

The Ultimate Guide to Learning English in Melbourne



LEVEL UP ENGLISH

Melbourne is one of the best cities in the world to learn English. This is a truly multicultural city where you can make friends from all over the world. Large numbers of students from all over Europe, Asia and South America come to Australia because of the weather, people and lifestyle. Melbourne has been consistently chosen as one of the best places to live in the world!

In addition to all of the international friends you can make, the local Australians in Melbourne are quite interested in foreign countries. There are many social clubs and people who want to learn foreign languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, French, Italian and on and on.

Australia has a great education system, and it also has English as its native language. So as a result there are many high quality schools where you can learn the grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading and writing of English. You can study for 20 or more hours per week at about \$15 per hour, be introduced to a lot of new friends and events in Melbourne. Joining a good school is like joining a community of new friends.

There are also a lot of chances to develop your English and networks by doing a part time job. This will give you valuable work experience and a better feel for natural use of English. You can also learn a lot about culture through working with other people.

There are many opportunities to learn English, speak English, make friends in English and learn about Australian culture. This guide will help you make the most of the language schools, language exchanges and part time jobs that you can do in Melbourne.

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CHOOSING YOUR LANGUAGE SCHOOL

The biggest influence on your life in Melbourne will be the language school you choose. Language schools can be divided into three groups. All have advantages and disadvantages. It is important to think about what you want from the school and how much you want to pay.

In every school you will need to attend class for 20 hours per week. You will make most of your friends in the school you start with – so it is a big choice. Don't just accept the first suggestion from the first agent you meet. Make sure you find out about many schools before making your final decision.

The cheapest schools are as low as AUD\$150 per week, the most expensive are almost AUD\$500. The quality of the school and price don't have a close relationship. There are many expensive schools that don't teach very well, and there are cheaper schools that have great teachers, activities and curriculum.

	Cost per week	Education Quality
University Language Schools	AU\$400 - 450	High
English Focus Schools	AU\$250 - 300	High
Training Schools	AU\$150 - 200	Low

CHOOSING YOUR LANGUAGE SCHOOL

University English Schools (\$350 - \$500)

Students who want to do a Bachelor or Masters at a University can enter the university automatically if they complete the courses. This means that they don't have to take an IELTS test to enter university. The students usually study at the language school for 1 – 2 years. A large number of the students are not very motivated to study because they didn't choose to come to Australia in the first place. There is a big focus on writing and reading, because these are the most important skills for students when they enter university. The teachers' quality is high and the classrooms are clean.

Recommendation:

If you are planning to stay in Australia for a Bachelor or Masters then you should go to a university. Also, if you want to focus mainly on writing or you want to have the best possible facilities then these are the courses for you.

Training Schools (\$150 - \$250)

There are many schools, which have a much lower standard of teaching, but can give students a student visa to stay in Australia. The facilities are usually less comfortable. Many students

often don't attend class everyday and English isn't their main focus while they are in Australia. These schools can give students a visa, but then the students spend most of their time working.

Recommendation:

If your main goal is to improve your English and meet many new friends then these are not the best choice. If you simply want the cheapest possible school and you are not worried about quality, then they are fine.

Language Schools (\$250 - \$350)

For \$250 to \$350 per week you have many choices. Most of the schools have a very high quality of teachers, about the same as the universities, but don't focus so much on writing and reading. The classrooms are not as nice as the universities but are still very clean and comfortable. Students come from all over the world.

Recommendation:

If you want a high quality of education but want to save money for other things like travel then this middle option is the best.

AGENTS

Agents are very important and can help you in many ways. It is difficult to come to another country to study, travel or do a working holiday, but agents offer a lot of advice about how to apply and where to go. Agents can help you translate information from English into your first language, apply for a visa and choose a school.

Every agent is different, and you can meet with or contact many agents before you make a choice. The agent needs to make a living, but you don't pay them any money. So they make money through commission from the product they recommend.

For each agent you speak to, it is important that you talk to them about your needs and budget. Don't just choose the first school that they recommend. Try to find out about a large number of schools and look at their websites before you make your decision.

Almost all schools have relationships with agents. The biggest advantage of agents is that they can often get a lower price for the school or a special

discount. The agent can save you a lot of money every week. If you find the school you are interested in by yourself, you can ask the agent if they have a relationship with that school.

Agents know a lot about the reputations of schools and understand the advantages and disadvantages of each one – so it is very useful to go through an agent. If you want to do your own research, you can find the schools on google and apply directly. If you have questions about the school you can just ask them a question via email.

Recommendation:

Speak to many agents and get as much information about living in Australia, costs, visas and schools from each one before you choose what to do. It is possible to apply directly for your own visa and apply directly to the school. The disadvantage is that you must spend more time preparing and may get confused, and you may not get any discount.

HOW LONG TO ATTEND FOR

There are many levels of English. You should stay in the school at least until you finish Upper Intermediate. The Upper Intermediate level is needed to study other subjects in English and to do a good job in your part time job. To reach that level of English may only take 5 or 6 weeks of English classes. However, if the student's English proficiency is low to begin with then they may need up to 40 weeks of English classes to finish Upper Intermediate.

Here is more information about the different levels:

Elementary:

The most basic is Elementary for people who were not good at English in high school or who have only just started studying. The next levels increase in difficulty and include a lot of different grammar and vocabulary.

Pre-intermediate:

You can have some basic conversations about things you are familiar with such as study, family, hobbies and dai-

ly life. You can talk about the past and the future. You have a lot of adverbs such as 'quickly, slowly, finally'.

Intermediate:

You are developing vocabulary quickly about many topics and you can talk about conditionals and experiences in the past. You can understand passives but probably can't use them yet.

Upper Intermediate:

You can use a range of grammar confidently to talk about many subjects. It's easy for you to have a good conversation with a native speaker of English, but you still struggle to talk in a group of native speakers due to the speed. You have enough to work well in a part time job and develop meaningful relationships and maybe even find a girlfriend or boyfriend!

Advanced:

Express yourself with a variety of complex grammar and a high level of fluency. You can find the right word for the right situation and can communicate effectively in an office situation.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES

The ultimate way to make local friends in an English speaking country is joining language exchange groups because for example in a not-for-profit organisation like [Language Connection](#), all of the local Australians are interested in meeting native speakers from Japan, China, Korea or Taiwan because they are either learning to speak Japanese, Korean or Chinese, or they want to go to one of those countries. And similarly all of the Korean students want to meet locals so that they can make friends with them and improve their English.

All of these language exchanges can be found by searching on google: 'language exchange melbourne' or if you are looking for one language 'Japanese English language exchange Melbourne'.

The best thing to do is to make friends with a local person who is learning your language. You will have many things in common and you can go out for coffee

and spend time speaking in each language. They can invite you to parties and you can meet their friends and really experience life in Melbourne.

Multicultural exchanges

There are a number of language exchanges where people from many language groups come to attend the event. They are often held at bars where people drink, chat and make new friends. They usually use flags to show which country people come from and which language they are learning. In general there are many people from different foreign countries but not as many local people. Most local people who attend are really interested in foreign countries, but there are some who say they are learning a foreign language, but can't actually speak at all and they aren't studying. Be careful of these people, they may be really interested in the culture, but they often just want to pick a girl up.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES

The events are usually at a bar and are free to enter. You need to pay for anything that you want to eat or drink. But you can just drink water if you want. These places are noisy and it's a good test of your listening skills.

These events are great for meeting people and practicing basic conversation. You will find that you always repeat the same information. You will meet someone for two or three minutes and then they are gone. You won't improve your grammar but you may learn some new words. At least you will have fun.

Recommendation:

Go to meet people and get the contact details of people who you want to meet again. If you meet people again then you might have a more detailed conversation. Try to make friends with people who are seriously learning your language because they can make really good language exchange partners.

Language Exchanges

There are language exchanges which usually meet in cafes or language schools for two languages to exchange. An example would be Japanese and English. All members of the event are either Japanese and learning English, or they are Australian people who are learning Japanese. These events are quiet and you may spend 2 hours sitting with the same group of people talking about many topics, or playing card/board games. You can bring your grammar homework or some specific topics that you want to improve your vocabulary on.

Recommendation:

These events will often attract people who are quieter and not as exciting, but they are the best way to practice. Make sure you are very clear that you want to spend about half the time practicing English, and then help the other participants with their second language. The event only works if you honestly try to help others with their language ability.

MAKING FRIENDS

If you have recently arrived in an English speaking country to attend a language school or an [ELICOS institution](#) then you are probably thinking about how to make more local friends to practice your English with. One of the best ways to meet local people is to join groups related to your hobbies.

For example, I am excited by different types of coffee. I also love Dvorak's music, and now that you mention it I'm a big fan of Ice Hockey. If I was coming to Melbourne to study English I would look for a group related to coffee beans. I could also join a classical music orchestra. Melbourne doesn't have any ice, so there may not be as many ice hockey clubs. But just having one big interest and a group related to that is already enough. Here is a link to a classical music appreciation group - all you have to do is search on google.

<http://www.meetup.com/meetup-group-classicalmusic/>

Often these interest groups will be very small and they will be happy for anyone to join and people who are interest-

ed in very specific things are usually really happy to find anyone else who loves what they love, and they will be more likely to be patient with your lack of fluency in their language.

The key is to think about what are local people really interested in that comes from your country. Are you an expert in Ikebana from Japan, or do you know a lot about wine - everyone would like to know more about what makes a wine really great. The world is full of people with a range of interests.

I had no idea that Ikebana from Japan was popular in Melbourne, but there is a regular group dedicated to that, [Ikebana Melbourne](#). If I were Japanese and interested in Ikebana, I would attend this event and make friends with local Australian people who share the same hobby as me.

Once you join you make friends with local people who have similar interests with you and this will be one of the best ways to continue to improve your speaking and listening.

PART TIME JOBS

Getting a part-time job rarely gives international students new working skills, but always helps boost speaking and listening proficiency as well as cultural knowledge.

Many part-time jobs are easy to get, but don't have a large degree of customer contact. Perhaps the worst possible part-time job to do is as a cleaner - generally you will be by yourself because managers know that cleaners usually don't clean when they are with someone that they can talk to.

If you work as a kitchen hand you will talk to the cooks and the boss, but you may spend long periods of time just washing dishes with no chances to interact. If you work in a supermarket the career experience and wage is similar, but the big difference is that you have more opportunities to talk to coworkers who are usually locals.

Working in a bar is generally not the best plan, but works well for students that already have a high level of speaking confidence. Working in a bar is very tiring because while everyone else is able to drink to keep their energy levels high, you have to maintain your level of interest in the interactions despite

feeling sleepier and sleepier. Bars are only open at night, and some are open into the early morning which will make it much harder to study well during the day.

Working in a fashion shop is a good choice if you are interested in clothes. You can have long conversations with some customers who will come from a variety of backgrounds. Usually these jobs require little experience and will accept international students easily. If you have a coworker then it will be even better. However, many shops don't have many customers, and you may find that you are sitting in a shop all day with no-one to talk to.

The best kind of job is working as a waiter/waitress in either a cafe or a restaurant. You have to have a lot of short conversations, but usually there are quieter times when you can talk more to coworkers and customers who aren't in a rush. Just make sure that you don't work in a restaurant that sells food from your own country. This will pay close to nothing and you will speak very little English. The only advantage is that it is easy to get these jobs. That is because people quit quickly.

ACCOMMODATION

One of the best ways to meet local people is to live with them. In many ways it is easier to live with people from our own culture - we can enjoy the same food and the same language. But the downside is that we lose the opportunity to make friends with flatmates from other countries and the local country.

Because you will have a lot of things in common, like the kitchen, living room and common friends, it is usually much easier to develop a good relationship with flatmates than other local people. As a result, looking for share houses with local people is one really good way to meet people. Obviously some people will hardly ever be in the house, and others might not be the kind of people you want to make friends with, but it's worth trying. You never know what you will get - here is a great article about [hilarious flatmate cooking tales](#).

The ideal situation is when you join a share house with a lot of people close to the city. Make friends with everyone, cook together, do something in the house together and very quickly you will be getting invited to dinners and parties. Whatever people suggest think about doing it. Even if you don't really like playing sports, you can come to the basketball game anyway.

The best website to look for local English-speaking flatmates in Melbourne, and Australia is [Flatmates.com.au](#). I've used the site myself to help friends find places to live and it has been really good. You may have to pay, but it is much better than [Gumtree](#).

For many people, there are so many stresses involved with living in a foreign country that it is easier to live by themselves or with other people from the same country. This is also ok, because you can still meet new people through community websites that are in your home language. One example is for Japanese people: [Dengon.net](#).

The disadvantage of living by yourself or with people from your own language group is that you may feel lonely or get very few opportunities to speak to native speakers. You don't have to confirm all of your accommodation before coming to Melbourne. You can stay in a backpacker for the first week while you visit share houses and find the right one.

ABOUT LEVEL UP ENGLISH

The founders and teachers at Level Up English have all studied foreign languages and believe that learning another language is one of the great joys of life. We run a school which is like a community of learners. We have interactive and fun classes that focus on grammar, vocabulary, speaking, listening, reading and writing equally. Then after class we all go out to language and cultural events in Melbourne where we can practice the new English we have learnt. We are very connected to Australians who are learning languages and want to connect learners from many countries together.

Our classrooms are located in the CBD of Melbourne and we run classes for General English. To find out more please visit our website or email us to find out more.

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