



SDE Shenzhen New Teacher FAQ

SCHOOL LIFE

- 1. Do I need to stay at school during office hours?*
Yes, teachers are expected to stay during office hours. It will also depend on your school with how strict the office hours will be.
- 2. Is there a dress code for teachers?*
Most schools don't enforce a strict dress code. Wear business casual at most. No sandals and/or tank tops. Try not to show or wear anything offensive while working at the school. Language centers and some Kindergartens will have a uniform. Dress codes will be communicated once school placement is confirmed.
- 3. Will I have a direct contact at the school?*
Yes, you will have a local Chinese contact teacher at your school that will work with and support you.
- 4. What's the relationship like with other teachers at the school? Are foreign teachers included in school activities?*
Both foreign and local teachers are very warm and welcoming. While not all local teachers will be able to speak English, they will still try their best to interact with you and say "Hello". Foreign teachers are also encouraged to participate in school activities to better the relationship between yourself and the school.
- 5. Are there any other foreign teachers at the school?*
The number of foreign teachers will vary from school to school. SDE teachers often work at schools down the street from each other, or even at the same school. Most of our schools have 2-3 foreign teachers.

TEACHING/CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- 1. How long have SDE teachers been teaching?*
From fresh teachers to senior teachers, people who work for us come from all backgrounds and experiences.
- 2. Is teaching experience necessary before moving to China?*
While teaching experience is not necessary before moving to China, all teachers with less than 2 years teaching experience are required to have a teaching certificate (TEFL, TESOL, CELTA, etc.) before coming to Shenzhen to teach. We can help you get set up with a course. Once a course is started, it will take 2-3 weeks to complete.
- 3. Are online TEFL programs acceptable? Does SDE have any reputable recommendations?*
SDE works with TFA (Teachers for Asia Academy) to assist our incoming teachers to become TEFL certified. It is a 120 hour online TEFL in length and will provide a foundation to begin teaching English as a foreign language. It is 100% online without any offline attendance needed, and is internationally recognized.
- 4. What are the general age ranges of students?*



Kindergarten: 3-6 years old
Primary school: 6-11 years old
Middle school: 11-15 years old
High school: 15-18 years old
Language Centers: 3-18 years old

5. *Will I use textbooks in the classroom? Is curriculum provided?*

Public Schools have curriculum for students in their primary English lessons. Most will not have a dedicated book for a foreign teacher's class, as they already have an English book for the primary English lessons by a local teacher. Foreign teachers are welcome to build upon the curriculum by creating supplementary lessons with new activities and games to review with students. However, teachers will mainly be responsible for creating their own lessons and curriculum according to the level of the students.

Language centers (training centers) will have textbooks and curriculum for the teachers to follow more closely.

6. *What will the students expect of me? What are their goals?*

Student expectations and goals will generally vary by age group. K-12 students studying English are required to take an English course; for subjects outside of English being taught in English, students are generally preparing for international schools or study abroad. Students in adult training centers are seeking to improve their career and business opportunities.

7. *Will the students know any English to begin with?*

Students will have their primary English lessons starting from first grade. English is often heard from T.V. shows, movies, and commercials. Even those who have not studied English before will still know "Hello!" and "How are you?" Communication in English only is possible with students at all ages and levels and it's surprising how effective body language and just one word can be. However, you will surely need to get creative in how you introduce more difficult activities and concepts. If it becomes too difficult, there may be a teacher assistant to help out!

8. *Will I have a teaching assistant?*

While it's not a guarantee, classes under grade 3 typically have a teaching assistant to support foreign teachers in the classroom. Above grade 3, there may be student TA's to make sure routines are adhered to. In training centers and kindergartens, there will be a TA present.

9. *Do teachers experience any challenges with the large class sizes?*

During online orientation and after your arrival, we will go over the aspects of classroom management to share experiences and strategies with you.

10. *Do teachers in China need a state teaching license from their home country?*

A formal teaching license from your home country is not a requirement to teach English in China. If you are an applicant with a formal teaching license, then a TEFL certification may not be necessary.

FLIGHT AND ORIENTATION

1. *What should I pack?*

Please refer to the SDE packing list. (Don't have one, yet? Ask your recruiter!)

2. *When should I arrive in China?*

The exact date of your arrival will be given in written notice from your recruiter and Foreign Teacher Management Specialist.



3. *When can I purchase the plane ticket?*
Do not purchase a ticket until you have received written approval from your Foreign Teacher Management Specialist. Once you have finished preparing the necessary documentation as set out by our recruitment and visa team, and have received written notice from your FTM, you may book the flight.
4. *Will the airfare be reimbursed?*
Airfare is reimbursed from a flat 5,000 RMB to be paid within a month after the first working day at the school.
5. *Will someone be there to pick me up from the airport?*
Yes, an English speaking staff member will be there to meet and take you to the hotel if you land in the Bao'an airport or in other cities of China. If you arrive in Hong Kong international airport, a specialist will meet you at the border between Hong Kong and Shenzhen to take you to the SDE office and your hotel.
6. *What is covered in orientation? Is it mandatory?*
Online Orientation and after arrival orientation is mandatory and will cover all aspects relevant to you working and living in China.
7. *How long is the onboarding period?*
The onboarding period will be 4-5 days as set out by your FTM.
8. *Will I be provided accommodation during orientation?*
Hotel costs will be covered by SDE for the first four nights.

SDE International

1. *What is the FTM Specialist Role?*
FTM's will be there with you from the very beginning to help get you settled, find an apartment, communicate with your school, help you if you get sick, and anything else you may need help with (within reason). Remember to pause and say thank you to them as often as you can!
2. *What others kinds of activities can I get involved in with SDE?*
SDE has an academic consultant team, writing team, ambassador group and campus ambassador group. If you are interested in helping organize activities or participate in these groups, let someone in the office know!
3. *How can SDE assist in finding additional part-time work for extra income?*
SDE will advertise part-time opportunities to our teachers looking for extra income. SDE may also organize Summer and Winter camps for teachers who are looking to earn some cash over the holiday. If there won't be any, there are plenty of other non-SDE Summer and Winter camps for interested teachers to join.
4. *Can I join SDE at a different time of the year other than the beginning of a school year (September 1st)?*
We have positions open year round. However, the most positions will be open for those applying to join at the start of each semester.
5. *Can I stay for another year if I want to?*
Of course! If you would like to stay, you can speak to your FTM or recruiter about signing on for another year.



VISA PROCESS OVERVIEW

1. *Where can I learn more about the Z work visa process?*

Please refer to the SDE Visa Guide and other visa support materials sent via email. If you have any questions, please contact your recruiter.

2. *How long did the process take from start to finish?*

It will take around 30 days to complete the Z work visa process. However, this all depends how many documents are prepared prior to application. Most teachers will take an average of 45 days to fully prepare documents, and arrive in China.

3. *Can I get a visa on arrival at the Shenzhen airport? Or at the border from Hong Kong?*

Visa on arrival can be done for those who will be working with us in Guangdong province. Please contact your recruiter for confirmation.

4. *Can I process the Z work visa at the Chinese consulate or consulate in my home country?*

Yes, you can get the Z work visa at the Chinese consulate or embassy that has jurisdiction over your residency in your home country.

5. *How much are the total visa costs?*

Visa costs vary based on citizenship and how fast you want it processed.

6. *Can I visit other countries while I'm working in China on a Z visa?*

Before going out of the country, please let your visa handler and specialist know. Once you have finished your work and residence permit, you are able to travel outside of China and come back.

MONEY MANAGEMENT

1. *How much money should I bring to China?*

We recommend teachers to save a 15,000-20,000 RMB to help with upfront costs.

2. *How can I pay bills?*

Bills can be paid via bank ATM, WeChat or Alipay.

3. *How do I handle taxes as an American abroad?*

SDE will help with this. The United States practices tax equalization. Since the Chinese tax rate is higher than the United States', teachers will generally only pay Chinese tax, deducted each month, and file a US return, with no payment due. Of course, if you have other forms of income, your circumstances may be different, and we encourage you to consult a tax professional.

4. *Is Shenzhen an affordable city to live?*

While Shenzhen is a modern city, it will be more expensive than smaller Chinese cities. However, it is still very affordable for those looking to save money.

5. *Is it possible to transfer money outside of China?*

Yes, it is possible to transfer money outside of China. You can do an international wire from your bank or use western union. If you buddy with a Chinese local, they can help you transfer money back home quite conveniently.

6. *How can WeChat connect to my bank?*

Once you have opened a bank account, you will have to enter in WeChat your personal and bank information to link both accounts. Once completed, you are free to pay directly from your bank account via WeChat! Almost every store and person accepts WeChat pay.



7. *How do I set up a local bank account?*

As part of orientation, an English-speaking staff member will take you to the bank to help you open an account.

APARTMENT

1. *How do I go about finding an apartment?*

Your Foreign Teacher Management Specialist will be there to help you find an apartment.

2. *What is housing allowance and how is it different from salary?*

Salary and housing allowance is paid together via direct deposit. With an invoice provided, housing allowance will be tax-free.

3. *What is the average monthly rent of an apartment?*

The monthly rent per room will vary from 2,000-4,000 RMB depending on size and location.

4. *Is there a deposit on renting an apartment?*

Most landlords in China require a 2 month deposit for rent. There will also be an agency fee of typically ½-1 month's rent.

5. *How much are monthly utilities?*

This will vary, but expect to pay 200-400 RMB per month for utilities (this will all depend on you).

6. *How are the living standards in China compared to Western standards?*

The living standard in Shenzhen is very good. Shenzhen is a very modern city with new building and apartments. However, don't expect everything to be the same as your home!

TRANSIT

1. *How can I explore Shenzhen?*

Shenzhen has many different options for exploration. Transportation options include: metro, bus, taxi, Uber (Didi), and bike sharing.

2. *Can I buy a metro card to use on all transit?*

Your FTM Specialist will help you get a transit card. It can be used on the subway and bus.

3. *Is it easy to get to Hong Kong?*

There's many different ways to get to Hong Kong. You can either go through one of the many subway transfers, by car, or by ferry.

4. *What else is there to go near Shenzhen?*

There are almost too many great destinations near Shenzhen! Macau, Guangzhou, Zhuhai, Taiwan, and all of Southeast Asia are just a few of your options.

5. *Is the transit information written in English?*

It is mostly in Chinese and Chinese Pinyin. There will announcements during transit will be made in English, Mandarin, and Cantonese.

6. *Is there a taxi request service app like Uber in Shenzhen?*

Yes. Didi, partially funded by Apple, is available in Shenzhen.

TECHNOLOGY



1. *What exactly can the WeChat app do in China? Why is it a must have?*
WeChat is an extremely convenient application. You will find just about everything is linked to WeChat (including your bank). All communication whether business or personal is done via WeChat. You will be in many group chats sharing newly discovered stickers and sending red pockets (you will find out soon enough). If you don't have it, you will find it quite hard to live here!
2. *How is the internet in China?*
You will find most websites and applications extremely fast within China. However, anything based outside of China will either be blocked or be very slow. China has its own version of every Western website (YouTube, Facebook, Spotify, etc.). So ask a local or another foreigner that has been here for a while what Chinese websites/apps they use to access Western TV shows, movies and music.
3. *What are some VPN recommendations?*
Astril and Express VPN are popular choices among expats. However, there are many VPN options available. Do some research to find one that fits you and make your purchase before arriving in China.
4. *How do I go about setting up a mobile phone number?*
Your FTM Specialist will help you set up your phone number your first or second day of arrival.
5. *Any other mobile app recommendations to download before I come?*
Pleco is a great translation app that will be used very often. It is also recommended to connect your VPN to your phone before arriving in China.

LANGUAGE

1. *Do I need to learn Mandarin before coming to China?*
No, you do not; but it definitely doesn't hurt to learn! You will find your experience here in China more enjoyable and enriching if you study some Mandarin before arrival.
2. *How can I learn or study Chinese before arriving?*
There are a ton of online resources! You can start practicing your reading with Chineasy, practice listening and speaking with Chinesepod and learning vocabulary with Memrise. These SDE non-affiliated resources can be found here: www.chineasy.com
www.chinesepod.com www.memrise.com
3. *Do Chinese people speak Mandarin, Cantonese, or both in Shenzhen?*
Chinese people in Shenzhen speak to you Mandarin. In Hong Kong and Guangdong province, locals speak Cantonese to other locals, but will use Mandarin for foreigners and other non-locals.
4. *How can I learn or study Chinese after arriving?*
Keep using the resources you've used prior to your arrival and stick with it! Always try to use the language you've acquired. There a lot of Chinese people wanting language exchange partners, as well as tutors and Mandarin language schools looking for foreign students.
5. *Is it easy to get involved in language exchange groups?*
Ask another SDE teacher! There is always someone who knows a person that knows a person.
6. *Can I easily find a Chinese tutor?*



If you want to learn Mandarin seriously, you may have to find a serious Chinese tutor. There will be plenty of Chinese people offering to tutor you. Make sure you pick the right one!

SHENZHEN & LIFESTYLE

1. *What makes Shenzhen a good city to live in?*

By good, I think you mean "great". It's a fantastic city to live in! Shenzhen is continually in the top 10 for cleanest air in China. It's a modern tier-1 city with everything one can find.

2. *Is China safe?*

China is extremely safe. You may refer to these SDE non-affiliated videos for more information:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1GmO18dano

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogJonfQgdEU

3. *Are the gyms where I can exercise?*

Yes, there are plenty of gyms here in China. Ask around for some suggestions and get ready to haggle membership pricing!

4. *What are some outdoor activities I can do in Shenzhen?*

Yes, there are many outdoor activities in Shenzhen. From surfing to hiking and rock climbing, Shenzhen has a very active outdoor scene.

5. *How does Shenzhen compare to other international cities, what is the atmosphere like?*

Shenzhen is a very young, diverse city with dynamic energy. You will not find another city in China with the passion and variety of Shenzhen.

6. *What's the nightlife like in Shenzhen?*

There is nightlife in all districts in Shenzhen. However, the most popular locations are Coco Park and Shekou. Since Shenzhen is a very young city, it attracts young people and therefore offers a great night life wherever you are in the city.

7. *Any good coffee shop/restaurant recommendations?*

Coffee shops are becoming more and more popular in China, and especially Shenzhen. You won't have any trouble finding coffee shops and as well as restaurants. Eventually, you will find the one that fits your palate.

8. *Is the weather/humidity bearable?*

It's bearable! However, you will definitely be sweating in the summer months. Please refer to the SDE packing list for what to bring to beat the heat!

9. *Is it easy to find other expats to socialize with?*

Yes, it is easy to find other expats to socialize with. Shenzhen has a big and active expat community. If you have an interest in something, let someone know and they will find a group of likeminded people for you. Remember, the most important social tool in China is WeChat!

HEALTH

1. *Is it convenient to see a doctor? Are there English speaking doctors in Shenzhen? Is it affordable?*

Your Foreign Teacher Management Specialist will accompany you to the hospital if anything ever occurs. While a lot of the staff in clinics hospitals do not speak fluent English, most of the doctors will be able to speak conversational English.



2. *What does the social and accidental insurance cover?*

Social insurance, at most, can cover up to 90% of inpatient fees. The accurate rate depends on the medicine used and services covered in the visit. Accident insurance can cover up to ¥10,000 RMB in a contract period (1 year) as long as it applies to the accident insurance. For more information, please ask your Foreign Teacher Management Specialist.

3. *Can I live a healthy lifestyle in Shenzhen?*

If you seek a healthy lifestyle, you will find it. There are plenty of fruit and vegetable stalls all around Shenzhen. The air is very clean and provides a good environment for any outdoor exercise. Additionally, there are plenty of gyms and athletic centers.

4. *I need to bring medicine with me to China. What and how much am I allowed to bring?*

Before leaving, please check with the airline you plan to take for the most up-to-date and accurate information for airline rules and regulations regarding medicines. As for crossing borders, remember to bring any prescriptions with you. For refills, trips to Hong Kong are convenient and western medicines are readily available.

5. *How do I stay healthy in China?*

Teachers will inevitably get sick because of changes to the new environment. For this reason, we recommend that you bring a variety of medications from your home country to combat things like the flu, diarrhea, and other general illnesses.

In addition to this, we also recommend that you keep the following advice in mind:

- Do not drink tap water in China. Drink boiled or bottled water only.
- Eat completely cooked food only.
- Avoid food carts and vendors that are not there consistently.
- Don't swim in rivers or lakes.

6. *Do I need any immunizations before coming to China?*

Make sure you are up-to-date on routine vaccines before every trip. These vaccines include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis vaccine, varicella (chickenpox) vaccine, polio vaccine, and your yearly flu shot. Additionally, we strongly recommend teachers to get Hepatitis A and B as well as Typhoid vaccine.

7. *I am concerned about the pollution in China. What is that like in Shenzhen?*

Shenzhen is consistently ranked in the top 10 cities for cleanest air in China. You can refer to this SDE non-affiliated video for more information:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_DNf4oz3mo&t=1s

GENERAL

1. *What should I bring to China that I can't get there?*

Please refer to our SDE packing list.

2. *Is it difficult to bring my pet to China?*

Yes, it is difficult to bring a pet to China. The flight is quite stressful on your pet. Before coming, make sure to plan accordingly.

3. *How can I adapt to the culture change?*



Have an open mind and remember communication is important! Don't isolate yourself from friends and family; keep in mind that most expats have gone and go through the same things and might have a slice of wisdom to share with you.

4. *What's the best advice SDE can offer for having a successful first year in China?*

Be flexible. Moving to a different country is full of new experiences and challenges. Whether good or bad, these experiences will bring immense value to your life and career. As long as you are ready to embrace the unexpected, you will find yourself a step ahead of others.

