

# Teacher Salaries



## Pre-Reading

### A. Warm-Up Questions

1. Would you like to be a teacher? Why or why not? If yes, what type of teacher would you like to be?
2. Why don't all public school teachers from the same country make the same salary?
3. Which countries pay the highest salaries to teachers?
4. Should teachers receive annual raises? What's a fair annual wage increase for any worker (e.g., 1%)?

### B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again after seeing the words in context on page 2.

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| ___ 1. on strike      | a) the increase in prices over time                           |
| ___ 2. make ends meet | b) to act as a replacement for something else                 |
| ___ 3. inflation      | c) participating in a protest by not working                  |
| ___ 4. benefits       | d) having no movement or change for a long time               |
| ___ 5. make up for    | e) to have enough money for life's necessities                |
| ___ 6. stagnant       | f) payment for work   |
| ___ 7. out of pocket  | g) the finding and hiring of new employees                    |
| ___ 8. compensation   | h) to give the money owed from a loan                         |
| ___ 9. recruitment    | i) payments or perks for employees, such as medical insurance |
| ___ 10. pay off       | j) with one's own money                                       |

## Reading

### TEACHER SALARIES

*Let's do the math*

1. In February 2019, public school teachers in Denver, Colorado, went **on strike** for the first time in 25 years. A few weeks later, teachers in Oakland, California, voted to strike. In both cases, the teachers were striking for pay increases. In cities like these, with an increasingly high cost of living, many teachers cannot afford to live where they teach. To **make ends meet**, teachers take on side jobs such as tutoring, babysitting, or rideshare driving.
2. While most teachers don't choose their profession for the money, they do expect a fair wage for the important work they do. In some parts of the world, including the US and the UK, teacher salary increases are often below the rate of **inflation**. This means that instead of receiving a raise each year, many teachers take a pay cut.
3. Do other **benefits**, such as summer vacation and retirement packages, **make up for** low or **stagnant** teaching wages? Many teachers choose to have their salary payments spread out over 12 months. This does not mean they are actually paid for their summers off. During the summer, many teachers work part-time jobs. They also take courses and workshops and do prep work for the next school year. Some teachers also pay for supplies and professional development **out of pocket**.
4. **Compensation** typically increases as teachers become more experienced. In some countries, such as Switzerland and Korea, experienced teachers are paid very well. In others, the top of the pay scale for teachers is far lower than it is for other similarly educated professionals. Will **recruitment** suffer as more graduates realize that they can't **pay off** their student loans on a teaching salary?

*“When have you ever heard of a lawyer or a doctor having to go on strike because they can't afford to live where they work?”*

—Rachel Sandoval,  
Colorado teacher (CPR News)

## Comprehension

Discuss these questions in pairs and write the answers in your notebook.

1. What is the reading mainly about?
2. What happened in Denver and Oakland in 2019?
3. Why does the reading mention inflation?
4. A common teaching myth is dispelled in paragraph 3. Identify the myth.
5. How does teaching experience generally relate to pay?

## Vocabulary Review

### A. Choose the Correct Word

Choose the word or phrase with the closest meaning to the underlined word or phrase in the following sentences.

1. They didn't take inflation into account when they gave us a salary increase.
  - a) medical benefits
  - b) increased living costs
  - c) work experience
2. Our wages have been stagnant for five years due to budgets.
  - a) inflated
  - b) low
  - c) the same
3. I pay for paper, pens, and craft supplies out of my own pocket.
  - a) on my paycheck
  - b) with my own money
  - c) from my benefits package
4. A 5% increase does not make up for us having the lowest wages in the country.
  - a) fix
  - b) approve
  - c) meet
5. My daughter is a single mom. She is struggling to make ends meet as a teacher.
  - a) get help
  - b) pay all of her bills
  - c) find work
6. Some of the districts up north have more difficulty with recruitment than we do.
  - a) payment plans
  - b) filing taxes
  - c) employment interest

## Vocabulary Review cont.

### B. Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.  
You may need to change the word forms.

1. I want to \_\_\_\_\_ my student loans, but I can hardly afford to pay for food and rent.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ package for teachers with more than ten years of experience is quite good.
3. The salary isn't great, but the medical and dental \_\_\_\_\_ are good.
4. Are the teachers \_\_\_\_\_ in your area? I heard the schools are closed.
5. I teach full-time, but I can't \_\_\_\_\_ without having a part-time job on the weekends.

## Grammar Review

### PHRASAL VERBS WITH "PAY"

#### A. Introduction

Phrasal verbs are verbs that have a particle.  
The particle can be a preposition or an adverb.

Like all verbs in English, phrasal verbs can be *transitive* or *intransitive*. Transitive verbs need a *direct object* (noun or pronoun) to complete the sentence.

#### Phrasal Verb Form

verb + particle (*preposition / adverb*)

#### B. Separable or Inseparable?

Most transitive phrasal verbs are separable.  
This means you **can** move the direct object (*noun*) between the verb and the particle.

- ✓ I want to **pay off** my student loans.
- ✓ I want to **pay** my student loans **off**.

A few transitive phrasal verbs are inseparable.

- ✓ I **pay into** a retirement savings plan.
- ✗ I **pay** a retirement savings plan **into**.

## Grammar Review cont.

### C. Pair Work

Look up the definitions of the example phrasal verbs with “pay.” Then work with a partner and practice asking questions using these phrasal verbs.

#### Phrasal Verbs with Pay

- pay off            • pay down        • pay back
- pay up            • pay out          • pay into (*inseparable*)

#	Phrasal Verb	Definition
1	pay off	
2	pay into	
3	pay back	
4	pay out	
5	pay up	
6	pay down	

#### Example #1

Q: Have you paid off your student loan yet?  
A: No, I don't have a student loan to pay off.

#### Example #2

Q: Do you pay into a retirement plan?  
A: Yes, I pay into a savings plan once a month.

## Discussion

1. Should teachers be allowed to go on strike?  
What do teachers strike for besides fair pay?
2. Should all school districts in one country offer comparable wages or should teachers earn more where the cost of living is higher?
3. Should all teachers be able to afford to live in the school district where they work?
4. Should everyone receive an annual salary increase to make up for the rate of inflation?
5. Should teachers' wages be based on experience or performance?
6. Who should earn more money, an elementary school teacher or a day care worker? Why? How much more money should a college professor earn than a high school teacher?
7. How often should teaching wages be increased/reviewed?  
Should teachers' wages ever go down?
8. Will enough young people always be interested in the teaching profession or will recruitment become a major problem?

## Continuing the Conversation

During your class or group discussion, did you disagree with any of your classmates on some of the issues? Was there a specific question or topic you'd like to keep discussing with a particular person in your class? Use one or more of these sentence stems to continue the conversation.

- I'd love to keep talking about...
- I was interested in what you said about...
- Was it you who mentioned...?
- You know, you had a good point about...
- I noticed that we disagreed about question number...
- I was surprised to hear your opinion about...

## Listening

Fill in the blanks as you listen to the recording.

### TEACHER SALARIES

*Let's do the math*

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2. While most teachers don't choose their profession for the money, they do expect a fair \_\_\_\_\_ for the important work they do. In some parts of the world, including the US and the UK, teacher salary increases are often below the rate of \_\_\_\_\_. This means that instead of receiving a raise each year, many teachers take a pay cut.
3. Do other \_\_\_\_\_, such as summer vacation and retirement packages, make up for low or \_\_\_\_\_ teaching wages? Many teachers choose to have their salary payments spread out over 12 months. This does not mean they are actually paid for their summers off. During the summer, many teachers work part-time jobs. They also take courses and workshops and do prep work for the next school year. Some teachers also pay for supplies and \_\_\_\_\_ development out of pocket.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ typically increases as teachers become more experienced. In some countries, such as Switzerland and Korea, experienced teachers are paid very well. In others, the top of the pay scale for teachers is far lower than it is for other similarly educated professionals. Will recruitment suffer as more \_\_\_\_\_ realize that they can't pay off their student loans on a teaching salary?

# Answer Key

### LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students read about and discuss teacher salaries and review phrasal verbs with “pay.” This lesson includes sentence stems for continuing a conversation.

### TEACHING TIPS:

See *Discussion Starters Teaching Guide* (<https://esllibrary.com/courses/72/lessons/>) for a variety of ways to use the reading.

**LEVEL:** High Int

**TIME:** 1.5–2 hours

**TAGS:** discussion, teacher salaries, teachers, education, income, school

## Pre-Reading

### A. WARM-UP QUESTIONS

Have students work in small groups or as a class.

### B. VOCABULARY PREVIEW

- |      |      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. c | 3. a | 5. b | 7. j | 9. g  |
| 2. e | 4. i | 6. d | 8. f | 10. h |

## Reading (and/or Listening)

Read individually, in small groups, or as a class. Discuss the quote. You can also play the listening as your students read along. A gap-fill version of the reading is available on page 7. Help your students with vocabulary and expressions that they are unfamiliar with.

## Comprehension

- The reading is mainly about teacher salaries and the struggles some teachers have to make ends meet.
- Teachers went on strike to fight for pay increases.
- The reading mentions inflation because the annual pay increase many teachers receive is not enough to cover inflation. Because of this, some teachers actually earn less each year.
- The myth is that teachers get paid for their summers off. In truth, many teachers choose to spread their pay out over the entire year. Many teachers also work in the summer.
- In many countries, experienced teachers are paid well. However, in other countries, teachers at the top of the pay scale get paid a lot less than other professionals with a similar education.

## Vocabulary Review

### A. CHOOSE THE CORRECT WORD

1. b      2. c      3. b      4. a      5. b      6. c

### B. COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. pay off      | 4. on strike      |
| 2. compensation | 5. make ends meet |
| 3. benefits     |                   |

*(continued on the next page...)*



## Answer Key cont.

### Grammar Review

If your students are familiar with phrasal verbs, use this grammar review as a refresher. After reviewing the form and notes, have students look up the different meanings of the example phrasal verbs with “pay.” Go over their findings. Phrasal verbs often have multiple meanings. Here are some common meanings of phrasal verbs with “pay.”

1. to pay all of the money owed (e.g., on a loan)
2. to regularly put money into a savings account or fund
3. to give back money that was borrowed temporarily (e.g., from a friend or relative)
4. to spend or pay a lot of money for something
5. (informal) to pay someone what you owe them (e.g., a debt, dare, or bill)
6. to slowly reduce a loan by paying some of it off

Place students in pairs to practice asking each other questions using these phrasal verbs. Do some error correction on the board.

If your students need full instruction or extra practice on phrasal verbs, try our related Grammar Practice Worksheets lesson on Phrasal Verbs: <https://esllibrary.com/courses/88/lessons/2742>

### Discussion

Answers will vary. Can be done in small groups or as a class. As your students are discussing the questions, take note of any students who seem to have strong disagreements or compelling conversations about a certain question. Encourage them to continue their conversation in the next task.

### Continuing the Conversation

Encourage students to use the prompts to continue one of the conversation topics in pairs or small groups. Students who aren't sure who to talk to can mingle and join in conversations or listen.

### Listening

1. on strike, afford, make ends meet
2. wage, inflation
3. benefits, stagnant, professional
4. Compensation, graduates

#### SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the word *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell it this way: *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find this word in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spelling.