

Module 10 – Lesson Planning

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I. The importance of lesson planning

A good textbook will give you a firm starting point for you to structure your lessons around, but while it is tempting to just follow the text book, you risk becoming a dull teacher who gives predictable lessons. The result can be de-motivated students, so always remember, textbooks are a resource, not a set text.

Your class is unique and it is up to you to challenge your students with your own material. The best way to do this is to carefully plan your lessons using interesting and stimulating exercises. This module can help you do that.

Here are some of the reasons why it is important to prepare a good lesson plan:

- It can give you confidence to guide the lesson in the right direction and to improvise if necessary
- It can help you to calculate how long each activity will take so that you don't run out of things to do
- It can help you to ensure that there is a good balance between presentation, practice and production
- It can help you to ensure there is a good balance between open-class work, group work and pair work

So far in this course, you've looked at some teaching methodologies and found out some ideas on activities for teaching grammar, vocabulary, and receptive and productive skills.

However, even the best activities won't work if they aren't integrated into a lesson plan with an objective and clear staging (presentation, practice and production).

II. A course syllabus

The best teachers who deliver the most effective lessons are those who think carefully about what they want to achieve in each lesson, how they are going to organise the materials and activities to attain that objective, and how the lesson fits in with the course syllabus.

The course syllabus is usually set by the school or institution you are working for, and textbooks will be provided along with a list of supplementary material. A syllabus will generally consist of a sensible progression of language items to be covered in the term/year, assuming that the items are new to the students and need to be introduced in that order.

III. Principles of effective planning

The key principles of effective lessons are:

- Variety
- Flexibility
- Timing
- Interaction
- Logical sequence
- Appropriate use of activities

1. Variety

Take a look at the following top tips about variety in your lessons:

1. Be aware of your students' different skills, and consider whether they are appropriately balanced.
2. Use the four skills (writing, reading, speaking, listening), but be aware that although all four skills are necessary, you may not want to spend too much time writing in the classroom.
3. A lesson which involves reading a text and aims to develop reading comprehension skills, can also include communicative tasks, a written follow up task, vocabulary work and grammar work. In addition, speaking activities will probably be interspersed throughout the lesson.
4. Don't try and please all of your students all of the time, but you can try to engage most of them most of the time if you have planned a mix of interesting activities, and provide opportunities for them to develop their skills.
5. Children in particular need to have different tasks in quick succession, as they generally can't concentrate on one thing for too long. And it is often necessary to be more flexible with the timing of the tasks.

2. Flexibility

No matter how much thought you have given to preparing a lesson, it will sometimes be necessary to deviate from your plan. You need to be sensitive to the mood of the class and if something isn't going well, do something differently or change the focus of the lesson completely.

For example, if a class is really tired and uncommunicative, do an activity which gets them up on their feet: a quick board race game, or a Find Someone Who... or place short texts / pictures around the room and ask them to match descriptions with pictures / summaries or headlines with texts.

Be prepared by having a stock of lesson fillers up your sleeve that require little or no preparation.

3. Timing and interaction

It is important to indicate on your actual lesson plan how much time you anticipate each activity will take and what type of interaction is taking place.

In terms of timing, always look through your plan to make sure you are not spending too much or too little time on different stages of the lesson.

With regards to interaction, try to include a balance of activities that have students working together (PW: pair work / GW: group work) or that involve the teacher (T-S / S-T).

4. Example lesson plans

It is a good idea to familiarise yourself with lesson plans by looking at some examples. The reason for looking at example plans is to illustrate that there is no set way to carry out a plan and individual teachers can always use their creativity, their experience and their knowledge of what works best in their classroom to put together their lessons.

Nonetheless, it's a good idea to always keep in mind the guidelines that have already been discussed. Remember, your lessons should have a clear focus, an explicit presentation stage (at some point) and include both controlled practice and freer production activities.

As much as possible, try to incorporate work in different skills areas (reading, writing, speaking and listening) – even though some of it can be left for homework, in particular writing.

You will now consider four examples of lesson plans. Each one provides a preparatory list, followed by an activity plan. Note that the third plan 'used to' relates to the video you watched for assignments 4-10 in checkpoint 3 (this is an extended 45 minute version of the same lesson).

LESSON PLAN 1: The modal verb 'can' (grammar lesson*)

* In a grammar lesson the focus is on specific grammatical rules and structures, which are presented, practiced and produced. The vocabulary used in the lesson is assumed knowledge.

Pre-plan

Level, age	Beginner, adults
Lesson	45 minutes

Length	
Objective	To be able to use the modal verb 'can' in order to talk about ability.
Target Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subject + can/can't + verb (<i>I can play the guitar./I can't speak Chinese.</i>) 2. (Question word) + can + subject + verb...? (<i>Can you play the guitar? What can you do?</i>) 3. Short answers: Yes, I can./No, I can't.
Assumed Knowledge	<p>Students at this level will know the present simple tense and will have learned how to form questions and negative sentences with 'be' and other verbs. However, this will probably be their first modal verb. For this reason, they will need to learn how modal verbs work differently from other verbs.</p> <p>They will know a range of action verbs, such as 'swim', 'ride', 'drive', 'play the piano', etc</p>
Anticipated Problems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They may want to conjugate 'can' in the 3rd person singular as they will have learned to do this in the present simple tense. (<i>He cans play the piano.</i>) 2. Students may try to put the preposition 'to' after the verb 'can'. (<i>He can to play the piano.</i>) 3. When making questions, they may try to use the auxiliary verb 'do' (<i>Do you can play the piano?</i>) 4. They will find it difficult to hear the difference between 'can' /kæn/ and 'can't' /kɑ:nt/. They will also find it difficult to differentiate between the strong form of can, /kæn/, and the weak one, /kən/.
Solutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. During the presentation stage, draw students' attention to the fact that 'can' does not change its form. Drill. 2. Point out as well that 'to' is not used after modal verbs. Drill. 3. Practise making questions. Error analysis exercises and having them put scrambled sentences in order can also help to work on sentence structure problems. 4. Provide them with the opportunity to listen to and distinguish between the different forms.
Preparation & Aids	Pictures of people doing things and handout for homework.

Lesson Plan (The activities are **not** labeled here, e.g. 'warmer', 'presentation', etc, because this is something you will be asked to do in the quiz)

Stage	Activity	Interaction	Timing

1	Practise some tongue twisters. (Other options are: hangman, anagrams, Q&A in pairs about last weekend, 'Find someone who...', 20 questions, etc.) Revision of last lesson: Go over homework if assigned.	T-S	4 mins
2	Use pictures or mime to elicit activities e.g. swim, ride a horse, drive. Put them on the board as pictures.	S-T	2 mins
3	Introduce sentences using 'I can...' & 'I can't...'. Try to juggle and elicit 'I can't juggle'; whistle and elicit 'I can whistle'. If the sentences cannot be elicited, feed them to the class. Once elicited/presented, each sentence is repeated chorally several times.	T-S	3 mins
4	Drill chorally & individually. Focus on pronunciation of 'can' and 'can't'. <i>I can swim. /kən/</i> (Word stress is on 'swim', not 'can', so 'can' is pronounced in its weak form.) <i>I can't swim. /kɑ:nt/</i> (The negative form has a different pronunciation and word stress is on both 'can't' and 'swim. This is important to point out to students as it will help them differentiate between the two words when they are listening.)	T-S-T	3 mins
5	Elicit the question form, and drill this with the short answers. Highlight the different ways to pronounce 'can'. Example: Can you swim? /kən/ Yes, I can. /kən/ No, I can't. /kɑ:nt/ (‘Can’ is weak in ‘Can you swim?’ because it isn’t stressed. It is strong in ‘Yes, I can’ and ‘No, I can’t’.)	S-T T-S-T	3 mins
6	Conduct a controlled question and answer drill around the class e.g. 'Maria, ask Giorgio...' (point to an action picture on the board).	T-S-S	6 mins
7	Pair work. Students ask and answer questions using 'can' about the actions on the board & note down their partner's answers. Monitor closely.	PW	7 mins
8	Write up the target language on the board and review any doubts.	T-S	2 mins

9	Get students to write down some unusual things they can do. Help them if they don't know the words in English.	S	2 mins
10	Milling activity: 'Find someone who can do some of the things on your list.' Students are to ask as many classmates as possible and take notes.	S-S	10 mins
11	Students report on their findings. E.g. 'Maria can't play the guitar, but she can play the violin.' 'Both Elena & Giovanni can juggle, but neither can whistle.'	S-T	2 mins
12	Set worksheet with gap-fill exercises for homework. Other options are: Transformation exercises (changing affirmative statements into negative sentences or questions), free writing exercise (describe things you can and can't do), etc.	T-S	1 min

LESSON PLAN 2: Giving advice (functional lesson*)

* In a functional lesson, the target language is a set of expressions/phrases used to perform a certain language function, e.g. giving advice, apologising, giving directions, or telephoning. These expressions/phrases are introduced and drilled as a whole (as 'chunks of language'). There is no focus on vocabulary or grammar rules.

Pre-plan

Level, age	Intermediate, adults
Lesson Length	1 hour
Objective	To be able to give advice using various expressions.
Target Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. You should / shouldn't... 2. If I were you, I'd... 3. You really ought to... 4. Why don't you... ? 5. It would be a good idea to... 6. I strongly advise you to... 7. You could... 8. How about... ?
Assumed Knowledge	Students at this level will know several verb tenses and be able to use modal verbs. They will know how to write indicative, negative and interrogative sentences. They may need to be reminded of how modal verbs work differently from other verbs. They will know how to

	write a diary entry.
Anticipated Problems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. They may stick to using only one or two expressions that they feel comfortable with like 'should' or 'could'. 2. They may sound too direct when speaking and will need to learn how to sound interested and polite when talking about other people's problems.
Solutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage them to try to make a sentence using each one of the various ways for offering advice when carrying out practice activities. 2. Highlight intonation and drill during presentation. Listen to students during practice and production stages and review intonation afterwards if necessary.
Preparation and Aids	Pictures of 4 different people, tape and tape script, handout with detailed/comprehension questions for tape script, role cards

Lesson Plan

Stage	Activity	Interaction	Timing
1	<p><u>Warmer</u>: 'Lie Detector'. Students each say 3 things they did last weekend. One thing is a lie. The rest of the students listen and write down what they think is not true. <u>Plenary</u> to see who the best lie detector was.</p> <p>Revision of last lesson. Check homework.</p>	S-S T-S	5 mins
2	<u>Lead-in</u> : Using a picture of a young girl, elicit from the students her age, her name and a problem she has (She likes a boy but is afraid to tell him).	S-T	2 mins
3	<p><u>Pair work</u>: Students discuss things she could do to solve her problem.</p> <p><u>Plenary</u>. Write ideas up on the board.</p>	PW S-T	3 mins
4	<u>Listening for gist</u> : Play a recording of the young girl talking with 3 different people who give her advice. Have students listen to see if any of their suggestions are made by the speakers. Play two or three times. <u>Plenary</u> .	T-S	8 mins
5	<u>Listening for detail</u> : Give students a handout with specific questions about the advice each speaker gives to the girl. Students listen and write down their answers. Check in pairs. <u>Plenary</u> .	T-S PW S-T	8 mins
6	<u>Presentation</u> : Give students a copy of the tapescript. Have them look through the conversations in pairs and underline examples where the speakers give the girl advice. Write these on the board. Highlight intonation	PW S-T T-S	9 mins

	and word stress and drill.		
7	<u>Controlled practice</u> : Put up 3 more pictures on the board. Elicit each person's name, age and problem from the class. Put students in groups to write down 3 or 4 pieces of advice for each person. Regroup students so they can compare their answers with students they were not working with before. Observe and note down errors.	T-S GW	9 mins
8	<u>Plenary</u> : Get students to correct the errors you overheard them making. Write up the corrected sentences on the board.	T-S S-T	3 mins
9	<u>Production</u> : Students are given a role card explaining a problem they have. Students mill around and speak to as many other students as possible to get advice and take notes.	GW	9 mins
10	<u>Plenary</u> : Feedback on activity. Ask a few of the students to share some of the advice they received.	S-T	3 mins
11	<u>Homework</u> : Students will use the information on the role card and the advice given to them to write a diary entry. They must describe their problem and discuss the advice they have been given as well as their opinion on what people have told them they should do.	T-S	1 min

LESSON PLAN 3: 'Used to' (grammar lesson*)

* In a grammar lesson the focus is on specific grammatical rules and structures, which are presented, practiced and produced. The vocabulary used in the lesson is assumed knowledge.

Pre-plan

Level, age	Pre-intermediate, adults
Lesson Length	45 minutes
Objective	To talk about past habits and states using the modal verb 'used to'.
Target Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. subject + used to + verb (<i>I used to live in Holland</i>) 2. subject + didn't use to + verb (<i>She didn't use to smoke</i>) 3. (a) (question word) + did + subject + use to + verb? (<i>Where did she use to live?</i>) (b) Did + subject + use to + verb? (<i>Did she use to visit you?</i>)

Assumed Knowledge	Students should have a sound knowledge of the present and past tense and be able to use indicative, negative & interrogative verb forms.
Anticipated Problems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Failure to understand the concept expressed by 'used to' (past habits or states that have finished). 2. Confusing 'used to' with other meanings of the verb 'use' and the adjective 'used'. 3. Pronunciation of 'used to': /d/ is elided (it isn't pronounced) and 'to' is often pronounced in its weak form, /tə/, and sounds more like 'ta'.
Solutions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Concept questions will be necessary to help explain the meaning expressed by 'used to'. 2. Pictures and a timeline can help compare present and past. 3. Drilling.
Preparation & Aids	Pictures for eliciting story, handouts, white board, markers.

Lesson plan

Stage	Activity	Interaction	Timing
1	<p><u>Warmer:</u> (For example: Find someone who, Naughts and Crosses to revise vocabulary, Lie Detector, Solve a riddle, Spot the difference, Word associations, 20 Questions, Hangman, etc.)</p> <p><u>Revision of last lesson:</u> Check homework (first in pairs, then as a class). Note: The video recording begins from the next stage.</p>	T-S	5 mins
2	<u>Lead-in:</u> Build up a drawing of a rock star on the board. Elicit information from students about his name and profession.	S-T	1 min
3	<u>Plenary:</u> In pairs have students brainstorm ideas about a rock star's lifestyle.	PW S-T	3 mins
4	<u>Lead-in:</u> Use pictures to elicit present tense sentences about the rock star's lifestyle.	S-T	5 mins
5	Drill chorally and individually.	T- S-T	1 min
6	Review present tense sentences by flipping back through pictures. See if	S-T	2 mins

	students can come up with the sentences on their own.		
7	Use drawings on the board to indicate the rock star's life has changed. Elicit from students that he is now in jail.	S-T	2 mins
8	Students in pairs discuss the problems with living in prison.	PW	3 mins
9	<u>Presentation:</u> Present target language using pictures to set up a timeline that compares the rock star's present and past lifestyles. Elicit sentences from students.	T-S S-T	5 mins
10	Presentation: Drill chorally and individually.	T-S	2 mins
11	Presentation: Write target language on the board: indicative, negative and question forms.	T-S	2 mins
12	<u>Controlled practice:</u> Students work in pairs on a handout leaving half the questions for homework. Write up substitution table on the board while students work.	PW	4 mins
13	<u>Plenary:</u> Go over answers. Let students call on one another for the answer to the next question.	T-S S-S	2 mins
14	<u>Production:</u> Put students in new pairs. Ask and answer questions about things they used to do when they were children.	PW T-S	5 mins
15	Plenary: Elicit examples, e.g. "I used to suck my thumb".	S-T	2 mins
16	Set homework assignment (finish handout).	T-S	1 min

LESSON PLAN 4: Means of transport (vocabulary lesson*)

* In a vocabulary lesson the target language is a set of words or collocations, usually united by a common theme, for example vocabulary of animals, vocabulary of rooms in a house, or vocabulary of a person's appearance. Grammar is not taught, it is assumed knowledge.

Pre-plan

Level, age	Elementary, adolescents
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Lesson Length	45 minutes
Objective	To learn vocabulary for different modes of transport. To learn how to talk about using transport.
Target Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. bus train underground car taxi bicycle plane helicopter cable car boat ferry ocean liner 2. to take a bus (train, plane, etc) to catch a bus (train, plane, etc) to go by bus (train, plane, etc)
Assumed Knowledge	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present simple, present continuous, past simple. 2. Verbs 'go', 'take' and 'catch' (they know the verbs but they don't know these particular verbs are used to talk about using transport). 3. 'I like + infinitive'.
Anticipated Problems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Students may be confused where to use the article and where not to use it (saying 'go by a bus' and 'catch bus'). 6. The production task refers to future plans and requires future forms, which the students don't know well. 7. Students may not know how to pronounce some geographical names.

Solutions	<p>5. During the presentation stage, draw students' attention to the fact that 'a' is used with 'take' and 'catch' but not with 'go by'. Write on the board and underline. Drill each expression separately, then all expressions together.</p> <p>6. Tell the students to use the present simple. Drill before the activity.</p> <p>7. Help with pronunciation while monitoring. Do not insist on exact pronunciation.</p>
Preparation & Aids	<p>1. Two sets of transport pictures & vocabulary cards: a larger set to be put on the board and a smaller set to be used by students.</p> <p>2. Maps of the world: several smaller ones and one large map.</p>

Lesson Plan

Stage	Activity	Interaction	Timing
1	Warmer: Play a quick game of Pictionary revising vocabulary taught in the previous lesson.	S-S	4 mins
2	Lead-in: Check that everyone understands the verb 'travel'. Ask students if they like to travel, where they travelled on their last holiday, what was the best trip in their life, etc.	S-T	2 mins
3	Presentation: Put Target Language (1) on the board as pictures. Drill each word as you attach it to the board; after adding several words, return to the previous words and drill again, then point to the pictures and drill all the target words in a random order chorally until the students remember each one without prompting. Correct pronunciation issues through individual drilling.	T-S	6 mins
4	Presentation: Put cards with words next to corresponding pictures. Drill again by pointing to words.	T-S-T	2 mins
5	Controlled practice: Matching game. Students are divided into two teams. Each team gets picture cards and word cards with the target language (picture/word side down). At the teacher's signal, the teams start turning over the cards and matching the pictures to the words. The first team to finish wins (provided the matches are correct).	S-S	4 mins
6	Controlled practice: Run and write. The teacher splits the large pictures in two groups and puts them on both sides of the board with some empty	S-S	4 mins

	space on the right of each picture. In the same teams, students take turns running to their half of the board and writing a word next to a picture. As one student writes, their team members can help them by shouting out the spelling. The team to have written more words correctly in less time wins.		
7	Presentation: Show your imaginary route around the world on a large map, feeding and drilling 'I go by train to Paris, I catch a plane to Porto, I take an ocean liner to New York', and so on. Write the target phrases on the board.	T-S	4 mins
8	Controlled practice: Elicit similar sentences from students by tracing a route on the map and pointing to pictures of transport. Drill.	T-S-T	3 mins
9	Production: In pairs plan a journey together around the world. Students prepare to tell about their chosen route using the language presented at Stage 9. Encourage them to make it interesting by visiting many different places and using all possible means of transport (they are free to include those not covered in the lesson, e.g. camel, motorbike, horse-drawn sled, etc; let them use you as a vocabulary resource if they don't know the words). Monitor.	PW	10 mins
10	Plenary: Volunteers present their journeys around the world.	S-T	3 mins
11	Warm-down: Ask students 'What's your favourite transport?' Elicit 'I like to go by...'. Time permitting, ask more questions: 'How often do you go by...?' 'When did you last travel by...?' 'Where did you go?'	T-S	2 mins
12	Homework: Imagine you are a tour operator. Advertise an exciting tour around your native country where tourists use many different means of transport. Prepare a 1-2 minute oral presentation for next lesson.	T-S	1 min

Remember that your aim is to move from being teacher-centred at the very start of the lesson to being student-centred. Notice that in both lesson plans the second half involves more pair and group work so that STT (student talking time) is increased and TTT (teacher talking time) is considerably decreased. Notice also that the largest chunks of time are spent on the freer practice and production activities. You can also see how lessons for elementary and pre-intermediate students involve more drilling and repetition and as students become more proficient, the work they do is less controlled and not so guided by the teacher.

You can see that the teacher has planned the lessons carefully by:

- thinking about the level, age and interests of the students;
- having an objective and listing the target language needed to achieve it;

- considering what the students already know;
- considering what they need to be pre-taught;
- thinking about possible problems and solutions;
- preparing useful visual aids;
- planning the interaction and length of time required for each activity;
- setting a written task for homework to reinforce what has been taught.

You also need to think about how you are going to set up the activities:

- What will the seating arrangements be?
- How will you give instructions/demonstrations?

Once you are actually working as a teacher in a classroom and planning pair work and group work, you will also consider who is going to work with whom, for example, strong students with weak students, or strong students with strong students.