

Effective Lesson Plan

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INTRODUCTION

Lesson plans help teachers provide an effective learning experience for their students. A lesson plan is the instructor's road map of what students need to learn and how it will be done effectively during the class time. After planning the unit and sequencing the learning experience, the next step focuses on developing individual lessons. Before planning the lesson, it is important to identify the learning objectives for students. Specifying concrete objectives for student learning will help the teachers to determine the kind of teaching and learning activities to use in class. The next step is designing appropriate learning activities and strategies to obtain feedback on student learning. These activities guide in checking whether or not the learning objectives have been accomplished.

Preparing a Lesson Plan

There are mainly six steps that guide the preparation of an effective lesson plan. They are discussed below. Each of these steps is accompanied by a set of questions for prompting reflection and guiding the teachers in designing the teaching and learning activities.

1. Outline Learning Objectives

The first step in preparing a lesson is outlining the learning objectives for the lesson. This helps to determine what you want students to learn and be able to do at the end of class. Consider the following questions that will guide in prioritizing the objectives:

- What are the most important concepts, ideas, or skills I want students to be able to grasp and apply?
- Why are they important?
- If I ran out of time, which ones could not be omitted?
- Which ones could I skip if pressed for time?

2. Develop the Introduction

After prioritizing the learning objectives, the next step involves developing a creative introduction to the lesson that stimulates student interest and thinking. A variety of approaches like personal anecdote, historical event, thought-provoking dilemma, real-world example, short video clip, practical application, probing question, etc. can be used to engage students. It is important to consider the following questions when developing the introduction:

- How will I check whether students know anything about the topic or have any preconceived notions about it?
- What are some commonly held ideas or misconceptions among the students about the topic?
- What will I do to introduce the topic?

3. Plan Specific Learning Activities

The third step, planning the specific learning activities, constitutes the main body of the lesson. The teacher needs to prepare several different ways of explaining the material (real-life examples, analogies, visuals, etc.) to catch the attention of more students and appeal to different learning styles. When the examples and activities are planned, it is also necessary to estimate the amount of time that can be spared for each of them. Some time should also be kept aside for extended explanation or discussion. Some questions to help design the learning activities to be used are given below:

- What will I do to explain the topic?
- How can I engage students in the topic?
- What are some relevant real-life examples, analogies, or situations that can help students understand the topic?

4. Plan to Check for Understanding

After explaining the topic and illustrating it with different examples, the next step is planning to check for student understanding. Teachers should think about specific questions to ask students in order to check for understanding. These questions have to be written down and paraphrased. This will help in preparing the teacher to ask the questions in different ways. The instructor should be constantly monitoring the lesson to determine the degree of instructional effectiveness. Once that is determined, adjustments may need to be made in the presentation to reach a desired learner outcome, such as slowing down, if the material is too difficult; speeding up, if the material is too simple; jumping ahead, if the students already know the material; or re-teaching, if the students are missing some important prior knowledge. Some questions to reflect on are:

- What questions will I ask students to check for understanding?
- What will I have students do to demonstrate that they are following the lesson effectively?
- Going back to my list of learning objectives, what activity can I have students do to check whether each objective has been accomplished?

5. Develop a Conclusion and a Preview

The fifth step in planning a lesson is developing a conclusion of the lesson and giving a preview on the next one. Teachers should go over the material covered in class by summarizing the main points of the lesson. After this, it is good to give a short preview regarding what will be learned the next day. This will help students stay engaged and maintain a smooth flow and transition of the teaching-learning process.

6. Create a Realistic Timeline

The final step involved in developing an effective lesson plan is creating a realistic timeline. A realistic timeline will reflect the flexibility of the teacher and readiness to adapt to the specific classroom environment. Most often, many of the planned topics cannot be covered due to time constraints. So, the instructors will need to adjust their lesson plan during class depending on what the students need. This decision can be made based on the list of prioritized learning objectives. Some strategies for creating a realistic timeline are:

- Estimate how much time each of the activities will take, then plan some extra time for each.
- In the lesson plan, indicate how much time you expect it will take next to each activity.
- Plan a few minutes at the end of class to answer any remaining questions and to sum up the key points.
- Plan an extra activity or discussion question in case you have time left.
- Be flexible – be ready to adjust your lesson plan to meet students' needs and focus on what seems to be more productive rather than sticking to your original plan.

When you teach to the objective, you

1. Generate in the learner overt behavior relevant to the objective in a way that is efficient (use of time), effective (desired results), and relevant (pointed toward the objective).
2. Use
 - Explanation - includes definitions, examples, modeling, process ("how to"), and content (basic facts or concepts).
 - questioning - sampling (one student at a time), whole group, signaled response
 - responding to the learner in terms of the learning
 - Activities - guided, independent

The concept of objectives first appeared in the literature in the 1930's, when Tyler (1934) wrote about the need for goal directed statements from teachers. He was concerned that teachers appeared to be more concerned about the content being taught than with what the students should be able to do with the knowledge, i.e., is it meaningful or can it be applied.

When you select the objectives, be sure they are at an appropriate level by following these steps:

- task analysis - the process of breaking down complex learnings into simpler parts, then sequencing the parts for predictably efficient and effective student achievement.

- steps to task analysis in sequential order
 - select the tentative objective
 - brainstorm for possible enroute learnings
 - weed out nonessential enroute learnings
 - sequence enroute learnings
 - form diagnostic questions (Can the learner?)

Objectives differ from goals in that they are very specific and are behavioral, meaning that the outcome can be **observed**. Good objectives contain the following components.

A specific behavioral objective	this must be observable and is a learning outcome and focuses on the learner
The condition	specifies under what circumstances the learner is expected to demonstrate competency, for example what materials the learner should use, what facilities may be needed, and how much time the learner has
The criterion level	specifies the amount of behavior that is expected to insure competency in the task

The steps in Specifying the Learning Outcomes

A brief overview of Objectives:

- A description of the intended outcomes of your teaching; these may describe:
 - Information that you intend your students to know or use.
 - Describe the skill that you intend your student to perform or demonstrate.
 - Describe the value or feeling that you intend your students to experience.

These outcomes must be expressed concretely and observable. You need to be cautious of using words that denote "desirable goals" but which are not possible to adequately measure. For example, we tend to use the phrase "appreciate American history." While this may be a laudable goal, it is not an objective that can be measured easily in the classroom. Many authors suggest using a list of action verbs, such as identify, differentiate. You may find some additional example. The following are some examples of observable learning outcomes:

- The student will recite the Gettysburg address ...
- The student will subtract a two digit number from a three digit number.
- The student will measure the length of the classroom ...
- The student will address an envelope

As you can see from the above examples, we need to also know the criterion levels of success.

Once you have identify the learning outcomes, you need to identify the conditions under which learning will occur. If the conditions are obvious, you do not need to include them in the objective. For example, it is not necessary to write: "Using a pencil and paper, the student will ..." However, it is important to inform students of the conditions under which they will be asked to demonstrate competence. For example, students will study differently if they are asked to list the causes of World War II as opposed to being asked to explain which cause was the most important.

Now that you have completed the two steps of specifying the learning outcome and the conditions under which the learning will be demonstrated, you will need to determine what the level of success the student must master to demonstrate competence; this is also known as the level of proficiency. Determining the proficiency level is a matter of making value judgments; however, it is important to understand that these levels can change as circumstances change. For example, at the start of the school year, you may want your students to write an essay that contains an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. If a student writes an essay containing these three parts, the objectives would have been met. However, as the student's proficiency increases, you will change your proficiency level to include perhaps expressing at least two ideas in the essay or providing appropriate transitions between ideas.

The proficiency level can be based on a number of factors, including:

- a certain number of correct responses on a test
- completion of an assignment with a certain minimum number of errors
- being able to perform something a certain number of times without errors
- to list the essential features (i.e, the primary and secondary causes of World War II.

An example of an objective containing all of the above elements might be:

Given a list of primary and secondary causes of World War II, the student will be able to label each item with 100% accuracy.

The student will be able to write a behavioral objectives containing the three required elements for the content s/he is teaching.

Lesson planning and Classroom Survival • Having a carefully constructed lesson plan in hand allows you to enter the classroom with considerably more confidence.

• Effective lesson planning, especially during your early days of teaching, rests heavily in good habits such as setting aside quality time for planning and putting the plan in writing.

• One key strategy for establishing rapport with students is expressing interest in them, their country, and their nation.

• Creating a warm, friendly class atmosphere makes teaching and learning easier for all concerned. Fun is a legitimate part of the language classroom. Sample Lesson Plan (Preview) Introduction (5 minutes)

1. (Put the words healthy, exercise, diet on the board.)

2. "Today's lesson is about how to stay healthy." (Explain healthy if necessary.)

3. "One way to stay healthy is to get lots of exercise." (Explain . . .)

4. "Another way is to have a good diet." (Explain . . .)

5. "Today we will learn vocabulary for talking about health. We will also practice using the right part of speech (gerunds) for talking about kinds of exercise."

6. "Let's start with a warm-up exercise." (Warm-up) Survey: What's your favorite kind of exercise? (10 minutes) 1. (Ask everyone) "What is one kind of exercise?" (As they answer me,

I list two or three kinds on the board in gerund form—walking, playing basketball, swimming.) 2. Assign survey. "In a minute, please survey three or four classmates." (Explain/demonstrate survey if necessary.) Instructions:

• Ask three or four classmates, "What is your favorite kind of exercise?" (Put the question on the board.)

• You only have five minutes!

• Get up and start! 3. Debrief.

• Have students volunteer answers—put them on the board—use gerund form.

- Go over the words on the board (especially any new ones)—using sentence My favorite exercise is
- Encourage students to write new words in their notebooks.

(Main Activity) Small-Group Task: A Healthy Menu (20–30 minutes)

1. Tell students I am new in China and want to have a healthy diet here.
2. In groups, have students make up the best possible menu for me for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and be ready to explain their choices to me.
3. Remind students that the purpose is to practice speaking English.
4. Debrief. Have first group give me the breakfast menu, and explain why they chose the foods they did. Then have one or two other groups report on breakfast. Then repeat for lunch, dinner.
5. Follow up by describing a healthy daily diet in the United States.
6. Close by reviewing any new words.

(Main Activity—If Time Allows) Dictation (10–15 minutes)

1. Dictate the following short passage to students for listening/writing practice.

(Use procedure for Dictation)

- (1) My favorite kind of exercise is walking.
 - (2) Running makes my knees hurt, and it makes me too hot in the summer.
 - (3) Swimming is nice, but I can't find a swimming pool.
 - (4) I like walking because I can always find a place to walk,
 - (5) and because it doesn't make me too hot.
2. Have students compare their dictations in pairs and help each other.
 3. Debrief by having the students say each sentence aloud (in chorus) while I write it on the board.
 4. Afterward, they check, and I walk around to see how they did.
 5. Close with brief comments on their writing (e.g., capitalization, punctuation).

(Reserve Activity) Health Proverbs

1. Put the following health-related proverbs on the board: An apple a day keeps the doctor away. An ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure. Early to bed, early to rise, makes one healthy, wealthy, and wise.
2. Then have students guess what they think the proverb's meaning is and whether they agree with the wisdom contained in the proverb.
3. In pairs or groups, have students think of similar health sayings in their language and translate these into English.
4. Have groups report. Different groups will probably have translated the same sayings, so compare the translations.

Basic tips for ensuring that instructions are understood include the following:

1. Keep instructions as short and simple as possible. Lower level students, especially those with poor listening comprehension, are easily thrown by complicated instructions.
2. Make instructions as specific and clear as possible. Vague instructions such as Talk about . . . don't give a clear direction. Discussion starts faster and moves with more purpose if you assign students a more specific task, such as making a list, making a decision, or designing a plan. (For more on tasks, see chapter 8.)
3. Repeat the instructions, using the same (or almost the same) wording.
4. Write down your instructions in your lesson plans, even verbatim. This permits you to repeat instructions more than once using the same words.
5. Speak more slowly and clearly than normal when giving instructions.
6. Check students' comprehension of instructions by having them repeat the instructions back to you. (Asking "Do you understand?" is generally of little use because the instinctive human response to this question is to nod your head whether or not you have any idea what the teacher is talking about.)
7. Check to see if students are actually doing the activity as you instructed. Often students appear to have understood the instructions, and they may well have thought they did, but when they begin the activity, it becomes clear that they either didn't understand all the instructions or misunderstood some of them. Movement One way to establish better rapport with students, as well as to maintain better control of the classroom, is to step out from behind the podium (or teacher's desk, or whatever) and move closer to the students. Physical closeness tends to create a feeling of emotional closeness, and students will 69Lesson Planning and Classroom Survival tend to feel closer to you emotionally if you are near them during at least some of the lesson.

I would suggest four rules of thumb for where you should be when:

1. When you need to write on the blackboard or use other things at the front of the class, stay near the front so that you don't have to constantly run back and forth.
 2. When you are speaking to the whole class for extended periods, stay at the front of the classroom but as close as practicable to the front row of students. Using a semicircular seating arrangement helps in this situation because you are closer to more students.
 3. When students are working on their own, or in pairs or groups, move around the classroom to check on them or simply to be nearer to them.
 4. When a student is speaking to you in front of the whole class, and you want the other students to hear what is being said, move away from the student who is speaking. This may seem counterintuitive: if you are having difficulty hearing the student, your natural tendency is often to move closer. However, if you want the rest of the class to listen, move further away so that the student is forced to speak up. Question and Answer You will greatly enhance the effectiveness of a question asked to the whole class if you pause before calling on someone to answer; this ensures that everyone has the time and the motivation to think through an answer. The Blackboard In many classrooms around the world, the blackboard is still the teacher's primary medium for sending visual messages to students, so I conclude with a few suggestions on how to use the blackboard (or whiteboard, or other type of board).
1. Make sure your writing is large enough for people in the back to read.
 2. Try not to waste a lot of time writing on the blackboard during class. If you need to write something relatively long, do so before class. (In poorer countries where students do not have access to textbooks, you may need to write the necessary material on the board so that students can copy it before or after class.)
 3. Try not to talk to the blackboard. If you need to write something on the blackboard, pause for a moment and allow students a moment of respite from the sound of your voice.
 4. Use the blackboard to entertain. The main attraction of many of my classes is the pathetic attempts at drawing with which I illustrate points. Students laugh at the drawings, I make my point, and the atmosphere in class is a little lighter. If you can draw well, so much the better.

5. When they are available, using devices such as overhead projectors or computers equipped with projectors has considerable advantages. However, remember that such equipment is somewhat more vulnerable to technological mishaps than blackboards are, so have a backup plan the students is learning their names.

In a foreign country where you have large classes and the names all seem strange to you, learning the names of all the students in a class can require a considerable investment of time and energy. However, the investment will pay significant dividends as the term goes on, and it is generally worth the effort (at least for those classes you see more often).

Gower and Walters (1983, 49) list a number of ways to learn student names, including the following:

1. At the beginning of a course, try to memorize students' names using the Name Game. Have student A say her name, have student B say his name and the name of student A, and continue until the last student has to recite the names of all the students in the class—just before you do the same. This game requires considerable concentration and tends to drag in classes with more than thirty students, but it is a good way for you to learn a lot of names quickly and to see that the students learn each other's names (if they don't know each other already). The Name Game is, incidentally, an excellent object lesson in the importance of repetition and concentration in memorizing vocabulary.
2. Have students make up name/biography cards (as suggested in chapter 2). If possible, have students attach a small photograph.
3. Keep an attendance list; this forces you to review names.
4. Especially during the first few lessons, consciously make a point of using students' names.
5. While students are doing pair or group work, spend time mentally reviewing their names.
6. Use the returning of homework assignments or papers as an opportunity to review names. One reason learning students' names is effective in developing rapport is that it is convincing evidence of your interest in getting to know students as individuals. Another effective way to show your interest in students is simply by responding to what students say in language classes as much as - or more than - you respond to whether or not they say it correctly. This shows not only that you consider language use to be genuinely communicative but that you consider the students people whose ideas and feelings deserve to be treated with respect.

Eight Questions to "Think Aloud" as You Prepare Lessons

1. **Students:** What are the academic, social, physical, personal, and emotional needs of my students?
2. **Strategies:** Which teaching strategies will best facilitate my students' learning?
3. **Grouping:** Should I group heterogeneously or homogeneously? What size should my groups be?
4. **Timing:** When is the best time to do this lesson? Are there prerequisites my students should have mastered?
5. **Materials:** What materials and human resources do I need for the lesson to be successful?
6. **Success:** Was the lesson successful? Were my students interested? Did my students learn? What didn't work? What will I do differently next time?
7. **Sequence:** What can I do next to build upon this lesson? How can I make it flow?
8. **Rationale:** What is the reason for doing this? What objectives will be accomplished?

The Secrets of Daily Lesson Planning

Your daily lesson plans should detail the specific activities and content you will teach during a particular week. They usually include:

- lesson objectives
- procedures for delivering instruction
- methods of assessing your students
- student groupings
- materials needed to carry out the lesson plan

As with all planning, the format of lesson plans will vary from school to school. Many school districts provide lesson-plan books, while others allow teachers to develop their own format. Regardless of the format, here are the key components of successful lesson planning:

- Your lessons should be readable and detailed enough that a substitute teacher could teach from them in an emergency.
- Consider making a copy or two of each week's plan. I used to take one copy home and place others at key areas in my classroom so I could leave my actual lesson-plan book on my desk at all times, available for the principal. This also allowed me to work at home on preparing materials for upcoming lessons and on planning for the following week without fear of misplacing my lesson book!
- Try scripting your lessons. It was time-consuming, but in my first few years of teaching, it helped me be better organized and more confident in front of my students.
- As a general rule, begin working on plans for the next week no later than Thursday. By then you will have an idea of which lessons weren't completed, the objectives that need to be reinforced, and which upcoming school-wide activities need to be integrated into your plan. If you leave the planning until Friday after school, it may not get done!
- Make a master copy or template of the planning pages you use, and write or type those activities that stay the same each week and the times they occur. Make several copies of the new page to replace the blank lesson-plan pages, but don't copy them too far in advance, in case you change your weekly schedule. Then just fill in the blanks on the copies with specifics for the week.
- Balance grouping strategies and activities in each learning style or multiple intelligence type so you are meeting the needs of all your students.
- Check with your principal for guidelines on when he or she will want to look at your lesson plans. Some principals make a point of viewing new teachers' lesson plans on a weekly basis so they can provide on-the-spot assistance throughout the school year.

Lots of image generators are available on the Web. Most are free and easy to use -- so easy even a technology director can manage them. Here are five of my favorites.

Hardware and Software Essentials

We asked members of the Education World Tech Team to tell us what hardware and software they consider essential -- or invaluable -- for today's educator? Discover what they told us.

Lesson planning is important because it helps teachers ensure that the day-to-day activities that go on in their classrooms are providing students with an adequate level of long-term progress toward the goals outlined in their scope and sequence, as well as their individual education plans when necessary. Without lesson planning, it is easy to get off track with one's class and miss out on educational targets.

An effective lesson plan includes several elements: learning objectives, quality questions, supplies and activities. It is important to have the learning objectives in mind because those should drive the development and implementation of all activities in the classroom. Quality questions are inquiries that the teacher plans to direct at the students over the course of the lesson. Sometimes these questions are rhetorical in nature, but more often they are designed to help the student think at a higher level than simple memorization and comprehension.

Listing the supplies needed is helpful for teacher preparation for the class, as sometimes the supplies may be beyond what the teacher has on hand. With technology becoming increasingly popular in the classroom, many lessons require tablet computers, cameras and other devices that the teacher needs to arrange ahead of time. Finally, activities round out the lesson plan. It is important to come up with a plan for assessment to determine whether the class has met its targets.

REFERENCE BOOK

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