



The new teacher's survival toolkit

A practical guide for thriving in your first term and beyond



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What this toolkit is for

Every teacher remembers what it felt like to stand in front of their first class.



It's often said that teaching is equal parts rewarding and challenging – and as an ECT, especially if you're starting your first year of teaching, getting started in the classroom can feel daunting.

But teachers can have a real impact on their pupils' lives and that's what makes the job so rewarding. We've put this toolkit together to help you find your feet over your first term – but you can refer back to it whenever you need a reminder.

You'll find guidance on your pension and payslip, mentor sessions, finding teaching resources, behaviour tips for the classroom, ways to protect your wellbeing and more.

Check out our ECT advice hub to find more support and resources.

Visit ECT advice hub



Getting started:

day one



So you're ready to start the new term – here are the first things for you to consider.

Make a note of your key people

My mentor:

My induction tutor:

My DSL (and deputy):

My union and rep:

Tips for mentor sessions

If you're not sure how to approach sessions with your mentor, make three simple notes:

- 1 What you feel is going well
- 2 Something you're finding challenging
- 3 A specific question you have

Check your digital safety

Take these four steps to protect your digital self:

- 1 Set every personal account to maximum privacy, then search yourself the way a pupil would
- 2 Choose whether you'd prefer to use your first and middle name on social media, rather than the surname pupils know you by
- 3 Read your school's acceptable use policy so you know the exact lines
- 4 Check your school's expectations around using AI tools – if there's an AI policy, read it

The important admin



Unions

The major unions for teachers are the [National Education Union \(NEU\)](#) and [NASUWT](#). A teaching union provides you with legal cover and they advocate for better pay and working conditions. They're the people who know your rights best and are invaluable to have in your corner.

You can usually claim tax relief on your union subscription.

[Join NEU](#)[Join NASUWT](#)

Teachers' Pensions

You're enrolled in the Teachers' Pension Scheme automatically. You contribute 7.4% of your salary (this percentage rises as your salary does) and your employer pays in more on top, to guarantee you an income once you retire.

[Teacher's Pensions guide for new teachers](#)

Check your payslip

It's easier to fix payroll errors sooner than later. When you get your first payslip, check:

- ✓ The tax code looks right for you
- ✓ Your Teachers' Pension and NI deductions are showing
- ✓ Your student loan plan is the right one
- ✓ Your union subscription is there (if you expect to pay through your school)

The teacher's toolbox

The right resources are invaluable for a busy teacher. Here's our toolbox of teaching resources, education news and support for ECTs, plus how you can get exclusive discounts.

Education Endowment Foundation

Evidence-based practical guidance and resources designed to help you make meaningful improvements in the classroom.

[Visit Education Endowment Foundation](#)

Tes Resources

One of the world's biggest libraries of teacher-made resources. You can filter for free resources, check reviews and adapt resources rather than building them from scratch.

[Visit Tes Resources](#)

Canva for education

All of Canva's premium design tools free for verified teachers: worksheets, displays, slides and video.

[Visit Canva for education](#)

Tes ECT advice hub

A dedicated hub bringing together expert advice, classroom resources and real stories from other new teachers to support you as you build confidence in the classroom.

[Visit Tes ECT advice hub](#)

Tes Magazine

Insight and analysis from teachers at every stage, plus the latest education news and analysis. Get the app for expert teaching insights wherever you are.

[Download Tes Magazine app](#)

Teacher Tapp

With the free app, you answer three questions a day and inform data that helps make the media, government and education businesses sit up and listen to teachers.

[Download Teacher Tapp](#)

Education Support

The UK's only mental health charity for education staff. Find free resources and connect with a qualified counsellor through their helpline.

[Visit Education Support](#)

Blue Light Card

At £4.99 for two years, you get more than 15,000 discounts on food, fashion, electricals, days out and more.

[Visit Blue Light Card](#)

Setting boundaries

The relationships you build with colleagues can be the most rewarding part of a job. But sometimes it can be hard saying “no” when you’re already working at capacity, especially if you’re new at a school.

We’ve put together these phrases to help you:

“I’d love to help. To do it properly I’d have to drop [X]. Which of the two would you rather I prioritise?”

Make it clear you’re willing to pitch in, but you’re already at capacity.



“I’d like to help but I’m at capacity this week – please ask me again after half-term though.”

You’re saying no because you don’t have time, not because you can’t be bothered.



“Let me check my to-do list and I’ll get back to you.”

It’s easy to overcommit when you’re under pressure. Take some breathing room to think on it.



“I can help with [X], but not with [Y].”

It doesn’t have to be all or nothing – make it clear you can pitch in, but you’re not taking it all on alone.



“I’d like to give this my full attention. Can we talk it through properly when I’m free at 4pm?”

Let them know you want to help, but now isn’t the best time.



Parental engagement

Engaging with parents and carers can feel daunting as an ECT. Remember that being proactive can go a long way. Here are our top tips:



Introduce yourself and send positive updates early on: this helps you establish trust from the beginning, making communication easier down the line.



Avoid jargon in conversations and emails home: using technical language can alienate parents – it's key to communicate accessibly and understandably.



Try not to be influenced by others' opinions: you might hear things about certain parents in the staffroom, but it's important you make up your own mind.



Most people just want to be listened to: put yourself in the parents' shoes and consider their point of view, especially if you're expecting a difficult conversation.

Opening at parents' evening

"It's lovely to meet you. [Name] has settled in really well. Let me show you what I'm pleased with and what we're working on together."

"It's great to meet you. [Name] has found it a bit tricky to settle in this term, but I'm really pleased with [X]. I think the next steps should be.... Is there anything you find helps at home?"

Parents' evening questions: the complete guide for teachers

A practical list of parents' evening questions, including questions teachers should ask parents plus the common questions parents ask teachers.

[Read guide](#)

Working with parents to support children's learning

Evidence-informed guidance from the Education Endowment Foundation to help schools work with parents to improve children's learning.

[Read report](#)

Your wellbeing



As a teacher, your wellbeing is vital. You've likely heard the phrase 'you can't pour from an empty cup' – and while it's true that your wellbeing impacts your ability to deliver better outcomes for your pupils, it matters in its own right, too.

We know you already have a lot to think about going into the first term of the year, so we've put together some simple tips you can incorporate into your everyday routine.

One win a week

Every Friday, take five minutes to write down something that went well, however small. At half term, the end of term and whenever else you need a reminder, look back at the list to remember your successes and see how far you've come.

Separate school and home

Sometimes it's hard to decompress and stop thinking about school or your pupils. Creating a physical separation can help you keep school and home separate in your mind, so if you bring work home, keeping it in a different room from where you relax and sleep can make a bigger difference than you'd expect.

Remember: things don't always go to plan

It's not a personal failing if a lesson or assembly doesn't go to plan – it's just part of the job, so try to see it as an experience to learn from. Have a chat with your colleagues, as they might have some useful feedback or insight. It's likely they've been there before!

Set boundaries

Some teachers find it useful to set hard rules around work and wellbeing, as it can be easy to over-commit and stretch yourself too thin. You might find it easier to choose what these are once you've been in the job for a few weeks, but they could include:

- ✓ Saying 'no' when you're at capacity (get help with this on page 7)
- ✓ Not checking emails after 6pm
- ✓ Leaving soon after the school day ends at least once a week

More support for teachers

You've reached the end of this guide,
but your teaching journey is just beginning.

You can find more support at tes.com/tes-for-teachers, including
classroom-ready resources, the latest education news and expert
insight into career development.

We're here for teachers at every stage of their journey, from their
first day in the classroom and every step that follows.



tes.com/tes-for-teachers