

TEN QUESTIONS answered by our Language Assistant Samantha Wood (year 2021-22)

1. What stage/s of the Spanish education system do you teach? (Infantil, Primaria, Secundaria, Bachillerato, Vocational School, Official Language Schools)

In my current position, I teach in the instituto (high school) where I have classes with the first, second, third, and fourth year students (12-16 year olds). I also teach in the colegio (primary school) where I have classes with the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade primary students (6-12 year olds). I have occasionally subbed in with some bachillerato classes as well.

2. What were you doing before you came to Spain?

Before coming to Spain, I was working in the United States for an engineering company doing administration and finance.

3. Why did you choose Andalusia, this region in Spain?

I didn't know anything about Spain before coming here and I happened to pick Andalusia by chance. I read a little bit about each region before choosing but I really feel like I picked blindly because I knew very little about the region or country in general.

4. How many teachers do you work with? What subjects do you teach?

In the high school, I work with three teachers (one in history, one in science, and one in physical education) and then with my coordinator on general things. In the elementary school, I work with two teachers (in natural science and social science).

5. What do you usually do as a language assistant?

As a language assistant, I coordinate with my reference teacher about the upcoming week and what needs to be covered in class. Sometimes I help select activities and materials. Most times I lead the class for at least half of the period to review the material in English. It's important for the students to hear the subject area spoken in English in a natural and relaxed way. I ask the students questions about the content so they become comfortable in making conversation in English. I also make sure to correct their pronunciation because this is often the first time they have a chance to practice the language with a native.

6. Being a part-time assistant means harder, less comfortable work? Does it bring any advantages to your work here?

Being an assistant and working with other teachers means that you have many opportunities to see different teaching styles and methods. I've learned different things from each of the teachers that I've worked with and it has really helped in my own professional development as a teacher. It's also nice to meet and work with some many different students as well since I am changing classes all the time.

7. How's the "payment"? Are you always paid on time, or have there been any delays?

Payment at this school is extremely reliable and I've never been paid late. I am lucky that I don't have to worry about if the payment is going to come in.

8. How do you travel to school?

Luckily, I often get rides from Seville to school from other teachers. They have been so agreeable in bringing me to school or home and very easy to work with. Other times, I take the bus. It's only about a 20-30min ride (depending on if I am going to the elementary or high school) and the bus is very comfortable.

9. Have you experienced any difficulties this year? (Not enough communication with the coordinator, difficulty with Spanish paperwork, etc.).

I have been extremely happy with my placement this year and don't have much to complain about. The Spanish visa paperwork is always a little difficult and I had trouble with that in the beginning, but it all worked out. The worst part about the paperwork is having to make an appointment online because sometimes there are no open spots. That has given me some trouble.

10. Any other tips/advice you'd like to share with incoming language assistants?

Try to get to know the students so that you can build a nice rapport with them, then they will want to stop you in the hall and practice more English with you. And the year goes by very quickly so take advantage of all the opportunities in front of you.