language assistants. If you choose not to attend the briefing, you should inform the relevant contact for your region's induction course once you arrive in Spain so that arrangements can be made for any important documents to be posted to you.

The Ministerio is not usually able to arrange separate courses for assistants in the Canarias, Baleares, Ceuta or Melilla; however, you may be invited to join another webinar. Please follow the guidance you receive from the Ministry.

6.2. TRAVEL ONWARDS FROM THE INDUCTION COURSES

If you do have a face to face induction day, we recommend planning your onward journey from the induction course to your placement prior to leaving the UK, as time during the induction course is limited. Please remember that we only pass on the following information. It is up to you to carefully research and compare each company before booking travel.

Buses

Different bus stations within Madrid cater for different parts of the country. A useful website is www.alsa.es which offers a national coach service where tickets can be purchased online in advance. If you create an account and are under 26 years old, you can also get a discount on most ALSA bus bookings.

The bus company "Bilman Bus" (www.bilmanbus.es) operates within the regions of Cantabria, País Vasco, La Rioja, Navarra, Aragon, Valencia, and Murcia.

For long distance journeys please see www.movelia.es and www.avanzabus.com. Former ELAs have also recommended www.damas-sa.es as a bus company in the South of Spain. Other assistants have recommended www.tmb.cat for transport in Barcelona and the surrounding area.

Trains

[RENFE](#) is the national railway company and runs several types of trains, but fares and journey times can vary:

- **Cercanías** provide regular services from major cities to surrounding suburbs
- **Regionales** are trains that stop at all stations
- **InterCity, Alvia, Euromed** and **AVE** (high speed) trains stop at most major cities
- **Carnet joven:** Invest in this young person's rail card equivalent for cheap rail fares

Booking train travel in advance online can also sometimes be cheaper. Assistants in the past have recommended bus travel over train as train travel can be slow (with the exception of the high-speed links, which usually cost more).

Bla Bla Car

Bla Bla Car is a website which offers car sharing for people travelling throughout Spain – potentially a great way to affordably see more of the country and practice your Spanish on the journey. Please exercise caution when travelling with people you don't know.



7. SETTLING IN

“Stay positive through any adversity at the beginning. It may be tough to initially adapt but it soon gets easier!”

7.1. ACCOMMODATION

The British Council is not in a position to help to find nor to provide accommodation. Equally, your school(s) are not obliged to provide or find you accommodation, but they may be able to offer you somewhere temporary to stay for the first few days or weeks, thus giving you some time to look for permanent accommodation. You should, however, not assume that your school will do this and should discuss your arrival and initial accommodation arrangements with them in advance. Please note that if your school does offer you accommodation, you are not obliged to accept it but remember, if you do accept it, you will have to abide by the school's rules.

“Be ready for anything and ask local people for advice - even if it's when you arrive! Something will come up, and don't be afraid to introduce yourself to people in cafes, schools, churches etc. and ask for help, to pin up notices.”

It is advisable to book temporary accommodation before you arrive. Staying in a local hostel or Airbnb will give you the opportunity to get to know the area and go to flat viewings before arranging permanent accommodation. You can ask your mentor teacher for advice on where to find accommodation. They may know a local family with a room to rent, or already have somewhere in mind for you to stay. If your school cannot help, there are some popular websites where rooms and flats are advertised.

Consider going to your teaching location to arrange accommodation in advance of the

induction course or before starting your job. Past assistants have emphasised the need to look for accommodation as early as possible. The first weeks of your assistantship will be busy as you will be finding your way around an unfamiliar town, dealing with bureaucracy, and trying to make a good impression at school. Remember that you will need your passport to check into hotels/hostels. **Do not** take out a contract on your accommodation **until** you know the location of your schools.

“I know of people who organised accommodation without seeing it before they arrived in their placement country and sometimes it did fall through - in one instance the flat didn't even exist! Before you leave the UK I'd recommend you to book a week in a hostel (ideally before your placement starts) to give you time to view accommodation and get used to the area.”

Useful websites

www.vibbo.com
www.idealista.es
www.fotocasa.es
www.lingobongo.com



Assistants in the past have had relatively few problems finding suitable accommodation but be prepared to spend about a week looking when you arrive. For this reason, you may wish to pre-book a hostel or hotel before you arrive. Some previous assistants recommend going out to your region a week earlier in order to find accommodation, get settled, and sort out any necessary administrative tasks.

Once you get to Spain the following suggestions may be of interest:

- advertise on the school/staff notice board and ask other teachers
- buy the local newspapers early in the morning and telephone likely numbers immediately
- ring the local university halls of residence or check their flat share adverts and notices, or advertise on their notice board that you are looking for a room
- ask local friends'/acquaintances' landlords if they have any further accommodation to let
- accommodation agencies may be able to help but you should **be very wary** of paying large fees and deposits, and always read the small print in any leases or agreements to be signed; **look for small agencies as often their fees are lower**
- search for a room or flat on the internet

If you are living in a large town or city, you are likely to have to sign a contract. In case you decide to change your accommodation during the year, **you are advised not to sign a contract for the duration of your contract unless there is a notice period included in the contract.** If you are in a smaller town, landlords may not bother with contracts; however, we strongly recommend that you ask for one.

Assistants in Barcelona are advised that finding accommodation can be difficult. They are recommended to look at websites such as www.resahousing.com for assistance. Please make sure you are aware of notice periods for moving out, or any fees you may need to pay before you sign any agreement.

We recommend that you take photos of your room and the flat when you move into your long-term accommodation and when you leave to

help you get back any deposit you may have to pay, which is usually dependent on the accommodation being in the same condition as when you first arrived. When you leave your accommodation, remember to cancel any personal contracts like internet or utilities. Ensure that you have checked health and safety issues in your accommodation (temporary and long term) such as fire alarms and exits, gas leaks, electrics, water, etc.

Assistants assigned to **Madrid, Barcelona, Málaga, Seville, or Mallorca** who are looking for accommodation with Spanish families may find the following programme useful: www.babelbridges.org/programme. Please note that the British Council is in no way recommending or endorsing this offer; we are simply passing on the information. You should research the following before agreeing to anything:

- location;
- suitability; and
- contractual arrangements

When looking for accommodation please follow the advice given in our [Personal Safety leaflet](#). When you have found somewhere to live, even if it has been arranged for you, do not live anywhere or sign any agreement you are not comfortable with and make sure that there is a period of notice written in the contract to avoid problems should you decide to change your accommodation during the year.

It is recommended to include a 'diplomatic clause' in the rental agreement to allow for a shorter notice period in the event that the rental agreement needs to be terminated prematurely due to force majeure (including in the event of a pandemic or a travel warning officially issued by a government. This is advised particularly in light of the current Covid-19 pandemic.

7.2. REGISTRATION IN SPAIN – NIE (NÚMERO DE IDENTIDAD DE EXTRANJERO)

“The process to gain the legal documents varies greatly in Spain, what happens in one town will be totally different to another. If you are in a smaller town you may have to travel the neighbouring larger town to obtain such document, this is not always an easy process, but don't worry once it's done it's done.”

Please note: It is very difficult for the British Council to provide comprehensive advice as every region / city has different processes for obtaining the relevant registration documents. We hope that the information below can assist you to prepare somewhat before departure to Spain; however, the British Council are unable to advise further on these processes and the local authorities in each region and/or your school(s) are best-placed to advise on the necessary procedures specific to each area.

Assistants should also keep up to date with the information provided on the Spanish Government's website [here](#).

Language assistants from countries outside the European Union (including the UK)

Assistants who hold a UK passport or another non-EU passport will need to apply for the **TIE** on arrival in Spain. TIE is an abbreviation for **Tarjeta de Identidad de Extranjero**, which translates as Foreigner Identity Card. The TIE is the document which proves that foreigners have obtained a residence permit or authorisation to stay in Spain for more than six months.

Your TIE card will include a unique number known as the **NIE**, or **Número de Identidad de Extranjero** (Identification Number for Foreigners). Foreigners having a relation with Spain for economic, professional, or social interests are required to obtain a personal, unique, and

exclusive sequential number for identification purposes. Without a NIE number the Spanish authorities will be unable to pay your 'ayuda mensual' / 'beca'.

“The process varies from region to region, so just stick to what you are told from the officials and not what somebody else has said in another part of the country.”

You can apply for the TIE at an immigration office or local police station in Spain. Feedback from previous assistants has highlighted the vast differences in processes across Spain. **Some areas operate an on-the-day queue system, while other regions allow online appointment booking in advance.** It is worth trying to research this before departure or asking your school as there can sometimes be a wait for bookable appointments.

You will have to pay the corresponding fee for the TIE (usually around fifteen euros) and it is highly likely that you will also need the following (and potentially additional) items when applying. You may wish to prepare some of these items before leaving the UK so that you have them available should they be needed:

- Passport and photocopies
- Completed and signed [EX-17 application form](#), plus copies
- Three recent passport photos, in colour with a white background
- Document proving your appointment as a language assistant in Spain (e.g. your *Nombramiento* issued by the *Ministerio/Comunidad*)
- Original and photocopy of visa, if applicable
- Proof of payment of the corresponding fee

Language assistants who hold an EU passport (non-UK)

On arrival in Spain, assistants from member countries of the European Union will need to apply for the **Certificado de Registro de Ciudadano de la Unión**, or the EU Registration Certificate. This Certificate includes your name, nationality, address, date of registration, and your **NIE** (Foreigner Identification Number). As

noted above, the NIE is the unique number that you will need to give to your bank in order to open a Spanish bank account and receive your monthly stipend.

You can apply for the EU Registration Certificate at the immigration office or police station in your assigned city or town. You must pay a fee (usually around ten euros) and it is highly likely that you will need to submit the following (and perhaps additional) documents:

- Passport and photocopies
- Completed and signed [EX-18 application form](#), plus copies
- Three recent passport photos, in colour with a white background
- Document proving your appointment as a language assistant in Spain (e.g. your Nombramiento issued by the Ministerio/Comunidad)

Guidance for all assistants

Aside from finding accommodation, one of the first challenges you face when relocating to Spain could be obtaining the above registration documentation along with the NIE number you need to open a bank account. We do advise that you try to start the process of obtaining a NIE as quickly as possible once you arrive in Spain.

Some assistants will find obtaining the NIE easier than others; however, at all stages we advise you to be **proactive** (don't leave things until the last minute), **patient** (things might not be processed as quickly as you hope) and **persistent** (don't give up!).

“In Spain, persistence is key. The catch-22 of needing an NIE to set up a bank account and vice-versa was made clear to me, but I found when I explained my situation and pointed out the difficulty of it, I could receive my NIE without a bank account.”

7.3. CREATING SOCIAL NETWORKS

Even if you have been to Spain before it is possible that you will find some things strange at first and will need a little time to settle in. On arrival, the thought of making friends and mixing with the locals can seem like a daunting task but, as long as you are prepared to put yourself out there, it is a part of the experience which previous assistants have found the most enriching. Give yourself some time to adjust – you don't need to feel like a local within a week and in the beginning you will have a lot of administrative matters to deal with.

“Get involved with youth groups, churches, local activities, sports, the gym etc. so that you're able to meet locals as well as other ELAs doing similar things to you. But try to target locals rather than fellow English-speakers, otherwise you could easily get comfortable and stuck speaking English most of the time”



Here are some other ways to meet people within the area:

- Live with native speakers
- Attend language exchanges
- Enrol for an evening class, join a sports club, music group, choir, etc.
- Enquire about joining the local university and attending lectures
- Get involved in the local culture and join clubs that you can't join in the UK; and
- Volunteer for a charity, society, festival, etc.

Former assistants have recommended that you don't spend all your free time with other assistants, as you will not be able to integrate into your community and life in Spain. On the other hand, don't feel that you must cut yourself off from them – assistants can provide a very good support network for each other, as you understand each other's experiences. Don't forget that there may be language assistants from other countries in your area.

As a golden rule, **try to say yes to every social opportunity presented to you that does not compromise your personal safety**. Accept invitations to places and activities even if they do not sound interesting as you might meet other people there who do share your interests; however, at all times, please follow the advice given in our [Personal Safety leaflet](#).

Start at school

It is important to make a good impression on your colleagues at school. Be positive, enthusiastic and willing to learn and help out where you can. You never know when you might need help from your colleagues. Socialise as much as you can with them as it can give you a bigger support network for the duration of your placement. It is also a great chance to improve and practice your Spanish – they might also want to practice their English with you, so help them where you can. Tell people what your interests are and ask them to let you know what's going on in the local area. Do keep in mind that teachers can be very busy, especially during exam periods.

Apart from your work in the classroom you may be able to attend other classes in subjects which interest you. You will find that you become much more integrated into school life and gain considerably more from your stay if you become involved in activities organised by the school, such as sports days, theatre or music productions or modern language societies. Go to school 'open days' or parent evenings as these are also a good way of meeting people. If you hear about something happening which interests you, ask if you can become involved. Don't wait to be invited as people may assume that you're not interested.

“My fellow teachers at IES Canarias have really gone above and beyond in making me feel welcome and showing me around the island. They are truly making the experience as easy and enjoyable as possible for me”

Previous Assistants and Modern Language Assistants

It is also a good idea to get in touch with other people in the area before you leave. One useful way to do this is to ask your school if they can share the contact details of any of their former assistants. You may also wish to look for previous or future assistants in the many **unofficial** Facebook groups online. Search 'Auxiliares de Conversación (*name of location*)'.

In the summer information pack, you will also find a list of last year's English Language Assistants in Spain who have consented to share their details with you. Later in the summer we will also email you a map with the details of former Modern Language Assistants who are now returning home to Spain after their year working in the UK.

Languages

“Language exchanges are a perfect way of meeting local people and improving your language skills. There are groups that meet in bars in the evening in most big towns and cities (check Facebook and watch out for flyers when you're out in your area). Arranging exchanges with the teachers in your area is also a good way to integrate, they tend to have a wealth of knowledge about the area and can be a lot of help when first settling in”

Another excellent way to meet new people is to set up language exchanges with local people who want to practice their English. You could also enrol at a local language school. (There are inexpensive government Official Language Schools that offer Spanish lessons and other languages in many areas.) You could join Erasmus societies (at a local university), offer English lessons to colleagues/locals, join a club, and join assistant groups on social networks such as Facebook. The website www.education-system.com offers opportunities for teaching extra English classes. Often language exchanges are called tandems or intercambios, so it's worth keeping an eye out for adverts.

ESN

Erasmus Student Network (ESN) is a non-profit international student organisation. Their mission is to represent international students, thus providing opportunities for cultural understanding and self-development under the principle of **Students Helping Students**. ESN can sometimes assist with finding accommodation in university towns and cities. Assistants completing their third year abroad can often affiliate to local ESN groups and register for an ESN student discount card. Often ESN groups run events and trips throughout the year which provide a great way to meet new people and explore Spain on a budget.

Social media

There are often Facebook groups for people who are new to the city/town which organise different events to help people make new friends - just search for 'new in "city name"'. Previous assistants have also suggested joining a local

Couchsurfing group as they often organise social activities.

Rural Posts

It should be noted that lots of the posts in Spain are in rural areas. Past assistants to rural areas have had very positive experiences as they have been able to see “real Spain”. Sometimes assistants posted to rural locations will comment that it can be more challenging to adapt to; however, it can be a very enriching experience and a real immersion in Spanish culture and language. Often assistants in rural postings comment that they receive much more support from their school which can help with settling into life in Spain.

“If you are working in rural schools like I did, it is important to give yourself time to adapt to your surroundings, it will come eventually and these small communities are very welcoming and grateful for your presence.”

It is important that the British Council and Spanish Ministry for Education send assistants to rural as well as more urban settings both in the UK and Spain as pupils in both settings must be given the opportunity to benefit from exposure to other cultures and language learning.

7.4. STUDY OPPORTUNITIES

If you wish to attend lectures on a part-time basis, you should obtain information before departure from the Education Department of the Spanish Embassy in London (telephone: 020 7727 2462). You should also take proof of your student status in the UK. If some of your students or friends ask your advice about studying in the UK, you should refer them to the British Council in Spain's website at www.britishcouncil.es.

7.5. SETTLING INTO SCHOOL LIFE

Starting any new job can be a daunting experience, no matter how confident a person you are. It's completely normal to be unsure of where to go, what to do, or who to talk to at the beginning.

The first step to settling in is getting to know your colleagues, and showing that you are enthusiastic and keen to get to know staff will go a long way. Start with a simple hello or ask how their weekend went. Learning some simple conversation starters in the target language is always useful. Remember, however, that you will be working in a school environment, therefore staff may not have a lot of free time. Don't be put off if a teacher doesn't have time to talk to you in the first instance, as they may be in-between or preparing for a class. It doesn't necessarily mean that they don't want to talk to you.

“Introduce yourself to everyone, even if you will not be working with them. Try and attend meetings when you can and never turn down invitations for a drink or meals out! Always speak to your colleagues and programme coordinator if there are any concerns - don't wait until the last minute to flag issues.”

Whilst it's important to get to know the colleagues you will be directly working with, it's always useful to get to know other staff too. Try introducing yourself to staff you may not directly work with; for example, teachers in other departments, lunch time staff, receptionists, caretakers, etc. If there are social occasions or team meetings try to attend them, as these are a great way to get to know colleagues in a different environment.

Language assistants that are proactive and take the initiative often settle into school life much faster. Being a self-starter is a great way to make a strong first impression. Teachers are often very busy and will certainly appreciate your efforts to help and try to make an impact.

“Treat them in a way you would like to be treated. If you want to take a day off/swap some days around, be willing to do the same for them if they need it. Being responsible, reliable and trying your best will get you further than missing days without real reason, looking like you don't really want to be there and letting teachers down if they give you a little bit of responsibility or ask you to do a favour for them. It's only for 9 months so you might as well give it your all and get the most you can from this experience.”



8. MONEY MATTERS

8.1. MONTHLY ALLOWANCE

Important note: During your time as a language assistant, you will be paid directly by the Ministry of Education or the regional authorities in each Comunidad, as they are your employers during the assistantship. The British Council are not your employer and do not administrate our assistants' payments. Any issues or queries surrounding pay are therefore best resolved by getting in direct contact with the relevant party within Spain.

You will receive a monthly allowance (*ayuda mensual*) of around €700. (There are some Comunidad posts where assistants will receive a higher monthly allowance for working 16 hours a week, but this is made clear in your *nombramiento*.) **The first payment of your allowance may not arrive until late November**, so you should ensure that you take around £1000-£1500 or a credit card to cover initial costs (**more might be required in larger cities**). This is likely to be an expensive month as you will have to put down a deposit on accommodation and invest in things like mobile phones and possibly extra furniture. We recommend that you budget for at least 2 months without pay so that you do not run out of money before you get paid.

For Ministry-allocated ELAs, the Ministry for Education will register all assistants on a payment system once in Spain. You will need to open a bank account in order for the Ministry to set up the payment system. Once you have set up an account you need to complete a bank details form issued by the Ministry. You will have to provide the entity number (*la Entidad*), branch number (*surcursal*), control digit (*D.C.*) and the account number. You should then send the form to the email address as instructed on the form. It is essential that all Ministry allocated ELAs follow the instructions provided in the *Guía del Auxiliar de Conversación*, which can be found on the Ministry's [website](#). These instructions will also be provided during the

induction courses to be held in Madrid and other cities. Comunidad-allocated ELAs should follow instructions from your Comunidad.

It is also useful to have access to your UK bank account throughout the year in case there are delays to the allowance payment. **Make sure you inform your bank before leaving the UK that you may use it in Spain so that they do not block your card.** Be aware that you are often charged for using your UK debit card to withdraw money abroad. You may wish to check what your bank charges are. Please check this information is correct with your local branch should you wish to pursue this option.

Your monthly payments should cover the cost of your rent and general living costs. If you wish to go travelling at weekends and holidays you may need to take extra money with you or have access to some savings. Your school may be able to give you an advance in an emergency.

8.2. ADDITIONAL INCOME

If you wish to supplement your income by giving private tuition in English, you are strongly advised **not** to advertise in local papers or public places. (Please read the relevant sections of our [Personal Safety leaflet](#)). In general, pupils are easily found through school or private connections, i.e. by word-of-mouth. However, it is essential to check that the other English teachers in your school(s) do not mind, so that you are not perceived to be 'stealing' their private pupils. The going rate for private one-to-one tuition seems to be **€10-25** per hour depending on how much preparation for the lesson you plan to do and how much your pupils can afford.

It is your own responsibility to ensure that any additional work does not conflict with your school timetable and with your duties as a language assistant. You should clear this additional work with your employer and should also be aware of any tax implications that may arise from these additional earnings, particularly following Brexit.

8.3. ERASMUS+ GRANTS

Language assistants who are completing the assistantship as a **third year abroad** **may** be entitled to an Erasmus+ Traineeship grant. Individuals can benefit from an exchange abroad with Erasmus+ multiple times, either as a student or as a trainee, but the total time abroad (study abroad periods included) may not exceed 12 months within one cycle of study. An undergraduate degree is considered as one cycle. In some cases, students can go for an Erasmus+ traineeship abroad as a **recent graduate**. In this case, the traineeship must occur within one year of graduation and individuals must apply while still being enrolled in their higher education institution. It is advised to discuss options with your university Erasmus+ / International coordinator as soon as possible to see if you would be eligible for additional Erasmus+ grant funding as a language assistant in 2020/21.

Please also note that the British Council is not the employer or traineeship provider of English language assistants. This means that we are unable to complete any Erasmus+ related documents and you should not put the British Council as the traineeship provider. You should put the name of your host institution (school) once you receive these details. Our understanding is that there is a one-month grace period following the start of your placement in which to submit any Erasmus+ documents; however, individual universities and Erasmus+ coordinators will have their own internal deadlines. Please liaise with the Erasmus+ coordinator at your university should you have any questions.

8.4. CURRENCY AND BANKS

“It's really easy to set up a bank account in Spain, but be aware that it charges you to take out of any bank that is not a branch of your account. Find a bank that has branches everywhere.”

Details of how to open a Spanish bank account will be given at the induction course and/or sent to you by the Ministerio/Comunidad. If you are

not attending the induction course, you should ask your school to help you.

You are advised to wait until you arrive in your town of appointment in Spain before opening a bank account. This will allow you to research all the local options, seek recommendations, and choose what will be most convenient for the rest of the year. It is essential that you open a bank account as soon as possible after your arrival. You may want to check with your local British bank whether it has a sister bank in Spain. You are likely to need to show your passport and any documents that you have received from the British Council and Ministry of Education / Comunidad / school that confirm you are a language assistant in Spain.

8.5. LOST OR STOLEN CREDIT CARDS

If a credit card is lost or stolen, immediately call your bank to cancel it. If stolen, the theft should be reported to the police.

8.6. INCOME TAX

There is no longer a Teachers Article included in the Double Taxation Agreement between the UK and Spain; however, as you are paid a stipend, you will not pay Spanish income tax on your earnings as a language assistant. You may be taxed for any additional jobs you take on in Spain and should check how much you can earn per year without having to pay taxes.

Upon your return to the UK you may need to declare your earnings in Spain to HMRC in case it is taxable. You are reminded that the UK tax year extends from 6 April to 5 April and that income earned in the UK between April and the start of your assistantship may be considered when your own or your parents' tax liability is being assessed.

Enquiries regarding UK income tax should be addressed to a local Inspector of Taxes, **not** to the British Council. We cannot assist you in this area because we are not trained in tax and cannot give advice on how your personal circumstances will affect your tax for data protection reasons. Please consult [HMRC](#) for information about who to contact.

9. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

9.1. ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Please remember that you are a member of staff and must therefore adhere to the holiday dates set by the school. If you cannot work due to illness, you should inform your school(s) and local education authority (if applicable) immediately by telephone. You may be asked to provide a letter from a doctor. This should cover the entire duration of the absence and must be sent to the school and, if applicable, local authority as soon as it is issued.

Any prolonged absence on account of illness should be reported as soon as possible to the Ministry of Education/Comunidad and to the British Council. Requests for leave of absence for any other reason should be made in advance to the head of the school(s) who is within his/her right to refuse it. You should ensure any permission of absence is provided in writing as evidence.

If it becomes necessary to resign from your post, you must give sufficient prior notice in writing of your intended departure to the school(s), the Ministry of Education/Comunidad, and the British Council, setting out your reasons in full. If you are an undergraduate, you must also inform your university/college in the UK.

Pay deductions

Please read this section carefully. Every year the British Council receives calls from assistants who are unaware of their school policies regarding absence and face pay deductions.

If you are absent from school without prior written authorization (or without providing doctor's evidence for your illness) a financial penalty could be deducted from your monthly allowance. Deductions are usually calculated via a daily rate from the first day of your absence until your return to school.

This daily calculation includes weekends. For example, if you are absent on a Thursday and do not return to work until the Monday, your monthly allowance could be deducted for 4 days (Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday). This rule also spans holidays; for example, if you miss school on your last working day before the Christmas holidays and do not provide evidence for your illness, your pay could be deducted by a daily rate until you return to school in the New Year. This could result in two weeks of missed pay.

“Lots of people put off registering at the doctor until they actually needed one, or didn't at all. I would strongly suggest registering as soon as you can and it will make things a lot easier for you when you are ill! Also, any day off work needs a note from the doctor so even if you just have a cold you will need a trip there!”

If you are sick, you should book a doctor's appointment immediately, even if you consider your illness to be minor. At the appointment you should explain that you work in a school and require evidence ('justificante') for your absence.

In some regions a doctor's letter is not considered as justification unless the letter explicitly states that the individual **was 'unfit to work'** and accounts for all the days of the absence. If you are required to take sick leave, please ask the doctor to clearly declare 'not fit for work' on the letter if appropriate.

In most circumstances the British Council is unable to intervene in matters of pay deductions due to unauthorised absence. Assistants must make themselves aware of and comply with their own school policy. Please be aware that your school may have a different policy to that of other assistants working in the same region.

9.2. SOLVING PROBLEMS & LINES OF REFERRAL

“Definitely speak up if there's a problem. Consult your mentor teacher, principal, or even a staff member you get on well with if any issues arise, and don't feel pressured to suffer in silence if there's something you aren't happy with.”

Schools in Spain differ from those in this country. Any difficulties should be discussed with your mentor teacher and/or the teacher of the class concerned in the first instance. If the problem cannot be solved, then talk to the head teacher or get in touch with your contact at the local education authority (if applicable).

Satisfactory solutions can usually be found through such consultations but if the problem remains unresolved, you may contact the Ministry of Education/Comunidad. The British Council in the UK will be happy to offer advice but should only be contacted when all other attempts to solve the issue have been made. Problems are dealt with most quickly and effectively locally and the British Council will instruct you to take the steps mentioned above. **Please see the provided ‘Line of Referral’ document for more information.**

It is a good idea to form a good working relationship with other members of staff. You should introduce yourself to all members of the English department. It is important to be patient and polite and to be aware of the work pressure of others. Please remember that it is not good practice to correct the teacher in front of students. You should always be punctual, responsible, and prepare adequately for your lessons. Furthermore, meeting regularly with your mentor gives the opportunity for them to provide feedback about your performance and for you to raise any concerns or issues.

Do tell people if you have problems or if you need information as, otherwise, they will assume that everything is ok. The authorities will not appreciate it if you suffer in silence and complain six months later. A lot of past assistants may tell you that their assistantship in Spain was the best year of their life. This can raise expectations and often leads to people feeling low especially during the first few weeks until they settle in.

9.3. CONSECUTIVE YEARS

English Language Assistants who wish to apply to stay at the same school or go to a different area in Spain for the academic year 2021/22 must apply through the British Council. Further information will be posted via [our website](#) in due course.



10. IN-COUNTRY ADVICE

10.1. PERSONAL SAFETY

It is very important to stick to the same health and safety rules as you would at home and always heed advice given by local people. Please refer to the **Personal Safety Leaflet** which provides emergency telephone numbers as well as essential guidelines on how to avoid potentially dangerous situations.

We strongly advise that you spend some time looking at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website and check it regularly as there is a lot of useful and up-to-date information provided. We also recommend that assistants read the UK Government's travel advice for Spain which can be found [here](#). Specific advice on safety and security can be found [here](#).

10.2. TRAVELLING AROUND SPAIN

“Throw yourself in, travel and visit as many places as you can, there's not likely to be many other times in your life when you have so much free time in a foreign country.”

Working as a language assistant gives you a great opportunity to travel around Spain and you should make the most of your free time. Holidays and long weekends offer you the chance to experience as much of Spain's beautiful countryside as possible. The Spanish government's tourist information website provides a lot of information about local traditions, celebrations, accommodation, etc. (www.spain.info/en/). Other useful travel websites are:

- www.lonelyplanet.com
- www.budgettravel.com
- www.roughguides.com
- www.worldtravelguide.net
- www.tourspain.es

“Stay in hostels when travelling. They are much cheaper than hotels and usually just as nice or nicer and often nearer the centre of town. Never be afraid to ask for help or information from locals. They are usually delighted to help.”

10.3. ISIC CARDS

International Student Identity Cards cost about £15 and are available online and from student travel agents such as STA and BUNAC. They can be used to obtain cheap entry into certain museums, theatres, cinemas, and art galleries throughout Europe. They may also entitle you to certain travel concessions. Please see www.isic.org for further information. Please note that in order to obtain an ISIC you need to be a full-time student, but other card options are available too.

For non-students who are under 31 there is the International Youth Travel Card, which can be bought in the same way (see www.statravel.co.uk/youth-identity-card.htm for further information).

10.4. INTERNET

In most rented accommodation, internet will already be provided and you will pay your landlord for this. In the case that it is not, former assistants have recommended that you do not take out a monthly or yearly contract and instead use a Pay-As-You-Go dongle, your phone's internet connection, or simply stick to using the internet in cafes. There have been issues in the past with assistants being unable to cancel their contracts and then being faced with legal action. If you do wish to take out a contract, please make sure that you read the small print carefully and keep a copy of all documents that you sign. Do not sign any contract without fully understanding the terms and conditions.

Student language assistants can sometimes benefit from using Eduroam. Thanks to global agreement, the Eduroam Wi-Fi roaming service is free-of-charge to users. More than 6,000 Eduroam hotspots are available at universities, research centres, academies, many schools, and other research and education institutions in more than 70 territories around the world. As Eduroam grows, more and more hotspots are appearing in additional places such as libraries, museums and public spaces like railway stations and coffee shops.

10.5. PHONING HOME & MOBILES

The country code for Spain is +34. Most assistants find that investing in a Spanish SIM card is a huge asset to their social life. Pre-pay is often more convenient and cheaper than a contract, and assistants in the past have recommended Orange, Movistar, Vodafone, and Happy Movil (through The Phone House). Online-only providers have started becoming more popular and are often very cheap. Yoigo and Lowi are two popular ones. Please also remember to cancel any contract before leaving the country. Do not sign any contract without fully understanding the terms and conditions.

Skype and WhatsApp calls have made contacting home much cheaper. Alternatively, you could use “Locutorios” (phone booth shops) which offer a cheap way of contacting UK landlines. Equally, many cafes will allow you to use their internet for free when buying a coffee or something to eat. Be aware that calls to the UK from a mobile can be expensive.

“Just like in the UK, cancelling internet, phone etc. contracts can be quite difficult and the companies you phone will offer you other contracts and, in my case, lie to try and get more money out of you.... Make sure you know exactly what you're signing up for when you first enter into a contract and make sure that you have your contract in front of you as you phone them to cancel a contract.”

10.6. LOST OR STOLEN MOBILE PHONES

If a mobile phone is lost or stolen, call the service provider and give them the IMEI number (a mobile phone's unique identification number) so that the service can be suspended. Report the theft or loss to the police, providing the IMEI and telephone numbers.



11. TEACHING TIPS AND RESOURCES

“Try to be positive as much as possible, never say no! It's a great experience so if you work hard, the school will appreciate it and you'll definitely be rewarded”

11.1. OBSERVATION PERIOD

When you first arrive at your school(s) you should ask for a period of observation of 1-2 weeks. It may not be offered to you automatically. Observation will allow you to familiarise yourself with the school environment, to experience classroom management techniques, as well as to get to know the names, faces, and personalities of your pupils and gauge their level of English.

Try to note the following:

- How the teacher starts and ends the lesson
- How the teacher speaks to pupils
- How the teacher involves all pupils, including shy ones, in the class activity
- What the teacher's attitude is to pupil errors and error correction; and
- How the teacher controls disruptive behavior, lateness, and lack of effort

11.2. TEACHING MATERIALS

One way of making language learning real for your pupils is bringing authentic materials from the UK into the classroom. Take the opportunity to collect a variety of resources while you are still at home.

Past assistants have found that the following materials worked well: photos of family and friends and your home town, lots of postcards, examples of UK coins and notes, train tickets and timetables, stamps, posters and tea towels to decorate walls, Christmas cards and crackers, posters and games, UK TV programmes and listings, magazines and local newspapers, CDs,

photos of school uniforms, a school timetable and school report, flashcards, word searches, maps, tourist brochures, UK food (Marmite, jelly, chocolate, custard, mince pies, gravy granules, etc.), adverts, menus, cartoons, comic books, DVDs (e.g. Ready Steady Cook for catering students), simple recipes like scones, recordings of the weather forecast, London Tube map, tapes of friends' accents and conversations, bingo, Taboo, etc.

The more materials you can find the better. Think about what worked well for you as a language student and about which items you find interesting when you are in a foreign country. You can also ask your host school(s) whether there is something specific they would like you to bring and to find out about topics you are likely to be asked to cover during your assistantship.



11.3. BRITISH COUNCIL TEACHING RESOURCES

The British Council produces and co-produces a range of resources specifically for language assistants. Making use of these will help you greatly to deliver interesting and useful classroom activities and will support you in solving problems in the classroom.

- [TeachingEnglish.org](https://www.teachingenglish.org) is an online resource centre produced jointly by the British Council and the BBC.
- The British Council [Learn English website](https://www.learnenglish.org.uk) is an excellent free online resource for students of English with lots of games, stories, listening activities, and grammar exercises. This may be a useful tool for you to use for your teaching but also to pass on to your students for them to access from home.

“I think the TeachingEnglish webpage is an invaluable resource, I often use it when preparing lessons, either for a whole lesson plan or just inspiration. I find the content to be really well designed and thought out. The glossary of teaching terms also available on the site is very useful too.”

Some other websites which may be useful are listed below:

- <https://go.edmodo.com/teachers>
- <https://www.teach-this.com>
- <https://en.islcollective.com>
- <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/uk>
- <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJsSEDFFnMFvW9JWU6XUn0Q>

11.4. LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS MANUAL

‘Language Assistant’ by Clare Lavery is a resource book designed for language assistants and provides information on all aspects of the role. Please read this carefully as it is extremely useful in preparing you for your assistantship. You can read the whole guide here: www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/pub_whole_manual.pdf

11.5. SCHOOL LINKING

Please note that many foreign schools are anxious to establish links with UK counterparts in order to share information and arrange pupil exchanges. Assistants are encouraged to help in whatever way possible in establishing such links

and there is information and guidance on the British Council website: www.britishcouncil.org/school-resources/partner

You may also wish to find out if your school has any eTwinning projects or set up a project yourself. eTwinning can be accessed via www.etwinning.net. eTwinning is a free online community for schools in Europe which allows schools to find partner schools and collaborate on online projects within a secure network and platform. Through participating in eTwinning, your school will be able to:

- enrich learning and motivation of pupils (aged between 3 and 19) and staff
- access high quality professional development and ready-made resources
- raise standards across the whole school community
- gain recognition through eTwinning awards
- Search for an Erasmus+ partner to carry out projects with and apply for mobility funding



11.6. BILINGUAL PROGRAMS

Many schools in Spain are implementing bilingual programmes. You may find yourself supporting teachers who teach science or PE in English. In some instances, students need to go through external exams in the school (PET from Cambridge University, GESE from Trinity College London, etc.). It is one of the roles of the language assistant to improve students' oral fluency and conversation skills.

www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/preliminary-for-schools/

11.7. BOOK LIST

You are not obliged to purchase any materials; however, some assistants have commented that the books below are useful for English language assistants, particularly those who may wish to engage in private tutoring or pursue a career in language teaching in the future.



Dictionaries

- BBC English Dictionary (BBC English/Harper Collins)
- Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (Longman)
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Oxford University Press)
- Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture (Longman)

Grammar Reference Books

- A Practical English Grammar (A.J. Thomson & A.V. Martinet, Oxford University Press)
- Current English Grammar (S. Chalker, Phoenix)
- Basic English Usage (M. Swan, Oxford University Press)
- Practical English Usage (M. Swan, Oxford University Press)
- Discover English (R. Bolitho & B. Tomlinson, Macmillan Heinemann)
- English Grammar in Use (R. Murphy, Cambridge University Press)
- Advanced Grammar in Use (R. Murphy, Cambridge University Press)
- How English Works (Michael Swan and Catherine Walter, Oxford University Press)
- Learner English (Michael Swan & Bernard Smith (eds), Cambridge University Press)

Basic Methodology Books

- The Practice of English Language Teaching (J. Harmer, Longman)
- How to Teach English (J. Harmer, Longman)
- How to Teach Grammar (S. Thornburg, Longman)
- How to Use the Internet in ELT (D. Teller & P. Gray, Longman)

Other Books for Teaching English

- Learning Another Language Through Actions, by James J. Asher
- TEFL Flashcard Games for Young Learners, by Chris Morton
- Easy TEFL Guide to Teaching English as a Foreign Language, by T.S. Seifert
- ESL Activities and Mini-Books for Every Classroom, by Kama Einhorn

12. SPOTLIGHT ON SPAIN

The Spanish population is now more than 46 million, with an average density of just 9.5 inhabitants per square kilometre - one of the lowest in the European Union. The Euro is the official currency.

Spain's urban population has risen to over 77% of the total number of inhabitants. The country's largest metropolitan areas include cities like Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Seville, Zaragoza, and Bilbao. Of the Autonomous Regions, Madrid has the greatest population density, followed by the Basque Country, Canary Islands, Catalonia, and the Region of Valencia.

Spain is a non-confessional state and the freedom of worship is recognised in its Constitution; however, the majority of Spaniards are Catholic, and this religion is deeply rooted in Spanish society.

Castilian or Spanish is the official language of the nation. There are also officially-recognised languages in the following Autonomous Regions: Cataluña has Catalan, Galicia has Gallego and the Basque Country has Euskera. In Valencia and the Balearic Islands, a dialect of Catalan is also spoken.

12.1. REGIONS

Spain covers an area of 505,955 square kilometres, which places it amongst the fifty largest countries in the world. Spain's geography is amongst the most diverse in Europe, boasting beaches, cities, mountains, and national parks, all within a relatively short distance of each other. Spain is the perfect place to visit other areas of Europe and Africa, such as Portugal or Morocco.

The country is divided into 17 autonomous regions, or 'Comunidades Autónomas' in Spanish. These Comunidades are further divided into 50 provinces ('provincias'). Each Comunidad will have its own history, traditions, culture and, in

some cases, language. They also have their own set of devolved powers and, typically, those communities with a stronger local nationalism have more powers.

12.2. NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

Spain has many official public holidays every year, some observed nationwide, some local. When a holiday falls close to a weekend, there is often a *puente* (bridge), meaning that the day in between is also a holiday. In all cases you should check public holidays with your school; however, the following holidays are usually observed in most regions:

- 01 January, New Year's Day
- 06 January, Epiphany
- 02 April, Good Friday
- 01 May, Labour Day
- 15 August, Asunción
- 12 October, Fiesta Nacional de España
- 01 November, All Saints Day
- 06 December, Constitution Day
- 08 December, Inmaculada Concepción
- 25 December, Christmas Day

Smaller towns will have local fiestas in addition to these holidays. Semana Santa (Easter) is one of the main holidays/fiestas in Spain and is a real highlight in the Spanish calendar (especially in Sevilla and the region of Andalucía in general). If you travel during this week, make sure you book early. Previous participants have recommended seeing as many Spanish fiestas as possible during the year as they are a real insight into Spanish culture and are brimming with traditional dishes, customs, lively displays, and fireworks, all of which vary widely across regions.

12.3. EMERGENCY SERVICES IN SPAIN

112 is the main emergency number in Spain. The European emergency number 112 is not the only emergency number in Spain. The national emergency numbers are:

- 091 – national police (Policía Nacional)
- 061 – health emergencies
- 080 – fire fighters
- 092 – local police (Policía Municipal)
- 062 – Guardia Civil
- 060 – to report a traffic accident

To report a crime, including stolen property and lost or stolen passports, visit the nearest Policía Nacional, regional police (Ertzaintza in the Basque Country, Mossos d'Esquadra in Cataluña, and Policía Foral in Navarra) or Guardia Civil Station to file a police report ('denuncia'). While in Spain, you can also call a dedicated English-speaking police line on +34 90 210 2112.

Citizens Advice Spain (English) – 0034 679 994 655 (11am – 2pm on weekdays) or email: info@citizensadvice.org.es

Samaritans In Spain (English) – 900 525 100 (freephone) or www.samaritansinspain.com

12.4. BRITISH EMBASSY AND CONSULATE

For up-to-date British Embassy and Consulate contact details in Spain please refer to: www.gov.uk/world/embassies. Please take note of the address of the British Embassy in Spain below in case of emergency or loss of your passport. Assistants who do not hold British citizenship should check with their own Consulates/Embassies in Spain.

British Embassy
Torre Espacio
Paseo de la Castellana 259D
28046 Madrid

Tel: +34 917 146 300
Fax: +34 917 146 301

Office hours are Monday - Friday 8.30am-5pm (Spanish time). If you call outside of these hours you will be given instructions on how to proceed with your call depending on your circumstances. Please see www.gov.uk/world/spain for more information.

Other Consular services are provided in [Alicante](#), [Barcelona](#), [Ibiza](#), [Las Palmas](#), [Malaga](#), [Palma de Mallorca](#), and [Santa Cruz de Tenerife](#).



12.5. BRITISH COUNCIL IN SPAIN

Please note: The British Council in Spain is not responsible for the administration of the Language Assistant programme - this is the role of the Spanish Ministry of Education in Madrid.

Our organisation started in Spain in 1940 and has since undertaken a major programme of activities to promote educational and cultural relations. The British Council has a total of 17 centres in a variety of locations including: Madrid, Barcelona, Segovia, Valencia, Bilbao, and Palma de Mallorca.

We also have the [British Council School in Madrid](#), where we give a bicultural and multilingual educational programme to almost 2,000 students, from 3 to 18 years old. We work hard to further their education at top universities, nationally and internationally. The British Council School is recognised globally as a leader in its sector and an innovative centre for British and Spanish education.

Many people associate us with qualifications such as Cambridge First and Advanced. Although they are a fundamental part of our work, they are not the only qualifications we offer. The International English Language Testing System ([IELTS](#)) is one of our most exciting ventures for young people and adults, conducted at our own centres and other external premises in Spain.

In addition to this, the British Council develops and participates in many different projects themed around society, science, education, and the arts.

In arts, we work primarily as facilitators and intermediaries. The Arts team in Spain develops relationships with cultural institutions and public organisations. Our goal is to showcase the best of UK creativity through artistic, innovative, and high-quality events. Through the European Union National Institutes of Culture (EUNIC) we are able to cooperate effectively with Europe's cultural institutions.

We also work with Teachers Associations in Spain, supporting their training and providing access to educational resources for its members. Our own annual conferences for teachers of English are held in late September and attract over 700 teachers.

The British Council is closely involved with the teaching of English abroad and organises a range of cultural activities, which may well be of interest to assistants. British books, tapes, and films may be borrowed from British Council offices for a small fee. Those requiring information or wishing to take advantage of its services may like to telephone or write to the British Council at one of its offices. To find out more about our activity in Spain, download our [Agenda magazine](#) (in Spanish).

EXAM ADMINISTRATION CENTRES

MADRID

Email: exams.madrid@britishcouncil.es
Address: Pº General Martínez Campos 31, 28010
Telephone: 911 218 000

BARCELONA

Email: exams.barcelona@britishcouncil.es
Address: C/ Amigó 83, 08021 Barcelona
Telephone: 911 218 000

BILBAO

Email: exams.bilbao@britishcouncil.es
Address: Avda Lehendakari Aguirre 29, 2º,
48014 Bilbao
Telephone: 911 218 000

TEACHING CENTRES

BARCELONA AMIGÓ

C. Amigó 83, 08021 Barcelona
Telephone: 911 218 000
Email: hello@britishcouncil.es

BILBAO

British Council Bilbao, Avda. Lehendakari Aguirre
29, 2º 48014 Bilbao
Telephone: 911 218 000
Email address: hello@britishcouncil.es

BRITISH COUNCIL SCHOOL

British Council School
C/ Solano 3-5-7
28223 Madrid
Telephone: +34 91 337 5050
Email: admisionescolegio@britishcouncil.es

MADRID CENTRO

Paseo General Martínez Campos, 31 28010
Madrid
Telephone: 911 218 000
Email address: hello@britishcouncil.es

MADRID ALCOBENDAS

Calle de la Constitución 59-61 Alcobendas
28100 Madrid
Telephone number: 911 218 000
Email address: hello@britishcouncil.es

MADRID LAS ROZAS

Nuevo Centro de la Juventud de Las Rozas
Avda. Nuestra Señora de Retamar 8, Las Rozas

Telephone: 911 218 000
Email address: hello@britishcouncil.es

MADRID SOMOSAGUAS

Calle Solano 5-7 Prado de Somosaguas 28223
Pozuelo de Alarcón (Madrid)
Telephone: 911 218 000
Email address: hello@britishcouncil.es

MADRID VILLAVICIOSA

Escuela Santa Ana, Calle Santa Ana 28670
Villaviciosa de Odón (Madrid)
Telephone: 911 218 000
Email address: hello@britishcouncil.es

PALMA DE MALLORCA

British Council Palma de Mallorca, Calle Arxiduc
Lluís Salvador, 1, 4º 07004 Palma de Mallorca
Islas Baleares
Telephone: 911 218 000
Alternative telephone: 646 727 631
Email address: hello@britishcouncil.es

SEGOVIA

British Council Segovia Avenida Padre Claret, 3
40003 Segovia
Telephone: 911 218 000
Email address: hello@britishcouncil.es

VALENCIA

Avda. Cataluña, 9 46020 Valencia
Telephone: 911 218 000
Email address: hello@britishcouncil.es

13. OTHER INFORMATION

13.1. DRUGS

Co-operating partners abroad have requested that the attention of British visitors be drawn to the severe penalties imposed for drug offences which may result in heavy fines and prison sentences. You are therefore strongly advised not to become involved in these activities.

13.2. POLITICAL DEMONSTRATIONS

Co-operating partners abroad have requested that the attention of British visitors be drawn to the severe penalties imposed for taking part in unlawful political demonstrations which may result in heavy fines and prison sentences. You are therefore strongly advised not to become involved in these activities.

13.3. SPOUSES / PARTNERS / DEPENDANTS

Assistants should note that the allowance is intended to provide for one person only. However, if an assistant's spouse remains in the UK and is unemployed, he/she may be barred from income support or be required to refund whatever was received as such since the start of the assistantship. Enquiries should be made to [HMRC](#) well in advance in order to prevent financial difficulties from arising during the period of appointment.



13.4. REFERENCES

Please note the British Council is **not** the employer of UK assistants abroad and should not be given as a referee in future job applications. In general, the head of the school would be the most appropriate referee.

13.5. SOCIAL MEDIA

You should be very careful about how you use social networking sites while you are an assistant. Keep your profile private so that it can only be seen by people you intend to see it. If you invite other teachers to be 'friends', remember to remain professional in what you say and avoid saying anything about your employer.

You should not exchange personal contact details with students, invite them to be 'friends', or accept similar invitations from them. This is likely to be regarded as inappropriate behavior. Check with teachers about the school's internet policy, particularly regarding any online communication involving students either in or outside school. It is exceptionally important that you understand issues around child protection, both to protect the students and also to protect yourself from any damaging and potentially serious accusations.

13.6. USEFUL WEBSITES

Useful websites include:

- www.globalgraduates.com
- www.gov.uk/world/spain
- www.britishcouncil.es
- www.google.es
- www.elmundo.es
- www.elpais.com

Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in these notes; however, the British Council cannot accept responsibility for any errors which may exist or for any subsequent changes.

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