

How do I become a teaching assistant?

If you want to become a Teaching Assistant (TA) / Classroom Assistant (CA)* / Learning Support Assistant (LSA) you should look for jobs advertised locally. It's the employers (schools themselves or local authorities) who recruit to specific posts and decide what skills, qualifications and experience to look for.

*CA is a term mainly used in Scotland

I. Where to Find Vacancies

Posts are usually advertised in the local press or on your local authority's website. Sometimes they are advertised in your local job centre or job bulletins are sent out to schools. For contact details at your local council, follow the link below (by alphabetical listing)

www.dfes.gov.uk/localauthorities/index.cfm?action=authority

You should also try the following websites for TA / CA / LSA jobs:

Jobcentre Plus www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

Local Government Jobs

www.lgjobs.com

E Teach www.eteach.com

Gumtree www.gumtree.com (London)

Select Education

www.selectededucation.co.uk

ITN Mark Education

www.markeducation.co.uk

Guardian Jobs www.jobs.guardian.co.uk

Childcare Link www.childcarelink.gov.uk



II. Volunteer Jobs

To volunteer your time to support children and young adults in a variety of settings please see

Time Bank www.timebank.org.uk

Millennium Volunteers www.millenniumvolunteers.gov.uk

III. What do Local Authorities or Schools look for?

You don't need to have a qualification to be a teaching assistant (TA) in a government funded school when you are applying at entry level. However increased competition for TA places in schools has meant that many employers can select candidates with a range of skills and qualifications. It is advisable for TAs to gain a qualification not only to do their job better but it is becoming standard to have an appropriate qualification for their level.

Local Authority Grade	Typical requirements (CRB check needed at all levels)
TA 1	Entry level, no qualifications needed but some experience may be required and enthusiasm around supporting learning. An adequate level of numeracy and literacy is needed together with a willingness to attend the TA induction course.
TA 2	This post usually requires an NVQ Level 2 or equivalent. Some employers may accept certificates and diplomas in TA or related courses with experience and a willingness to gain a full NVQ.
TA 3	This post usually requires an NVQ Level 3 or equivalent. Some employers may accept certificates and diplomas in TA or related courses with experience and a willingness to gain a full NVQ.
HLTA	This post usually requires adequate experience, an NVQ Level 3 or equivalent together with HLTA status including a literacy & numeracy qualification at Level 2.

Many local authorities advertise for TAs who possess full NVQs at Level 2, Level 3 and/ or have HLTA status. This shows a level of competency based on the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and indicates that the TA at this level is able to deal with certain tasks and responsibilities. It also determines pay in many cases.

If you do not work as a TA yet it is almost impossible to gain an NVQ without having a job as a TA since NVQs are employment based qualifications. Anything that is not an NVQ for TAs tends to be at a slightly lower level as the time training in a classroom is minimal and not all of the NOS are met in some cases. These include qualifications with 'certificate', 'award' and 'diploma' in the title*. However these qualifications / courses can help you towards a full NVQ as many use key parts of the NOS. A number of local authorities do recognise these certificates when recruiting TAs but some only favour candidates with a full relevant NVQ. Always check with your local authority what they look for when employing TAs at each level as it varies around the country. Not all certificates are recognised by employers and some may not be recognised by the government's quality assurance body; the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). **Always Check!**



*These include TA specific courses leading to; an Award, Apprenticeship, Diploma, Certificate, Personal Development Award (Scotland) and CATS points in further and higher education.

For lots more on teaching assistants see www.skills4schools.org.uk/page.asp?id=63

IV. Qualifications and Training

There are no national qualifications requirements for TA posts, but you might also want to contact your local council to find about more about any local requirements they may have.

The qualifications available for teaching assistants fall into two categories, work-based and work related.

A. WORK-BASED

The work-based qualifications or vocational qualifications are the NVQs (or SVQs in Scotland). From early 2008 the NVQ / SVQ for TAs at Level 2 and 3 will be called

Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools. These are also available at Level 2 and Level 3.

There are also **apprenticeships** for teaching assistants that use the National Occupation Standards (NOS) like the NVQ / SVQ route.

National Occupational Standards are agreed statements of competence, which describe the work outcomes required for an individual to achieve the standard expected of them in work. For information on the NVQs for teaching assistants and the National Occupational Standards please see the Skills4Schools Website www.skills4schools.org.uk/page.asp?id=63

Other work-based qualifications include the new **Support Work in Schools Qualification (SWiS)** which offers a recognised award or certificate for those who don't want to take on the full NVQ straight away. SWiS is ideal for support staff with more than one role, new and inexperienced staff but TAs should ideally aim for the NVQ in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools.

For more on SWiS see; www.tda.gov.uk/support/qualificationsandtraining/swis/swisguidance

Work based qualifications (NVQ, SWiS and apprenticeship) usually require you to be employed in a school first as they are competency based and you are assessed at your place of work. However some training providers may be able to arrange work placements to enable you to complete a level 2 NVQ.

The **Apprenticeship** option is open for anyone living in England that is not in full-time education. Get on-the-job training, study for a nationally recognised qualification such as an NVQ and earn money while you learn. If you are aiming to work in a school or with young people consider the Early Years Care and Education Apprenticeship this can be found under the Health, Care and Public Services section. To find out more about an Apprenticeship scheme and register online for a free pack go to www.apprenticeships.org.uk

B. WORK-RELATED

Work-related qualifications such as the Certificate/ Diplomas and the Foundation degree do not require you to be in a job and are usually offered by a training provider such as a college or University. Entry requirements for these courses will vary between providers. However some providers may require you to be employed in a school to be able to register for a Foundation degree www.foundationdegree.org.uk

For general information and careers advice visit the national careers advice website Learndirect www.learndirect-advice.co.uk or alternatively call one of the learndirect advisers on **0800 100 900**. You can also find useful information on teaching assistants including a range of literature on the TDA website at www.tda.gov.uk/support

Plan your training by using the Skills4Schools Journey Planner, register for free at www.Skills4Schools.org.uk