



## When School is COOL



Margaret Langdon went back to school to speak with three teachers and learn what it takes to front a classroom with students of all ages.

If you want to be a teacher because you think it's an easy job with short hours and long holidays – think again. It may not be the job for you.

If, however, you're prepared to work hard and you want your days to be full of variety and challenges... read on!

A career as a teacher means you will be able to make a real difference to kids' or adults' lives.

Attributes that can make you suited to teaching include good time management and organisational skills, patience, empathy, being passionate about education, and wanting to make learning fun.

Most people can think back to their school days and remember one or more teachers who stood out as being inspirational for one reason or another. Perhaps they were funny, or dramatic, or extremely knowledgeable about their subject matter. Or they had the knack of being able to encourage and bring out the best in everybody and open up the world to their students.

Great teachers come in all shapes and sizes. Perhaps, one day, one of them could be you.



**Kathryn Shlinners, 31, began her teaching career in her native - England. Five years later she calls Australia home, currently working at Old Orchard Primary School in Melbourne's east.**

**Why did you decide to become a teacher?**  
I love working with children because of their honesty, enthusiasm and zest for life.

**Is teaching a good career if you want to travel?**

Absolutely! I've taught in the UK, Australia and Spain. There are many options to teach in Asia and beyond and I have friends who are using their teaching degrees in the Middle East.

**What was your first year of teaching like?**  
That was when the real learning started. I learned a lot from my mistakes - the kids tell you if you're doing something wrong! I loved the experience though. Having your first class is the best feeling in the world. Scary, but so rewarding.

**What are the good things about your job?**  
You don't have time to get bored. The kids keep you on your toes and every day is different. The kids in your class become like a big family. That's a really special feeling.

**The not-so-good things?**  
There's a lot of work to do at home. And every teacher dreads report writing time!

**What's the biggest challenge?**  
Maintaining a good work-life balance. The demands of the job can make you really tired and you have to make sure that doesn't impact on your personal life.

**Do you recommend teaching as a profession?**  
Yes! It's challenging, rewarding, inspiring, frustrating, enlightening and tiring. It's many things, but overall, when you see how far your students have come at the end of the year, there's no greater feeling.

**What are your top teaching tips?**  
Be yourself with the kids. Kids are smart and know when you're 'putting on a front'. By giving them the real you, you'll build a strong relationship where learning - and fun - will flourish.



Secondary School

**Grant Taylor has been teaching science in Western Australian secondary schools for 10 years. His first year at a small country school wasn't easy, but he rose to the challenge and since then has gone from strength to strength.**

**What qualifications do you have?**  
A Bachelor of Science and Graduate Diploma of Education from the University of Western Australia.

**What was your first year of teaching like?**  
It was tough. I was the only science teacher and I had to prepare lessons and write programs for a range of topics I wasn't familiar with. I thought about quitting, but my colleagues were very supportive. I made good friends and grew to love the community I was working in.

**What are the good things about your job?**  
There's plenty of variety each day and it's a mentally stimulating career. The relationships and rapport you build with the students are rewarding. Holidays are great!

**The not-so-good things?**  
The workload can be high and you often take work home with you to do on weekends and holidays. Dealing with difficult students can eat up your precious time and add to your stress levels.

**What's the biggest challenge?**  
Students who don't want to be in school. Managing them can be an adventure but you learn tricks and techniques as you go. Time management can be a real challenge.

**Do you recommend teaching as a profession?**  
Yes, the interaction you have with students can be fun and rewarding. That outweighs the negatives.

**What are your top teaching tips?**  
Be prepared to work really hard in your first couple of years and then things will get easier. Get help and advice from your experienced colleagues and avoid going into a classroom under prepared.

**TAFE Teacher**  
Reannon Hemmings, 28, always saw herself working in legal practice - until she was offered a teaching position at Box Hill Institute in Melbourne five years ago. She gave it a go and since then hasn't looked back.

**What qualifications do you have?**  
A Business Degree and a Law (Honours) Degree, as well as a Postgraduate Diploma in Legal Practice, Skills and Ethics. I'm currently doing a Masters of Education at Monash University.

**What are the good things about your job?**  
I've grown to appreciate the flexibility that teaching offers. I teach business units at TAFE level and law units in degree programs, so I work with a range of students on different paths in life and I enjoy being a part of their journey. The most rewarding aspect of my job is when a student learns a new concept or theory and the material becomes meaningful for them. The staff room is also a warm and supportive environment with cups of tea readily on offer!

**The not-so-good things?**  
Bringing work home on nights and weekends.

**What's the biggest challenge?**  
Being proficient in each subject allocated to me. This often means late nights preparing for classes.

**Do you recommend teaching as a career?**  
Yes. It's a flexible profession that's different each day. If you love working with a wide range of people then teaching's a good choice.

**What are your top teaching tips?**  
Prepare extensively for each class. Work closely with colleagues and support each other.