

**MY CELTA  
EXPERIENCE:**

**-WHAT IT'S REALLY  
LIKE, AND WHY I  
WOULD HIGHLY  
RECOMMEND IT  
TO YOU!**

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So, you're thinking of doing the CELTA course, are you? Well, you must at least be intrigued by the idea, or you would not even be bothering to read through all this. Well, good on you for having the initiative to get this far – it's a great first step. Sadly, I can't meet each and every one of you, and spend hours talking you through the course, but I'd still like to offer you my perspective on the CELTA course, which I recently survived, or 'graduated', depending on your outlook, completing the course in September 2013. Now, you'll probably have heard (or will hear) from the lecturers and co-ordinators what the CELTA course is about, and what you need to do, and how beneficial it is...However, what *this* document will aim to do is give you a first-hand account of living the CELTA, and some advice and tips to bear in mind when making the choice on whether or not to embark on the CELTA course yourself.

Honestly? Here's the thing. Those beautiful certificates from Cambridge do not come easy; not by a long stretch. As the co-ordinators will have told you, it's hard work. And let me assure you, it *is* hard, and there will be times when you'll get so tired you'll want to give up, abandon your books and sleep for 4 days. However, there's no getting around it, it is plain, hard graft, and does require a lot of sacrifices in order to do it justice, to the best of your ability. Okay, so by now you're probably thinking about quitting this before you start...But let me assure you of something. Yes, I learned the true meaning of tired, yes, I did develop something of a Powerade dependency, and yes, I did get sick of not heading to bed on the same date I woke up on...but the CELTA course, for me, was one of, if not the best thing I have ever done. All the late nights and early starts will be worth it; when you stand in front of your class, knowing that what you teach these students will be carried with them for years to come; you will mean so much to them, the sense of value you feel is truly incredible. It may seem frightening at the beginning, and yes, the first time you stand in front of your class will seem daunting, but the students will warm to you quickly –remember, they'll be just as nervous, if not more so, than you! Soon you will acclimatise and start to enjoy it; teaching will become a pleasure. I *cannot* express to you the wonderful feeling you get when, thanks to you, a student has a 'eureka moment' – that is something they will always remember, and will always have you to thank for, to remember you by. We all remember that one lovely teacher who helped us, took the time to tend

to us, worked with us throughout it all, no matter how long it took...Wouldn't it be fantastic to *be* that person for another student?

In regards to the CELTA assignments, my best advice would be just try to keep on top of things – as soon as you start procrastinating and letting things pile up, you'll be in trouble. Big time. And it will take innumerable cans of Red Bull and a lot of lost sleep to get you out of trouble. If you manage your time effectively, you will find things a lot less stressful. The co-ordinators are very responsive and helpful to any queries; there is no such thing as a 'stupid question'. What is ridiculous is risking mistakes purely through a *reluctance* to ask, or send a quick email. I found the co-ordinators and mentors wonderful through my time on the CELTA course; you will grow fond of them (yes, I'm being serious) and be more comfortable turning to them in times of trouble. They will handle any problems effectively and sensitively; never be afraid to talk to them about any issues you may have – they are there to mentor you, and guide you to success.

Okay, more honesty time. If I could sum up my CELTA experience briefly; it was hard, one of the hardest things I have ever done, but definitely also one of the most rewarding, in terms of personal feelings, pride, and in terms of the qualifications you gain, and the consequent doors that are flung open to welcome you. It's an excellent pathway, and along the way you will pick up an uncountable list of transferable skills; and perhaps one or two friends. I still remain in frequent contact with all my fellow CELTA graduates and at least 3 of my previous students – another wonderful benefit to completing this course.

Well, that pretty much covers my CELTA experience. If you do decide to embark on the CELTA course, here's a quick list of my best advice, based on my own experiences and mistakes:

- **Keep on top of your workload; don't fall behind and cause yourself unnecessary stress!**
- **Take criticism with a pinch of salt (but no tequila): it is essentially there to help you, not drag you down.**
- **Check your assignments and lesson plans carefully; it's easy to make silly mistakes when you're tired.**

- **Embrace the course fully, and just keep in mind what it will do for you, when you reach that light at the end of the tunnel...no matter how far away it may seem!**
- **Get the most out of the experience; experiment, trial your own ideas, and never be afraid to express your creativity; who knows, you may just invent the next revolutionary teaching technique!**
- **Lastly, if you do decide to do this – have fun. Yes, it is hard work; but you can have a lot of laughs and great memories along the way. The CELTA course is what you make it – and believe me, it can be absolutely incredible, if you put your heart and soul into it.**

With that, I leave you to make up your own minds about whether or not to take on the CELTA course; however, I would highly recommend it, as I hope this document has managed to convey. Go for it, and good luck!

Bethan Skinner (Former CELTA survivor/graduate)