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Components of a Lesson Plan


Lesson plans are a road map to facilitate teaching and learning. Lesson planning is an important aspect of effective teaching because it focuses the teaching on the students; however, lesson planning can seem overwhelming and laborious.

So what can teachers do to decrease the anxiety about lesson planning? First, having a checklist of components that are needed in a lesson plan is a great place to start. But first, do you remember an effective teacher? What about that teacher made them effective for you? Most likely, that teacher did the following:

1. Gained your attention and prepared you for learning
2. Informed you of the learning objective(s)
3. Reviewed your prior learning and knowledge related to the objective(s)
4. Shared, modeled, and described the content
5. Made the content relevant
6. Checked to make sure you were understanding
7. Used a variety of teaching methods to help you learn best
8. Aligned the assessments to the learning objectives
9. Assessed your learning both formatively and summatively
10. Reflected on the outcome to determine successful completion

Designing a Lesson Plan

Now, how do you accomplish all of this? Your effective teacher had a lesson plan that was used as a guide to plan for each of these components.

[A lesson plan template](#)  or model is a great place to start. A lesson plan template provides the following:



1) structure; 2) a logical progression, 3) an emphasis on student involvement, 4) a focus on learning goals and objectives, 5) accountability for skills taught, and 6) an opportunity for teacher reflection. There are many templates and models for lesson planning; however, effective models have four basic parts.

1. Objectives
2. Presentation
3. Practice
4. [Assessment](#)

This four-part structure allows students to:







1. understand what they are going to learn,
2. know how they are going to receive instruction,
3. practice the material while receiving feedback, and
4. be assessed based on what they have learned.



An effective lesson plan includes **learning objectives, practice, presentation and assessment phases** (sometimes overlapping), framed by "bookends" > **a warm-up and a wrap-up!** Importantly, the learning objectives make up the foundation of an effective course and lesson plan. This graphic organizer shows the ground up progression for thinking through a lesson plan. Each phase will be outlined below, beginning from the foundational base of the pyramid and working 'backwards' from there. ([This version of the lesson plan template](#)   has all the guiding questions you need to complete your detailed lesson plan.)

Backward Design helps you and the students determine if the objectives and assessments are aligned. Backward design ([Fink, 2003](#); [Wiggins & McTighe, 2005](#)) requires articulating an end goal for student learning, then going backwards to design the course or lesson to achieve the goals and objectives you have laid out. This model is centered on the alignment of objectives, assessment, and teaching and learning activities. So let's start with the objectives!

Step 1: Creating Objectives

- Create measurable learning outcomes or knowledge and skills that are to be acquired and developed by students after each lesson. Create 1-3 objective(s) per lesson related to the course objectives.
- Sequence lesson objectives so they build upon each other, from easy to difficult if necessary
- **Objectives must be measurable** - these are how you will know the students have learned what they should have learned.
- **Objectives usually start with a verb**; that explicitly describes what students will do. Avoid vague words like understand and know (they are not measurable).
- **Objectives are single sentence statements. Objectives should focus on what the student will do** not what the instructor does.
- **Objectives should focus on different levels of learning**, not just on acquiring content knowledge.
 - Read about [Bloom's Taxonomy](#)  (seminal literature about the different levels of learning - including recent changes to the taxonomy)
 - Print this '[Formula for Writing Learning Objectives](#)'   as a handy resource.
 - Explore [this great site by Iowa State University](#)  with a revised taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001). You can mouse over parts of the graphic organizer to see examples of written learning objectives for knowledge and cognitive processing dimensions.
 - Read about the **difference between goals and objectives** 
 - Review the rubric about [good learning objectives](#) 

Step 2: Mapping Objectives to Assessment Choices

Once you have determined your learning objectives, you should select the assessment options that will most effectively target those objectives. Lesson-level assessments include tasks and activities that take place in class, allowing students to demonstrate their success with learning objectives. They allow you to formatively assess learning (in the moment) (see [Active Learning](#) for a host of suggestions). The assessments may also include longer term assessments, such as a paper, presentation, or exam that will demonstrate learning from a given lesson at a later date. The key is that the assessment choice makes sense for the given learning outcomes.

Consider this scenario and answer the question: Does this assessment map to the intended learning outcomes?

- A biology instructor wants his students to **argue for the role of biodiversity in the local habitat**. He has presented them with articles highlighting current events related to biodiversity issues (e.g., culling wolves, deer hunting, loss of algae, etc.). In class, he has them work in groups to synthesize the information from the readings and compose a petition for state leaders to consider related to a bill they are considering in the legislative session related to some of the related issues. Once each group is ready, he stages a debate so they can present their ideas and take turns role-playing biodiversity advocates and opposing lawmakers.
 - How does this assessment (debate) map to the bolded objective above? (Answer: It's a great fit!)

Step 3: Mapping Assessment to Learning Plan (Teaching and Learning Methods)

After the objectives have been established and assessment options considered, you begin mapping the phases to the objectives going backward with the warm-up and wrap-up as the bookends! Once you know what you want them to be

able to do by the end of the lesson and how you would like to assess this learning, you can start to flesh out the details of the lesson plan. Below are prompts under each of the phases (and the bookends) to guide the lesson planning process.

> Warm-Up / Anticipatory Set

- Quick review previous material (or activate background knowledge for new material)
- Introduce Objectives for the day's lesson
- Review what will be presented today

Phase I: Presentation: (Exploration & Explanation; Determine Readiness and Experience)

Describe here the **process you will use to present course material** (see [Active Learning](#), [Teaching Large Classes](#)) to explore and explain content that will open their minds, show benefits, and integrate new learning with prior knowledge and experience.

- Consider what content you are going to present (e.g., concepts, theories, skills, procedures, etc.)
- Gather materials and resources for each lesson - Referring to course objectives, collect the instructional components to be used in each lesson
- Determine teacher led or student led learning (e.g a narrated lecture, active learning activities, learning community activities)
- Select web-appropriate delivery methods for your content and audience (i.e., audio, video, synchronous classroom, Internet resources, etc.)

Phase II: Guided Practice and Collaboration (Encourage Autonomy; Formative Assessment & Instructor Reflection)

Develop and describe [practice activities](#) or events for students to use the content material (will students reflect on or "do" work in the class). Rely on active learning approaches to ensure that learners participate and contribute to learning. Teachers reflect on student learning and students receive formative feedback to improve their understanding.

- Create practice activities or events (will students reflect on or "do" work in the class)
- Activities that foster interactive learning on an individual, group, or learning community level
- Feedback and interaction opportunities might include instructor – student, student – content, student - student, learning community, self-assessment, etc.)
- Select web-appropriate delivery methods for your content and audience
- **Reflect on the results to determine if students are meeting the objectives.**

Phase III: Assessment (Independent Action)

Describe the graded items or evidence you will collect (i.e., assignments, discussions, projects, papers, quizzes, exams, etc.) that measure student learning outcomes based on the objectives. Design [assessment](#) tools that show and encourage immediate application of learning and determine successful student outcome.

- Students need to demonstrate knowledge and skills. How will you answer the question: Have the course objective(s) been achieved
- Create a description and instructions for your assessments
- How will the students be graded? Create a grading scale or rubric if necessary
- Select appropriate delivery methods for your assessments
- Provide student feedback on performance

> Wrap-Up / Review and Connections

- Review the lesson material and how this information will transition into the next lesson (or into the real world) to help your students make the connections

Considerations & Sample Templates

Lesson plans are meant to support you, not constrain or frustrate you. The above template is *one possible template* that you can employ. Of note - with any template, it will appear there are phases or stages. In reality, lesson plans are more fluid. At their core, they should have a warm-up/review, an opportunity to explore new content, an opportunity to practice/apply this information, a means by which the instructor can be sure learning is happening and a wrap-up/review. You may go into the practice phases multiple times in one lesson, depending on how much new information you wish to explore with your students. You also may not have a separate assessment phase, as it can be woven into the other two phases.

Here are some other common lesson plan template stages:

- [Intro, Through and Beyond](#) ↗
 - Includes: Introduction of new content, Opportunity to practice, Opportunity to apply to the 'real world'
- 6-Step Lesson Plan
 - Includes: Warm-up/Review, Introduction, Presentation, Practice, Evaluation, Application
- [5-Step Lesson Plan](#) ↗
 - Includes: Anticipatory set, Instruction, Guided practice, Closure or assessment and Independent practice
- [The Fluid Lesson Plan](#) ↗
 - This lesson plan idea by Megan Rodgers is a really nice idea for those who want a little more flexibility in their planning. Take a look and see if her approach can work for you.

*Note - if you search for lesson plan templates, you'll see there are many (5-step, 6-step, 7-step, even 8-step!). Find the one that works for you and try it out.

**Tip - Write a lesson plan as if you were creating it for a substitute to come in and teach your class. If you keep this in mind, you'll be very thorough, down to the materials you need, the questions you'll ask the students, the instructions for activities, etc. The benefit to this level of detail is that from semester to semester, you can revise after each lesson and reuse in future semesters.

Conclusion

Lesson planning is a critical part of overall course design. Once you have designed your entire course (including the structure and sequence, the tools you will use, and delivery method), mapping and aligning the course objectives (and the individual learning objectives for each lesson) to the assessments, occurs most successfully during the lesson planning stage. Alignment must occur between assessments and objectives to have successful student outcomes.

For additional information and ideas, please visit our [Web](#) and [Print](#) Resources listed by topic or our [References](#) page with listings by author.

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