

Video transcript

Introduction

The aim of this video is to look at the steps involved in planning a lesson and how to ensure that planning is directly linked to effective teaching and learning.

We will cover the key aspects of lesson planning, including:

- different types of planning
- learning objectives
- success criteria
- activities
- and the importance of evaluation and reflection.

Different types of planning

First, let's look at the different types of planning.

To plan individual lessons, it is important to first look at **long-term planning**, which covers the content of the syllabus across the school year or years. The long-term plan enables teachers to identify the key skills and learning objectives that need to be delivered, as well as subject specific content and preparation for summative assessments. It includes consideration of timing of learning, access to resources, and a balanced coverage of different skills and concepts. You should consider the number of lessons your school offers for your subject, allowing flexibility for events that may take time out of your teaching.

Once the outline for teaching and learning is in place, then more detailed **medium-term planning** can start for the teaching sequence and the learning objectives that need to be covered during each unit, term, or semester. An outline of possible teaching activities can be included in

the medium-term plan which will then be fully developed in the planning for individual lessons. An example of a medium-term plan is the scheme of work.

The scheme of work can form the main basis of your teaching, or you can select aspects that you think are most relevant to your own learners. You may choose to support the existing Cambridge Scheme of Work with your own material, ideas, and additional resources. The scheme of work is designed to be flexible and should be tailored to your own context and your own teaching methods.

For each unit or topic, it is helpful to estimate the number of lessons that learners will need to cover the learning objectives, key skills and concepts. This can be adapted as the academic year progresses. Remember that your expertise and knowledge of the capabilities of your own learners makes you best placed to determine how many lessons are needed.

Short-term planning involves writing lesson plans. Lesson plans are led by the learning objectives, or parts of learning objectives that you are focusing on in the lesson.

Lesson plans should consider the needs of all learners to create an inclusive learning environment. They should provide:

- details of activities and resources
- possible timings
- learning and lesson objectives
- notes on previous learning
- and information on differentiation and assessment.

A lesson plan should build on previous learning. It may be necessary to adapt lesson plans to suit your own group of learners, or to revisit an aspect of learning that they have not fully grasped.

Initially, lesson planning can take quite a long time, but your planning will speed up as you become more familiar with the content and skills that make an effective lesson plan.

This is the Cambridge lesson planning template. However, your school may have its own planning template that you could use.

Objectives and success criteria

The starting point for any lesson plan is the identification of one or more learning objectives – these should answer the question ‘What do I want learners to learn?’ and be linked to your medium-term plan. You should also be clear about how your lesson will fit with the assessment objectives in the syllabus.

You should plan your activities with these in mind and should consider how you will assess the learning that has taken place and how effective this has been.

To help you frame the lesson plan you could use active verbs from ‘Blooms Taxonomy’.

There should be a clear distinction between what the learners will do and what they will learn. You should also consider what evidence there will be to demonstrate learning – this is the success criteria. Learners need to feel challenged in lessons and teachers need to set high expectations to ensure maximum progress.

Let's now look at learning objectives and success criteria:

Learning objectives should not be too broad, they need to be specific and there should be a maximum of three. Ensure that learning objectives allow for an element of challenge for **all** learners and avoid learning objectives that are purely based on learning facts.

Learning objectives are what the learners should be able to do by the end of the lesson. Lesson objectives are essentially what they are going to do in order to achieve that.

They should be shared with your learners early on in the lesson. They could be written on a PowerPoint or the board and should also be explained verbally.

Objectives should be:

- in learner-friendly language
- referred to during the lesson
- and reviewed at the end of the lesson.

The learning objectives and success criteria will together enable you to assess the learning that has taken place. Consider what your learners will be able to do, or know, by the end of the lesson that they could not demonstrate before. How will you share with your learners what you are looking for in their learning and work? This needs to be more than task completion.

Success criteria is a set of features that you would like to see in your learners' work. They should be referred to during the lesson and not just at the end. There shouldn't be too many and you should let your learners know which are the most important criteria. This will give them power and responsibility for their own learning and motivate them. It will

enable them to understand what they need to do next and to reflect on their own learning.

Content and structure of a lesson plan

We will now look in more detail at the content of an effective lesson plan.

It can be helpful to think about **keywords** that your learners will need to know and understand. These should be shared with your learners and explained where necessary. It is important to ensure learners can use and understand correct terminology, command words and suitable sentence stems to express their responses. A useful way of introducing new vocabulary is to have an activity that learners can begin as soon as they enter the classroom whilst waiting for the lesson to start.

Previous learning should be recapped or built upon, this could be from the last lesson or from the previous year. By considering what learners already know, you can avoid duplication in the lesson which can lead to demotivation.

Starter activities should be short and involve the whole class. They can be used to:

- assess prior knowledge
- bridge learning from previous lessons
- or practice a skill from earlier learning.

The starter activity should be a short task with an appropriate level of challenge. It could be a question-and-answer task or a prompt that will lead into the main activities.

In the **main activity or activities**, learners should be able to take ownership of their own learning.

And they could work:

- individually
- in pairs
- or in small groups.

You should consider at the planning stage what resources you will need so that these are ready before the lesson – this may be stationery such as glue or scissors, reading material or audio-visual resources. When using ICT, or other equipment in a lesson, it is important to make a clear statement on how this will enhance learning. It's also important to anticipate any potential risks and plan for these.

You should plan the teaching approach or approaches that you will use in the lesson, for example, card sorting, think-pair-share, flipped learning, a writing frame, a quiz, role-play, peer teaching, producing something creative or group work.

When using group work, plan the groups and try to rotate these each lesson.

The teacher may assign group members based on ability, their seating plan, by assigning random numbers, or by using Cambridge teaching tools to generate a name. Learners may also select their own groups, where appropriate. Consider in advance how you will physically arrange the groups in your classroom – will you need to move the furniture? You may, for example, want to use a cluster arrangement of desks, rows, or a horseshoe shape.

Dialogue in group work helps learners develop their thinking and articulate their responses, by giving one another encouragement, learning respect for the opinions of others, and ensuring that they all

understand the success criteria. Group work and dialogue are also linked to active learning. Active learning encourages learners to identify and build on prior experiences and promotes effective communication. It encourages learners to take ownership of their own work and think about their thinking – this is called metacognition.

It is important to plan the types of questions you might ask your learners at different stages within the lesson. Effective questioning develops critical thinking, makes thinking 'visible' and enables teachers to assess learning.

It is useful to end the lesson with a reflection on learning and a review of progress. This is often referred to as a **plenary**. There should be a main plenary at the end of the lesson, but it is also useful to include mini plenaries throughout the lesson to check understanding and progress.

Learners should be able to talk about what they have learned, and it also provides an opportunity for them to let you know anything that they still feel unsure about – this should be factored into future lesson planning. A plenary can use structured questioning, feedback from learners or brief accounts of work. As a teacher you will be able to assess what learning has taken place, and how effectively.

Effective plenaries can:

- relate clearly to the learning objectives and success criteria
- deal with misconceptions
- help learners to understand and remember key concepts
- and make links to past, present and future learning.

Plenaries do not have to be whole class; they can also be group based with teacher guidance.

Differentiation, assessment and homework

Differentiation ensures that individual learners' needs are provided for, creating an inclusive learning environment. Teaching methods, learning activities, resources and the learning environment should be adapted for individual learners or groups of learners.

Differentiation may be in the form of:

- different learner groupings
- adapting the activity or outcome
- or varying the amount of support provided.

This may be appropriate extra challenge for learners who are competent in a concept or skill or may be extra support for those learners who are still working towards competence. It is important to avoid giving more of the same work to learners – they should instead be offered opportunities to extend and deepen their thinking.

For a teacher to know that learning has taken place, there needs to be some form of **assessment** included within the lesson plan. This can be done through asking learners questions during the lesson or it can be more formal.

Whilst some assessment is summative and takes place at the end of a unit, year, or stage of learning, there also needs to be regular and ongoing assessment. Assessment for learning is formative and takes place throughout lessons. It is used to close the gap between the current understanding of learners and the learning objectives.

The teacher's role is to communicate appropriate goals and feedback. Self-assessment is also essential for learners to progress, and peer-assessment may also be used when appropriate. The use of

assessment throughout the lesson allows you to make quick and necessary adaptations to the lesson plan and future lesson plans. To enable learners to make progress, it is important that they receive timely feedback.

Feedback should be:

- specific
- constructive
- and meaningful to learners.

It should link clearly to the learning objectives and success criteria so that learners know how well they are progressing and what they should do next to improve. Feedback can be given to an individual learner, to a group or to the whole class. It can be verbal or written. Non-verbal feedback, such as a nod or a smile, may be used to encourage learners in their responses.

Setting **homework** also forms a key role in both formative and summative assessment. Homework tasks need to be meaningful and relate to the learning objectives and success criteria of the lesson or of the next lesson. They should provide an opportunity to improve important skills, consolidate or extend classroom learning and enable learners to become more independent.

Reflection and evaluation

Finally, teachers need to reflect upon and evaluate their lesson plans in terms of how well the learning objectives and success criteria were met. This may be done individually or as a department. This will enable activities to be changed or modified to ensure maximum learning opportunities in the future.

Planning also needs to be evaluated as a lesson may not have gone as originally planned. This may not necessarily be a problem with the lesson plan itself but may indicate that learners needed more time for an activity or that the success criteria needed to be clearer.

We ask learners to reflect upon their learning, we, as teachers should do the same. Reflection is a key part of professional development and growth and has benefits for both you and your learners. It allows you to progress and learn from your teaching experiences and to continuously improve.

You could, for example, ask yourself:

- What might I do differently?
- How can I best communicate with colleagues and learners to ensure that my lesson planning is effective and appropriate?
- Which aspects of planning do I wish to research further?
- How has thinking about my own lesson planning changed my pedagogical thinking?