



6 Ways to Tackle Your ELT PD in the New Year

by [Stephanie N. Marcotte](#)

As educators and professionals within the field of English language teaching, it's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day activities that fill our busy schedules. Often, we might write "update résumé" on a to-do list, but we never quite find the time to do this. This can also be said for professional development (PD) as well. It's much easier to take whatever workshops might be offered at work than it is to explore the true training that will help us move closer to our teacher and leadership goals. However, with the new year upon us, it is important to take the time to review PD opportunities for the upcoming year and create a clear plan of action.

Six Categories for Professional Development Planning

When thinking about PD, it's easy to get caught up in attending the same conferences or waiting for the same workshops to come around again. However, this often leaves holes in both teaching and leadership. Planning out PD takes a bit of scaffolding that can often be broken down into six categories. These six categories can help teachers of all levels outline their goals and truly scaffold their development, especially when transitioning into a new year.

1. Updating and Polishing Professional Documents

Before outlining new areas to study or items to apply in teaching, it is important to update the work that has already been completed. This can often be a launching or spring board to help remind you of where you are in your journey and where you want to go. Try to think outside of the box when creating, updating, and polishing these documents.

Pro Tip: Consider using programs like VisualCV.com, where you are able to create a modern CV and cover page. Even if you don't have anything new to add to your CV or résumé, you can always think of new ways of formatting and organizing the information that you already have.

2. Reflection and Discussion

We hear time and time again how important reflection is in our learning and development as educators, leaders, and members of our field. This can't be reiterated enough. Reflection is a way to think about ourselves, our identity, our students, our communities, and so much more.

Reflection is about more than just documenting lessons; it can be a tool used to help push thought and learning forward.

Pro Tip: This year, consider reading a new book and start pushing yourself to think about topics that frame teaching, learning, and society. You might think about reading [White Fragility](#) by Robin DiAngelo, [Social Justice in English Language Teaching](#) by Christopher Hastings and Laura Jacob, or [Supporting English Learners with Exceptional Needs](#) by Patricia Rice Doran and Amy K. Noggle with Heather Wayson Wilson, June Lucas Zillich, and Gregory Knollman. You might even choose to hold discussion groups with other educators to talk about this or similar books.

3. Teaching Tools and Tips

This is often seen as the go-to PD category. Think about your teaching practice and new tools, lessons, or resources that you would like to integrate into your course. You might decide to explore a new book or topic in the classroom. You might also decide to think deeper about your technology use.

Pro Tip: You might consider playing with resources like [Screencast-O-Matic](#), where you can record online lectures and videos. Instead of searching the internet for the perfect grammar video, you could create one yourself in minutes. There are a myriad of options available; however, think about what you want to prioritize in your own teaching.

4. Continued Learning

Next, try and find one class that might be interesting either to help support your teaching and/or to help you develop as a learner. Often, we are burning the candle at both sides, taking a class is a great way to decompress and focus on something else. Taking additional courses, whether with or without college credit, is often great in terms of developing transferable skills or gaining stackable credentials.

Pro Tip: You might consider purchasing a [MasterClass](#) membership or taking a [Coursera](#) or [FutureLearn](#) course. [TESOL International Association](#) also has great certificate programs, courses, and online workshops. Think about what you might like to participate in. If you are new to online teaching and learning, for example, this might be a great area to focus on.

5. Job Exploration

Whether you love your job or not, there are often other jobs out there that could be interesting. Try and take stock of the job you want, and schedule time to constantly be building toward that dream job or searching for it.

Pro Tip: Take stock of the transferable skills and experiences that you bring to any position. Be sure to highlight these in your professional documents. Then, scope out the ELT jobs that are currently open. One great place to look is the [TESOL Career Center](#). If

there is a job that you would like to pursue, see what the requirements are for that position. Then use this information to help tailor your application or continued PD.

6. TESOL Affiliate Involvement

Take a deeper look at what opportunities exist within your TESOL affiliate. Your TESOL affiliate is more than just a Facebook page or conference; there are often copious other services that are provided to help build community and development within the field of TESOL.

Pro Tip: Consider reaching out to your [TESOL affiliate](#) and offering to write a blog, volunteering to help plan a conference, sharing resources to be posted on social media, or acting as a liaison between your affiliate and other affiliates. There are many affiliates that provide free membership. Take a look at the affiliates in your area, and reach out to them to learn more.

Your Professional Development Plan: Get Started!

PD is a constant muscle that we must strengthen. We cannot fall victim to the same old workshops, but we must strategically look at what we need to do and learn in order to better develop our teaching and leadership muscles.

These six areas can be a helpful lens in order to view our own PD past, present, and future. Consider using the following table (also available as a printable PDF in the [Appendix](#)) to help plan out what your PD plan is for the new year.

Professional Development Category		Your Plan
1	Updating and Polishing Professional Documents	
2	Reflection and Discussion	
3	Teaching Tools and Tips	
4	Continued Learning	
5	Job Exploration	
6	TESOL Affiliate Involvement	

In this new year, take some time to reflect on all that you have learned and all that places that you would like to go. PD is a journey, and you're in control as to where it will take you. Don't shy away from new experiences or opportunities, but have a plan so that you make the most out of everything that comes your way.

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Appendix: Your Professional Development Plan

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