

# ESL Topics: Salary & Minimum Wage

## Sample Questions & Answers:

### Beginner:

**1.) What is the minimum *wage* in your country?**

*It depends on the province you live in, but my province of Ontario has a minimum wage of \$10.60.*

**2.) Do you feel the minimum wage in your country is fair and competitive?**

*I feel like it's enough to *keep you afloat*. However, it's not enough to get ahead.*

**3.) Do you recall your first job? What was your hourly wage?**

*I started working when I was 14. I got an hourly wage of \$6.40.*

**4.) Have you ever had a job that paid *sales commission*?**

*No. Nowadays it's not common to get sales commission unless you work in real estate or automotive sales.*

**5.) Was your first job *memorable* or were you very dissatisfied with it?**

*I hated my first job, but it helped me realize the importance of a hard days work. I worked 30 hours a week at the age of 14 in a grocery store while juggling high school. It wasn't easy.*

### Intermediate:

**1.) What is the lowest amount of money per hour that people can legally earn in your native country?**

*(Beginner questions #1 reworded) By law the lowest wage payable to a legal worker is \$10.60 an hour.*

**2.) Are "under the table" jobs common in your country?**

*While illegal they are still quite common in the service industry. Illegal immigrants take a fair share of under the counter jobs in Canada.*

**3.) In Canada single people can "get by" on minimum wage, but in other countries minimum wage barely allows people to survive. How about in your country?**

*It's definitely difficult to make ends meet.*

**4.) Does your country outsource work to other countries? How have blue-collar workers reacted?**

*Canada has started to outsource jobs to foreign countries like China. The only real outcry has been noticed in the automotive industry when middle class Canadians lost their jobs to oversea manufacturing plants.*

## **Advanced:**

**1.) How did you get your "foot in the door" at your current job?**

*I didn't need any assistance to get my current job as an English teacher. I just had to make sure I had all the prerequisites.*

**2.) Is your salary high and competitive enough for a disposable income? Are you saving for a "rainy day"?**

*My salary is definitely enough to get by and I am able to have somewhat of a disposable income. However, my occupation has no room for growth. I'm always saving for a rainy day.*

**3.) Is your current/future job secure from automation or outsourcing? What profession would you like to pursue if that is not the case?**

*My job is beginning to be replaced by cheaper online courses, along with translation technologies and a lesser need to learn English.*

**4.) Has your family climbed the **social ladder** in comparison to your grandparents or great grandparents? Is it hard to move up economically in your country?**

*I think climbing the social ladder in Canada is getting harder and harder. While there are a lot of resources available for new immigrants in the country from third world nations, much of the middle class is heavily taxed and has diminishing job opportunities.*

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**Match:**

Match the words from column 1 with the best-suited answer in column 2.

Column 1	Column 2
1.) wage	a.) additional compensation for exceeding expectations
2.) "keep you afloat"	b.) a requirement for something else to happen next.
3.) commission	c.) transfer of work to outside suppliers.
4.) under the table	d.) monetary compensation
5.) outsource	e.) money left over after taxes and expenses are paid.
6.) prerequisite	f.) machines replacing workers
7.) disposable income	g.) the hierarchical structure of society
8.) automation	h.) cash paid illegally without being

Column 1	Column 2
	taxed.
9.) social ladder	i.) surviving financially

### Questions:

- 1.) Does your current job provide room for growth?
- 2.) Do you want your children to have a part-time job or focus on school?
- 3.) What is the minimum age before being able to work in your country?
- 4.) How much are you taxed? Is it fair in your opinion?
- 5.) What professions are in high demand?
- 6.) Would you recommend your career to your children? Would you want them to follow in your footsteps?
- 7.) Do you think children need allowance?
- 8.) What was your first job? What were some of the perks?
- 9.) Will you work part-time or start a business after you retire from your profession?

### Vocabulary:

- **wage:** How much you get paid per hour or per task completed. *"My hourly wage is terrible for the amount of work I do."*
- **"keep you afloat":** Staying above water financially. *"It's not easy keeping afloat with my current salary and all my expenses. Hopefully I will catch a break."*

- **sales commission:** Extra/bonus pay when you make a sale. *"Even though my hourly wage is not that great I get a really nice sales commission for every sale I make."*
- **memorable:** Worth remembering because it was special or unusual. *"I had some really memorable experiences while I lived and taught in South Korea."*
- **"under the table":** Money paid in cash that is not recorded for income taxes. This form of payment is usually illegal. *"When I first immigrated to Canada I washed dishes under the table for a couple bucks an hour."*
- **"get by":** Earning enough money to pay the bills and living expenses but not enough money to have a disposable income. *"With my bills and child support I can barely get by these days."*
- **outsource:** When a company sends manufacturing or service jobs overseas to save on expenses. *"I heard they will be outsourcing the production of Canada Goose jackets next year to Vietnam."*
- **"foot in the door":** A way to get an opportunity for a job. *"While most internships in Canada don't receive a salary they do allow the intern to get their foot in the door at a big company."*
- **prerequisite:** A requirement before you can apply or move on to the next stage of something. *"Having a degree is a prerequisite to teach English in South Korea."*
- **disposable income:** Money you have left over after paying all your bills and expenses. *"Don't waste your disposable income on partying. Save it for a rainy day."*
- **room for growth:** The opportunity to move up at your company or in your field to earn a higher salary. *"While teaching English is fun there is no room for growth, so it's time to pursue a new career."*
- **automation:** When a job that was once done by hand is now replaced by machines. *"The automotive industry has been hit hard due to the automation of the assembly line."*
- **social ladder:** Your status based on income and occupation. *"If my son becomes a doctor he will climb the social ladder and lead a life I could only dream of."*

## Daily Expressions, Phrasal Verbs & Idioms:

1.) "monkey work": Work that is repetitive and not challenging.

*"I love working for a big company but my boss makes me do monkey work all day; it can get depressing."*