

Notes for English Language Assistants appointed to Spain in 2014-2015



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

Notes for English Language Assistants appointed to Spain 2014-15

Congratulations on your recent allocation to a post as an English Language Assistant in Spain.

This document contains important information and advice regarding a variety of practical and administrative matters affecting UK assistants in Spain. They should be read carefully, retained for reference and considered in conjunction with any papers issued by the Spanish authorities. It is important that you take this information with you whilst undertaking your year abroad 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 should change at any time from now, please inform us immediately by sending an e-mail to assistants.uk@britishcouncil.org. We may need to contact you during the year with updates to these notes, invitations or urgent messages.

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

Best wishes,

Language Assistants Team, British Council

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The Basics

1. Co-operating Partner

Language assistants are either employed by the Ministry of Education or directly through the Comunidad.

Ministry posts contact details:

Subdirección General de Promoción Exterior Educativa
MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN, CULTURA Y DEPORTE
Paseo del Prado, 28, 5ª planta
28014 Madrid

Tel +34 91 506 5594

Fax +34 91 506 5704

www.mecd.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano-mecd/catalogo-servicios/profesores/convocatorias/extranjeros/auxiliares-conversacion-extranjeros-espana.html

E-mail: auxiliares.conv@mecd.es

Comunidad Posts contact details:

Please note that all those posted to *cupo comunidad* posts (IND 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 a **paid member of staff** with the responsibilities and required professionalism that this entails. Please refer to our website for more information on your role: www.britishcouncil.org/languageassistants-your-role.htm

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 be 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.

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 – please see chapter 10 of the “Language Assistant” manual and the “Essential UK” section of the website:

www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/whole_manual.pdf
www.teachingenglish.org.uk/language-assistant/essential-uk

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.

It is also very important to make sure that you are familiar 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 Eurydice webpage for specific information:

www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/eurypedia_en.php

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Some posts in Spain will be in areas where dialects and other languages are spoken. For example, posts in **País Vasco, Navarra, Galicia, Comunidad Valenciana, Islas Baleares** and **Cataluña** are often in both Castilian and Basque, Galician or Catalan speaking schools. Some assistants may be posted to an exclusively Basque, Galician or Catalan environment, in which case staff are asked to ensure that the assistant has regular exposure to Castilian.

3. Period of appointment

The period of appointment for UK assistants in Spain next year will be **1st October 2014 – 31st May 2015**.

Appointments to primary schools in Madrid are **1st October – 30th June**.

Comunidad Appointments to primary and secondary schools in Castilla y León are **15th September – 15th June**.

Assistants are expected to work 12 hours a week (some posts in Navarra may be 14 hours a week). 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.

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 have to 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 no regular public transport serves your school(s) and there are no lifts available to your school(s) please inform us of the situation.

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.

If you have not already done so please fill in the online **Acceptance of Assistantship** form providing the full name/s and address/es of the school/s you have been allocated to once you have received the details. The form can be found here:

[online survey](#)

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 ask about accommodation and give them an idea of your anticipated arrival date.

You should also ask them for some 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.

Staying a consecutive year

ELAs who wish to apply to stay at the same school or go to a different area in Spain must apply through the British Council. Further information will be posted on this link in due course:

www.britishcouncil.org/languageassistants-spain.htm

4. Predecessors

Contact details of assistants appointed to your area in 2013-2014 are included in a separate document. It should be noted that schools do not necessarily receive assistants from the same Anglophone country each year, and the British Council holds records of assistants from the UK only. Past assistants have emphasised how useful it is to contact former assistants in their area and have described their advice as invaluable.

Arrival

5. 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 **2015**. 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 require a visa to enter Spain.

If you have dual nationality (UK/other) you should ensure that your UK passport is valid and you should use this one to travel while in Spain. This will save you considerable complications with the local authorities (Social Security etc.). This does not apply if one of your passports is Spanish.

Assistants should carry photocopies of your passport with you at all times as a form of identification but ensure that you keep these safe and out of sight.

6. Foreign & Commonwealth Office Information

Before travelling to Spain you should ensure that you check the FCO's 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.public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKGOVUK/subscriber/new

We also recommend that assistants read the 'Advice for Travellers' documentation provided by the FCO, which can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/policies/supporting-british-nationals-overseas/supporting-pages/advice-for-travellers

7. Induction Meeting

Induction courses are organised by the Spanish Ministry of Education/local comunidades. Please refer to this website for information regarding where and when the courses will take place:

www.mecd.gob.es/servicios-al-ciudadano-mecd/catalogo-servicios/profesores/convocatorias/extranjeros/auxiliares-conversacion-extranjeros-espana.html

Please follow any information/advice that is given from the Comunidad/Ministry about your induction course. If your induction dates are not yet on this website please continue to check.

Please follow the instructions on how to confirm your place. If you do not confirm your place before the date stated, there may not be accommodation for you (if provided) during the course. 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 previous assistants and language assistants of other nationalities. 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 Ministry of Education in Spain is not usually able to arrange separate courses for assistants in the Canarias or Baleares, Ceuta or Melilla. You are welcome to attend the course in Madrid, but it is understandable if you are not able to attend considering the travel costs involved.

8. Travel to Spain

You are responsible for the cost of your own travel and any travel to and from your place of appointment during the year. The following websites may help you when booking your travel:

www.raileurope.co.uk	www.ryanair.com
www.eurostar.com	www.jet2.com
www.directferries.co.uk	www.flybe.com
www.eurolines.co.uk	www.thomsonfly.com
www.skyscanner.net	www.opodo.co.uk
www.britishairways.com	www.expedia.co.uk
www.easyjet.co.uk	www.ryanair.co.uk
www.interrailnet.com	

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 the cheaper airlines have quite a low baggage allowance.

"Travel around Spain is cheap - flights with RyanAir, Easyjet, buses and trains all good price, but some timetables are not frequent. Avoid travel on a Sunday." (ELA Spain 2012-2013)

Travel onwards from the induction courses

RENFE (www.renfe.com/) 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 apart from the high-speed links. The website (www.softguides.com/guia_madrid/transporte/buses.html) is useful for planning journeys. 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. The bus company "Bilman Bus" (www.bilmanbus.es) operates within the regions of Cantabria, Vizcaya, Álava, La Rioja, Guipúzcoa y Navarra, la Comunidad Valenciana and Murcia. For long distance journeys please see www.movelias.es

www.damas-sa.es/ has been recommended by former ELAs as a bus company in the South of Spain

www.TMB.cat is a website recommended for transport in Barcelona and surrounding area

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 information. It is up to you to carefully research and compare each company before booking travel.

Working as a language assistant gives you a great opportunity to travel around Spain and you should make the most of your free time. Try to avoid coming home every holiday and experience as much of the surrounding area as possible.

Money Matters

9. Monthly allowance

You will receive a monthly allowance (*ayuda mensual*) of around €700 (possibly slightly more in Madrid IND). **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 2 months without pay so that you do not run out of money before you get paid.

For Ministry allocated ELAs, the Ministry 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 give the following information to the Ministry: the IBAN (International Bank Account Number), the entity number (*la Entidad*), branch number (*surcursal*), control digit (*D.C.*) and the account number.. You can send these to the Ministry by email to mjesus.rodriquez@mecd.es. It is essential that all Ministry allocated ELAs follow the instructions provided in the *Guía del Auxiliar de Conversación*. 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 British 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.

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.

10. Erasmus grants

Language assistants who are currently on their compulsory year abroad **may** be entitled to an Erasmus grant. Please contact the Erasmus coordinator at your university for further information.

11. Currency and banks

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.

*"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."
(ELA Spain 2012-2013)*

"Not sure if this only applies to Spain but make sure to make photocopies of your passport. You'll need them if you pay by debit card in most shops." (ELA Spain 2012-2013)

12. Income tax

A Double Taxation Agreement exists between the UK and Spain. Under this agreement UK assistants are normally exempt from Spanish income tax for a period of up to 2 years. However, it is normally the case that 100% of the remuneration received abroad will be liable for UK tax. It is important to know that the agreement only covers teaching jobs. You might be taxed for any non-teaching jobs and should check how much you are allowed to earn per year without having to pay taxes.

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 taken into account when your own or your parents' tax liability is being assessed.

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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, cannot give advice on how your personal circumstances will affect your tax, and for data protection reasons. Please check www.hmrc.gov.uk/ for information about who to contact.

13. Insurance

You will not be insured under the Spanish National Health system because you will not be paying contributions from your monthly allowance.

You are strongly recommended to take out travel insurance for the period between leaving home and taking up your appointment, and again for the period between ending your appointment and returning to the UK. 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' 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.

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 time abroad. It is important to cover medical and other expenses, personal accident and personal liability, travel, luggage and personal possessions and cancellation charges. 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 no insurance company will cover you in the event of a natural disaster or the outbreak of war.

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.

For the time before and after your official period of appointment as an assistant, you will need a UK-issued European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). The EHIC card will also be useful for any trips to other EU countries. It covers any medical treatment that becomes necessary during your trip, because of either illness or an accident. The card gives you access to state-provided medical treatment only. It provides no top-up on the cover of the national health scheme while you are in Spain during the period of your contract. To apply for a card please use the following link: www.ehic.org.uk. You can also obtain an application form from the post office.

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 on: 01481 725241 for advice. Applicants from Jersey should contact the Employment and Social Security Department on: 01534 445505 for advice.

Please see the FCO website for more information regarding healthcare in Spain:

www.gov.uk/healthcare-in-spain

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.

In addition to health insurance, it would be wise to consider insuring your personal possessions. You should also 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

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the cause of an accident of any kind – e.g. cycling on the road – the resulting costs, practical and legal, could be prohibitively high.

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

Administrative Matters

14. 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 because of 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 are reminded that if you are absent from school without prior authorisation, your allowance will be discontinued from the first day of your absence.

If it becomes necessary to resign from your post, you must give sufficient prior notice in writing of your intended departure to the school, 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.

15. Solving Problems

Conditions in 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 British Council will instruct you to take the steps mentioned above. **Please see the provided 'Who to Contact' document for your line of referral.**

To avoid problems at school, 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 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 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.

Settling In

16. Accommodation

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.

The first thing to do when looking for permanent accommodation is to ask your mentor teacher if they can recommend anything. For example, 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, your best contacts are your predecessors at the school or in the area.

Consider going to your teaching location to arrange accommodation in advance of the induction course or of 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. Having accommodation lined up can make this easier. For temporary lodgings while you look for something permanent, investigate the possibility of staying in a youth hostel. **Do not** take out a contract on your accommodation **until** you know the location of your schools.

You may find the publication *Segundamano* (also online at www.segundamano.es) useful when searching for accommodation. Try searching for agencies or rooms for rent on the internet (see www.loquo.es and www.easypiso.com) and take a look at the property pages in the local *diario*. Outside of Madrid and Barcelona, assistants in the past have had relatively few problems finding suitable accommodation, but be prepared to spend about a week looking after arrival if you haven't arranged anything in advance. 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 getting your NIE (*Número de Identidad de Extranjero*).

Please note that the British Council is not in a position to provide or to help find accommodation.

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

- advertise on the school/staff notice board and ask around the staff; do NOT advertise in local papers or public places
- 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
- write to or visit as soon as possible any student or youth organisation in the area that might have details of available lodgings: the local tourist office may have a list of such organisations
- find out about local religious organisations as they often know of rooms 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

Some websites you may find useful are:

Temporary accommodation:	www.hihostels.com www.hostelbookers.com www.hostelworld.com
Permanent accommodation:	www.segundamano.es www.loquo.es www.easypiso.com www.easypiso.com www.lingobongo.com/madrid www.idealista.es www.fotocasa.es

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 do not usually 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 www.bcn-housing-students.com/ or www.loquo.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.

Former assistants have recommended www.kalea.es/fotokaleacasa/ for accommodation for ELAs appointed to Alava, Vitoria, Vizcaya, Guipuzcoa and Cantabria y Burgos

Previous assistants are often able to offer advice on how to find accommodation locally.

Remember that you will need your passport to check into hotels/hostels.

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 e.g. 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.

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.

17. 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.

The best way to start is with colleagues at school. Make sure that you always seem positive, enthusiastic and willing to learn. Socialise as much as you can with colleagues and accept all invitations to events, dinners etc. 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.

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 get in contact with a previous assistant in your region and ask them to give you any e-mail addresses or numbers of contacts they made. 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, 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. 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.

Please follow the advice given in our [Personal Safety leaflet](#).

www.educa-system.com offers opportunities for teaching extra English classes.

Assistants in Madrid may be interested in MadridMas (see www.madridmas.com), a student organisation which offers opportunities to meet people, travel, go to bars and clubs, fiestas, dance classes, etc. at discounted prices.

You should be very careful about how you use social networking sites while you are an ELA. 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 on your wall and be careful what you say 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 behaviour. 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 you from any damaging and potentially serious accusations.

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

- live with other students/native speakers
- 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 couldn't join in the UK
- 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. You may wish to ask your employer if they have contact details.

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.

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 very enriching and a real immersion in Spanish culture and language. It important to send assistants to rural as well as more urban settings as pupils have such little exposure to other cultures and English learning.

18. Travelling around Spain

Useful travel websites:	www.lonelyplanet.com
www.aboutspain.net	www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree
www.red2000.com/spain/	www.budgettravel.com
www.tourspain.es	www.roughguides.com
www.okspain.org	www.worldtravelguide.net

“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.” (ELA Spain 2012-2013)

“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.” (ELA Spain 2012-2013)

19. 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 see refer to the [Personal Safety Leaflet](#) which provides an emergency telephone number 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 ‘Advice for Travellers’ documentation which can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/policies/supporting-british-nationals-overseas/supporting-pages/advice-for-travel

Ensure that you check regularly the Spain travel advice page: www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/europe/spain

Please also refer to the FCO website for information regarding sexual attacks:

www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/rape

20. Taking a car 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.

Notes for English Language Assistants appointed to Spain 2014/2015

Document compiled by British Council: Information correct @ 24.07.2014. Please inform us during the year of any changes that you come across

The website of the Association of British Insurers (www.abi.org.uk) has general information on driving abroad, including the document 'Motoring Abroad' (see link below), which has 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:

Motoring Abroad:

www.abi.org.uk/~media/Files/Documents/Public/Migrated/Motor/ABI%20guide%20to%20motoring%20abroad.ashx

If you require information on driver licensing you should contact Drivers Customer Services (DCS), Correspondence Team DVLA, Swansea SA6 7JL (Tel: 0300 790 6801, or using the online email service which can be found here:

www.emaildvla.direct.gov.uk/emaildvla/cegemail/dvla/en/index.html)

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 a website at www.dvla.gov.uk. UK licences are recognised in all EU countries plus Switzerland, for as long as they remain valid.

You will need to research the laws on driving in Spain, including adapting your head lights for driving on the right.

21. ISIC cards

International Student Identity Cards cost £9 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.isiccard.com for further information. Please note that in order to obtain an ISIC card you need to be a full time student.

For non-students who are under 26 there is the International Youth Travel Card (£9), which can be bought in the same way – see www.statravel.co.uk/youth-identity-card.htm for further information.

All assistants under the age of 30 (or 26 depending on the country or region), can also buy the European Youth Card. Holders of the card are eligible for discounts at a range of places and on a range of services. For more information on the discounts and where you can buy the card, go to www.euro26.org.

22. 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 7243 8535. 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.org/spain.

23. Phoning home & mobiles

The country code for Spain is +34. Most assistants find that investing in a mobile phone 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, Happy Movil (through The Phone House) and Yoigo (see www.yoigo.com).

Previous assistants have recommended investing in a landline and internet through ONO (see www.ono.es). Very cheap calls to the UK via a skype account (see www.skype.com) can then be made using the internet. Using local "Locutorios" (phone booth shops) are also a cheap way of contacting UK land lines.

Be aware that calls to the UK from a mobile can be expensive. Previous assistants have recommended using Skype and www.voipbuster.com as an alternative.

HOWEVER do not sign any contracts for phones or internet if you are not going to be in Spain for the entire length of the contract (most phone contracts are for a minimum of 12-18 months).

24. Internet

Former assistants have recommended that you do not take out a monthly or year contract and instead use a Pay as You Go dongle or simply stick to internet 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.

25. Useful websites/information

You can read case studies written by former assistants on our website:

www.britishcouncil.org/languageassistants-ela-success-stories-main-page-2.htm

Year Abroad Advice: www.thirdyearabroad.com

Other websites:

FCO website for Spain	www.ukinspain.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/7550878/Living_in_Spain
British Council Spain	www.britishcouncil.org/spain
Spanish search engine	www.google.es
<i>El Mundo</i> newspaper	www.elmundo.es
<i>El Pais</i> newspaper	www.elpais.es
Information on Madrid	www.in-madrid.com/index.html

Teaching tips and resources

26. 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
- how the teacher controls disruptive behaviour, lateness and lack of effort

27. 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.

The British Council is also closely involved with the teaching of English abroad. Local branches develop useful resources and organise a range of cultural activities, which may be of interest to you and your school. For information on forthcoming events, go to www.britishcouncil.org/spain.

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/learning-ie-school-partnerships

You may also wish to find out if your school has any eTwinning projects or set up a project yourself:

www.britishcouncil.org/etwinning.htm

28. 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. This can be downloaded here:

www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/whole_manual.pdf.

Please read this carefully as it is extremely useful in preparing you for your assistantship.

29. TeachingEnglish website

TeachingEnglish.org is an online resource centre produced jointly by the British Council and the BBC has a specialised Language Assistants micro-site:

www.teachingenglish.org.uk/language-assistant

On the site you will have access to:

- Teaching tips
- Essential UK: Seasonal lesson plans based around UK topics
- Primary tips: Help getting started with primary-level students
- Classroom games

30. LearnEnglish website

The British Council Learn English website is an excellent free online resource for students of English with lots of games, stories, listening activities and grammar exercises:

www.learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/

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.

31. Facebook page

Our Facebook page provides an opportunity to discuss teaching ideas and share your experience with other assistants (we send approximately 3000 Language Assistants around the world each year).

www.facebook.com/EnglishLanguageAssistants.BritishCouncil?ref=tn_tnmn

32. 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 e.g. 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.

33. Useful teaching websites

Teaching websites	
www.englishclub.com *	www.onestopenglish.com
www.cambridgeesol.org/teach *	www.bogglesworldesl.com
www.news.bbc.co.uk/cbbcnews/hi/teachers *	www.developingteachers.com
www.letssingit.com	www.tes.co.uk
www.lyrics.com	www.projectbritain.com
www.enchantedlearning.com	www.slideshare.net/
www.cartoonstock.com	www.prezi.com
www.puzzlemaker.com	www.busyteacher.org
www.skyline-english.com	www.eslprintables.com/
www.eslcafe.com	www.vanda51.blogspot.com/
www.eslpartyland.com *	www.bbc.co.uk
www.eslgold.com	www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc
www.esl-lab.com	www.news.bbc.co.uk
www.eslflow.com	www.royal.gov.uk
www.eslflashcards.com	www.visitbritain.com
www.funschool.kaboose.com/	www.visitscotland.com
www.learnenglish.org.uk/kids	www.discovernorthernireland.com

* Recommended by former assistants.

Miscellaneous

Co-operating partners abroad have requested that the attention of British visitors be drawn to the severe penalties imposed for drug offences and 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.

Married students 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 well in advance in order to prevent financial difficulties from arising during a married assistant's period of appointment.

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.

34. Public Holidays

Spain has at least 14 official holidays every year, some observed nationwide, some local. When a holiday falls close to a weekend, there is often a *punte* (bridge), meaning that the day in between is also a holiday.

The following holidays are observed almost everywhere:

12th October – National Day	1st January – New Year's Day
1st November – All Saint's Day	6th January – Epiphany
6th December – Día de la Constitución	Good Friday (before Easter Sunday)
8th December – Feast of the Immaculate Conception	1st May – Labour Day
25th December – Christmas Day (within two week holiday)	

Smaller towns will have local fiestas in addition to these. Semana Santa (the week leading up to Easter) is one of the main holidays/fiestas in Spain and is a real highlight in the Spanish calendar (especially in Sevilla). 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 brimming with traditional dishes, customs, lively displays and fireworks, all of which vary widely across regions.

Useful contacts

For up-to-date British Embassy and consulate contact details in Spain please refer to

www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/find-an-embassy/

Please take note of the address of the British Embassy in Spain below in case of emergency or loss of your passport.

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.ukinspain.fco.gov.uk for more information

Emergency services in Spain

If you require urgent police attention, ambulance, fire brigade etc.	112 (no area code)
If you want to report assault, robbery or accident to the police	+34 902 102 112
Road accidents or information about weather and traffic congestion	+34 900 123 505
British Consular Emergency Service for any emergency queries at any time of any day. Leave a message and someone will normally get back to you within one hour of your call.	+34 91 524 97 00
General enquiries to the British Embassy	+34 91 700 82 00, +34 91 319 0200

Assistants who do not hold British citizenship should check with their own Consulates/Embassies in Spain.

The British Council in Spain

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 Council offices for a small fee. Those requiring further information or wishing to take advantage of its services may like to telephone or write to the Council at one of its offices. **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.**

The offices are located at:

British Council, Madrid - Main Office Pº General Martínez Campos 31 28010 Madrid Tel: (+34) 91 337 3500 Fax: (+34) 91 337 3573 Madrid@britishcouncil.es	British Council, Barcelona Amigó 83 08021 Barcelona Tel: (+34) 93 241 9977 Fax: (+34) 93 202 31 68 regisbcn@britishcouncil.es
British Council, Bilbao Avda. Lehendakari Aguirre 29 - 2º 48014 Bilbao Tel: (+34) 94 476 3650 Fax: (+34) 94 476 20 16 Bilbao@britishcouncil.es	Valencia British Council Av. de Catalunya, 9 (esquina a Primado Reig) 46020 Valencia Tel: (+34) 963 392 980 Fax: (+34) 963 691 389 Valencia@britishcouncil.es

Book List

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. Thornbury Longman
How to Use the Internet in ELT D. Teeler & P. Gray Longman
One to One Peter Wilberg Language Teaching Publications

Also look out for the series of handbooks and source books for language teachers published by CUP, Longman, Macmillan and OUP.

Quotes from former ELAs

"Spain's bureaucracy can be infuriating. Nothing will be done on the day you intend it to be, expect to have to return several times to get something sorted but don't lose your head, it will get sorted eventually."

"My advice is to go out to your chosen country/region a week before you start in school in order to find accommodation and to be as settled as you can be before the hard work starts."

"Assistants can normally become part of the local Erasmus university groups which offer great help with things like accommodation etc..."

"If you're going to Spain, then be warned, you may well not be paid on time!! Be patient, but keep contacting the local education authorities who deal with British council correspondence, and try to take extra money for the first 3 months just in case."

"Make sure you have your EHIC card before you leave and register with your local health centre when you arrive."

"Also, don't panic if you don't hear from your school. I eventually heard from mine on the 7th of September, but I know some assistants who hadn't heard from their school at all, but when they got to Spain they just popped into the school and everything was very easy."