



# Premier TEFL Lesson Planning Guide



**A good teacher can inspire  
hope, ignite the imagination,  
and instill a love of learning.**

**Brad Henry**

**In this guide, we will consider what is involved in planning and preparing a successful efl lesson. This guide will be especially useful for newer teachers but also for more experienced teachers who want to plan more effectively.**

While many experienced teachers often write only a minimally structured lesson plan as they have developed a set routine for how they approach each lesson, it is recommended that newer teachers develop the habit of writing and following a detailed lesson plan for at least the first 6 months to a year. This requires discipline but will help you develop your teaching skills over time.

In addition to lesson planning, it is also useful to reflect on your lessons after each class, making notes on what went well and what could have been better. Even the most experienced teachers think about problems that occurred during class and how they might best be corrected.

Though lesson planning is time-consuming, it is a good idea to save every lesson plan you write.

These plans can then be recycled when teaching similar topics or learner levels.

We will look at different aspects of a lesson plan in detail, including lesson aims, context, target language, class profile, assumptions, anticipated problems and solutions, materials and board work.

We will also look at how to stage a lesson considering stage aims, timing, procedures and interaction patterns.

We will look at different lesson plan models and the advantages of using these for different types of lessons. We will look at longer-term planning using a syllabus or timetable to help structure a series of lessons.

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# Lesson Planning

# What is Lesson Planning?

If you are new to teaching, preparing and planning a formal lesson plan can sound very daunting. Newer teachers often find it takes time to plan lessons at the beginning of their careers and this can be initially frustrating.

Effective teachers go on planning and preparing their lessons throughout their careers, even if their plans are very informal and planning time is reduced.

For students, evidence of a plan shows that the teacher has devoted time to thinking about the class, showing a level of professionalism and commitment to their students' learning. Lack of planning reveals the opposite.

We can define lesson planning as follows:

- Lesson planning is essentially a thinking skill, training teachers to imagine their lessons before they happen. You can never predict everything that will happen in a lesson and how students will respond but, by planning effectively, you will be better able to cope with whatever happens in the lesson.
- A lesson plan should not be a rigid route map of what must happen in the lesson but a guide to achieving the lesson aims, giving the lesson a framework or overall shape. Effective teachers think ahead, having a destination in mind they want their students to reach and knowing how to get there.
- Producing a formal written lesson plan before a lesson trains teachers in 'planning thinking'. It is a useful tool for teachers to analyse what they are going to teach, how they are going to teach it, which materials or techniques they will use and how they can cater for their students needs and learning styles.
- Although it is useful to consider different stages of a lesson and think about timing, lesson stages should be more than a series of timed activities. There should be a clear link between stages and to the main aims and objectives of the lesson.
- Though experienced teachers may take less time to plan and be more able to think on their feet in class, lesson planning is essential for all teachers, new or experienced.
- Teachers should have their lesson aims clearly in mind before they approach the planning stage. In student-centred lessons, the aims should reflect what the students will be able to do by the end of the lesson. When planning it is a good idea to start planning the last stage of the lesson first and then work backwards to make sure aims are achieved.
- A lesson plan is a flexible, working document, designed to teach your students and adapted to their needs. When lesson planning, think about the students you are going to teach. Make sure some activities can be extended and personalised and have some extra activities 'up your sleeve' that can be dropped in if necessary. Over-planned lessons can become extremely rigid and dull as often too much attention has been spent on the plan.



# Considerations When Planning

Some general areas to consider when planning are:



**The learners** – will they enjoy the lesson? Will they benefit from it?



**The aims** – what will the learners be better able to do by the end of the lesson?



**The teaching point** – what is the subject matter of the lesson? Which skills or language areas will be studied? Which topics will be used?



**The teaching procedures** – what activities will you use? What sequence will they come in?



**Materials** – what texts, audio-visual materials, exercises, supplementary resources will you use?



**Classroom management** – what will you say? How will seating be arranged? How much time will each stage take?

## Formal and Informal Planning

There are three different approaches to lesson planning:

- A detailed formal plan
- A detailed informal plan
- A brief note of running order for activities

## A Formal Plan

A formal plan contains two parts:

**Background Information** – i.e. aims, target language, materials, predicted problems and so on

**Outline of Procedures** – i.e. a description of activities, their order and predicted timings

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# Formal & Informal Planning



# Formal Planning Background

## Lesson Overview

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Date	11th April
Time	9:00 - 9:50
Class Name	Elementary
Teacher	Simon Hughes

## Lesson Aims

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- Main Aim**
- Use different prepositions of place accurately in spoken English to describe where things are.
- Sub Aim(s)**
- To revise a lexical set of vocabulary related to furniture and items found in the kitchen.
- To give students controlled and freer speaking practice.
- Personal Aim**
- To ensure that instructions are clear and checked.



### Context

The target language will be presented in a situational context. A mouse is in the kitchen and the target language will be used to describe where the mouse is.



### Assumptions and Timetable Fit

I'm assuming students know vocabulary related to furniture and items found in the kitchen as this vocabulary has been presented and practised in previous lessons this week.



### Target Language

10 Prepositions of Place: at/on/in/in front of/behind/between/next/to/opposite/under/over



### Materials and Equipment

Whiteboard and pens, a pen and paper per student, pictures of house for freer practice.



### Anticipated Problems and Solutions

- Some of the prepositions are more complex than others e.g. 'opposite' and 'next to'.
- Maria and Jose always talk.
- Ensure that my board plan is clear so the meaning of 'opposite' etc is clear.
- Ensure Maria and Jose do not sit together.



### Class Profile

A multilingual class of 10 students from France, Spain, Italy and Japan. All students are learning English to further their careers in their home countries. Maria and Jose are strong speakers but often inaccurate. Yoko is accurate but is often reticent to speak.

# Formal Planning

## Outline of Procedures

Time	Stage Name	Stage Name	Stage Aim	Interaction
5 mins	Context Setting Vocab Review	Use board drawing of kitchen. Check students know the vocabulary (table, fridge etc). Establish character of frightened husband trying to find mouse	To revise vocabulary and establish the context	Whole Class
5 mins	Present Target Language	Draw mouse in various positions in the kitchen and elicit where it is – correct and drill sentences –  <b>husband and wife,</b> <b>H:</b> Where's the mouse? <b>W:</b> It's under the table And so on	To present target language and give students controlled oral practice	Whole Class
5 mins	Controlled Practice	Divide students in pairs and give each pair a role: Student A – husband, Student B – wife. Students practice questions and answers using the picture on the board.  E.g. <b>A:</b> Where's the mouse? E.g. <b>B:</b> It's on the fridge Students swap roles half-way through. Teacher monitors and provides help with pronunciation and language	To provide controlled practice of the target language	Pair Work
10 mins	Less Controlled Practice	In groups, students extend the dialogue and improvise to extend and act out the scene using more characters. Teacher monitors and provides support Students act out their scenes for others to watch	To provide less controlled practice	Group Work
10 mins	Written Consolidation of Oral Work	Appoint a student as 'writer' at the board. Class recall and dictate a sentence from the dialogues. Continue with different students and new sentences	To consolidate the target language	Whole Class

# Formal Planning

## Outline of Procedures

Time	Stage Name	Stage Name	Stage Aim	Interaction
10 mins	Freer Practice	<p>Hand out pictures of whole house labelled A and B (Sheets A and B have the mouse in different places). In pairs, students explain to each other exactly where the mice are without looking at each other's pictures. Partners must draw mice in the correct places.</p> <p>Teacher monitors and takes notes on errors and good uses of language</p>	To consolidate target language	Pair Work
5 mins	Error Correction/ Feedback	<p>Teacher provides praise to students on good language use.</p> <p>Teacher gives delayed 'cold' correction on errors including pronunciation errors</p>	To consolidate learning	Whole Class



## Informal Planning

An informal plan is frequently used by more experienced teachers on a daily basis to record 'planning thinking' and to guide them during the lesson to achieve their lesson aims. An informal plan consists of notes about the procedure the teacher plans to follow.

An example of an informal plan is as follows:



**Intro** – 'Would you like to change the past?' Discuss. Allow space for students to explain their thoughts. Say: 'In today's lesson we'll be talking about the past and speculating as to what would have happened if things had been different.'



**Picture** – JFK and NK – elicit who they are – what happened to them. Encourage 'if' sentences – correct errors and get students to repeat correct sentences with good pronunciation (N.B. don't get carried away with the form and correction that I don't listen to what they are saying – look for interesting ideas as well as correct grammar)



**Structure** – when well-established in the class (after a number of sentences – and most people able to speak a correct sentence) write up one or two on the board. Focus briefly on how the structure is made – N.B. If+subject+had/'d+ past participle+would've/might've/could've +past participle etc)



**Introduce role-play topic** – use board drawing to set the scene and explain problem situation (hotel in chaos – whose fault is it?) Discuss the basic situation briefly – then hand out role cards – give them only three minutes or so to read and think about cards



**Do role-play** – don't interfere. Listen and take notes of usage of target structure

## Running Order

The simplest type of lesson plan, used by many teachers, is a basic 'running order' of activities, with a note of specific language points or materials that will be used. This plan also helps record your 'thinking planning' and is very quick to produce.

An example of a basic 'running order' is as follows:

- Chat – last night – pub? Home?
- Recall things people said – collect as direct speech on board
- Focus on useful verbs explained/demanded /promised.....
- Pairs – turn into reported speech (write)
- Stand up – tell each other about last night using reporting verbs
- Do course book – page 5 ex 3 + 4
- Filler game – famous quotations (if time)



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# Planning: Background Information

The key question of every lesson is 'What are the aims of the lesson?' If you can answer this, you can be clear about what you hope your learners will achieve by the end of the lesson.

Knowing where you are going helps you to make moment-by-moment decisions about different paths or options you could take in the lesson while keeping the main aim clear in mind.

In a student-centred lesson, lesson aims should reflect what the students will be able to realistically do by the end of the lesson. When planning, it is a good idea to start planning the last stage of the lesson first and then work backwards to make sure your aims are achieved.

**Lessons where the aim is unclear or too ambitious are often unsuccessful.**

In a lesson, you may want to practise a grammatical structure and also encourage students to practise speaking. You may also want to use or improve certain techniques while you are teaching. It is easier then to divide aims into 3 separate parts:

- **Main aims** – the main focus of the lesson
- **Sub aims** – other skills or language you want students to practise
- **Personal aims** – techniques or aspects of teaching you want to use or improve during the lesson. You may want a potential observer to focus on this area

As a general rule, in a lesson where the main aim is to introduce, practise or review language systems, the sub aim should be skills-based. Likewise, a skills-based lesson should have a language systems sub aim. For example, in a lesson where your main aim is to practise a certain grammatical structure (language system), your sub aim may be to give students controlled and freer speaking practice (skill).

Aims should be clear, specific and achievable, mentioning the context used in language systems lessons and what the students will be doing by the end of the lesson. For example, if your main aim is 'to teach present perfect' you can consider some of the following questions to ensure your aims are clear and specific:

**By considering the above questions, aims could be rewritten as follows:**

- **Main aim** – to review and give controlled and freer oral practice of the first person affirmative, negative and question forms of the function of the Present Perfect tense used to describe past experiences in the context of holidays, using a situational context – for example, I've been to Turkey.
- **Sub aim** – by the end of the lesson, students will be able to orally describe past experiences using the present perfect form in the context of holidays.

**Good phrases to use when describing aims are:**

- To raise awareness of...
- To expose learners to...
- By the end of the lessons, students will be able to...
- To review...
- To provide further practice of...

Personal aims are also really important considerations when planning your lessons. You may wish to develop further in your teaching or try out new techniques for the first time. In formal lesson observations, your Director of Studies or Academic Manager may have given you suggestions for improvement in their post-lesson observation feedback. By including personal aims, in future observations, you can get useful feedback about how well you have improved in certain areas. Personal aims can vary from teacher to teacher but examples are as follows:

- To reduce teacher talking time (TTT)
- To organise the whiteboard more effectively
- To use technology (iPads, tablets) in class
- To give clearer instructions
- To encourage self correction
- To use an authentic song effectively to teach vocabulary



## Context

In EFL classrooms, there should always be an emphasis on students using language in a meaningful and memorable way. When teaching grammatical structures or vocabulary, it is useful to use a context to help students understand the grammatical rule.

When you create a need for language with a meaningful context, students will understand and remember your language point.

You can set contexts in the following ways:



**Situational context** – set up a situation using pictures or drawings on the board. An example of this is in the example formal lesson plan above in which the situation of a mouse in the kitchen was used to teach prepositions of place.



**Pictures or picture story** – visual aids can be used effectively to elicit and practise grammatical rules e.g. to teach the target language 'I used to be rich' you could have two pictures, one picture in the present of a tramp and a picture in the past of a millionaire to show a clear change in circumstances.



**Written text** – to revise grammatical structures, you could use a newspaper article or other text with clear examples of the structures. Students then read the text, then analyse the text for examples of the target language.



**Spoken text** – you could use an audio text, video or song to present or revise grammatical structures or vocabulary. For example, you could use an interview to practise question forms or a song such as 'Money, money, money' to teach lexical sets of vocabulary, in this case language for money i.e. 'rich', 'penny' and so on.



**Topic** – you could use a topic like your last holiday, your first job to present and practise language in context.



**Role-play or task** – a motivating way of presenting language is by first asking students to do a role-play in a certain situation e.g. complaining in a shop, then provide the language they need to carry out the role-play more effectively. Students then do the role-play again once they have focused on the target language. This context provides a need for the language, motivating students to focus on the language so they can complete the task more effectively.





## An Informal Plan

When deciding on a suitable context, it is good to think about the function of the grammatical structure you want to teach, the learners' interests and the level of the students.

For example, your target language may be Present Perfect for experiences (i.e. 'I've been to Turkey'). If you were teaching an elementary class or low intermediate class, this language may be new to the learners. A clear, situational context (e.g. a tourist returning back from his travels) may be more appropriate to teach this language for the first time. If you were teaching an upper-intermediate class, however, you would assume that they have already studied this language.

Therefore, a task-based approach, where you ask students to talk about their life experiences without providing language first, may be more appropriate to establish what the students already know and what they may need further practice in.

## Assumptions and Timetable Fit

Another consideration when lesson planning is establishing how this lesson fits into a course of study and what prior knowledge students bring to the lesson, based on previous lessons and the students' learner level.

In the example lesson plan considered in the formal lesson plan section, the teacher assumed that the students were already familiar with vocabulary to describe household items such as 'fridge' and 'table'. Therefore, at the beginning of the lesson, he was able to quickly revise this vocabulary rather than present this as new language. He then built on this previous knowledge by teaching prepositions of place using the context of household items.

We can also assume that students of a certain language level bring a certain amount of knowledge and understanding about target language to the lesson. For example, as previously discussed, we can assume that upper-intermediate students are familiar

with certain grammatical structures and vocabulary and we can build on that previous knowledge to teach more complex grammatical structures.

For example, when planning to teach a lesson on how to use the Past Perfect tense (i.e. 'I had seen the film'), we can assume that learners are familiar with the less complex Past Simple tense (i.e. 'he came home'). This makes it easier to present and build on previous knowledge to give students practise in using both tenses to highlight that one action happened before another ('I had seen the film before he came home').

If you are unsure about what a learner should know at a certain level, it is useful to refer to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) can-do statements. Syllabi contained in course books and supplementary materials are based on the CEFR and can provide a clear reference.



## Target Language

When teaching a language systems lesson – either grammatical structures or vocabulary – it is important to analyse the language you are about to teach in the planning stage so you are clear about what you are teaching and how to explain the concept to your students. You will need to produce a model sentence or sentences.

To analyse grammatical structures effectively, it is essential to refer to a grammar book or resource, especially when you are new to teaching. When analysing grammatical structures, it is important to consider the following:

<b>Form</b>	the parts of speech used to construct the structure
<b>Meaning</b>	the concept the grammatical structure expresses
<b>Function</b>	how the structure is used communicatively

To illustrate, let's analyse the following target language:

- Target language – Present Perfect Simple
- Model Sentence – 'I've been to Turkey'
- Form

### Affirmative

I + have + been + to + Turkey

**Subject + have + past participle + to + country/place**

### Negative

I + have + not + been + to + Turkey

**Subject + have + not + past participle + to +**

### Question

Have + you + been + to + Turkey?

**Have + subject + past participle + to + Turkey?**

**Meaning** to talk about past events which have a link to the present when there is no past time marker

**Function** to talk about past experiences at an unspecified time

When teaching vocabulary, it is important to list the key vocabulary you want to teach to learners and think of how you are going to teach or elicit such vocabulary

# Key Vocabulary

- Depending on the lesson and learner level, it is advisable to limit key vocabulary to 10–20 items rather than aim to teach all vocabulary in a certain lexical set or family of words linked together
- Research has shown that a learner needs to be exposed to a lexical item approximately 6 times before it enters their active vocabulary so attempting to teach all vocabulary in a certain lexical set could swamp the learners
- With higher level learners, you can assume that they will already be familiar with more familiar, high frequency words based around a certain lexical set so key vocabulary should build on familiar vocabulary
- In addition to analysing what you are going to teach, you must also decide how you are going to teach it. Some of the ways vocabulary can be presented are as follows:



**Using pictures or visual aids** – this works well for vocabulary used to describe objects e.g. clothes, animals, furniture etc



**Using realia or real objects** – e.g. teaching clothes by pointing at the clothes you and the students are wearing



**Using mime or actions** – e.g. teaching 'frog' by jumping around the room like a frog



**Using sounds** – e.g. 'to whistle' by making a whistling sound



Using matching type activities in which vocabulary items are listed on one side of the paper and meanings are jumbled on the other side. Students then match vocabulary items to their meanings in pairs



**Through a text** – e.g. using a newspaper article about a crime to teach vocabulary items such as 'steal', 'thief' and so on. Students look at the words and deduce the meaning from context.



**Using a story or situation** – e.g. teaching the words for relationships 'get to know each other', 'fall in love' by telling the story of a couple meeting and their relationship progressing.

It is also good to consider different ways of presenting vocabulary to appeal to different learning styles. For example, you could present the vocabulary item 'guitar' in three different ways to appeal to different learning styles:



**Visual** – picture of a guitar

**Auditory** – play some guitar music

**Kinaesthetic** – mime playing a guitar

# Language Skills

If you are teaching a language skills lesson, you first need to decide which skill you are going to give learners practice in:



Listening



Reading



Writing



Speaking

In addition, it is useful to analyse which sub skills you are going to give learners practice in and what you expect learners to be able to do at the end of the lesson.

**Examples of sub skills for language skills are given below:**

- Listening for gist, listening for detail, listening for specific sounds (i.e. phonology)
- Reading for gist, reading for detail, skimming, scanning, extensive reading
- Writing in different genres (e.g. essay, short story) handwriting
- Speaking discussions, debates, turn-taking, interview skills

## Materials and Equipment

While planning your lesson, you may have consulted different teaching resources and considered using equipment as part of the lesson. It would, therefore, be frustrating to enter the class and find out during the course of the lesson that you had forgotten to bring a copy of a resource you had planned to use or failed to set up your equipment. It is, therefore, worth making a note of all materials you plan to use in a list, including reference numbers. If you need to make photocopies of supplementary resources also make a note of this to ensure you are well-prepared.

Examples of materials and equipment could include:



Course Books



Supplementary Materials  
Photocopies



Games or activities  
cut up



Grammar Book  
or Reference



Pictures



CDs/Audio Files



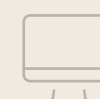
DVDs/Video Clips



Internet Resources



CD Player



Computer



Realia



## Anticipated Problems and Solutions

It may not be possible to predict everything that could happen in a lesson but it is worth considering possible problems and solutions to those problems so you are fully prepared for anything that may happen.

Anticipated problems can include:

- Possible difficulties students may have with the target language or skill
- Potential classroom management issues
- Issues with equipment and materials

After you have analysed your target language or decided which language skills sub skill you want students to have practice in, it is important to consider potential difficulties that may arise. Students may confuse Present Perfect Simple (e.g. 'I've been to Turkey') with Past Simple (e.g. 'I went to Turkey') as both tenses describe past actions.

When teaching vocabulary, students may have difficulties pronouncing certain sounds. Students may struggle with reading a longer text.

Difficulties may arise from a student's first language. For example, Russian students may have problems using articles ('a' and 'the') as these are not used in their language.

Students whose first language does not use the Latin script may find it more difficult to read or write, even at higher levels. Resources such as 'Learner English' (Swan and Smith, 2001) are extremely useful as they list potential difficulties that may arise in most major language groups.

Potential classroom management issues could involve student numbers. If you have planned a pair work activity, what happens if an odd number of students come to class? If you have a small classroom and have planned a mingle activity, classroom space may be an anticipated problem.

You may have planned an activity such as a role-play which needs clear instructions in order to work effectively. Classroom management also includes potential student issues, for example dealing with late-comers to class or students who are shy when talking in a group.

Technology in the classroom can be an effective resource when it is working but you also need to consider what you would do if you have technical issues. It may be worth considering a back-up plan if technology fails you.

In addition to anticipating problems, you also need to consider possible solutions so you are fully prepared for anything that may happen in class.



## Class Profile

Your class profile will help you plan lessons which cater for your learners' strengths and weaknesses and learning styles. The following considerations are important when thinking about your class profile:

Name	Maria	Mohammed	Cristina	Simon
Age	20	18	30	25
Gender	F	M	F	M
First Language	Spanish	Arabic	Spanish	French
Motivation	Work reasons	Go to Uni	Pleasure	Work reasons
Education	High School	High School	University	University
Attendance	100%	70%	80%	75%
Learning Style	Visual	Kinaesthetic	Auditory	Kinaesthetic
Strengths and Weaknesses	Strong grammar, shy speaker	Fluent speaker. Slower at reading	Excellent grammar, struggles with fluency	Fluent confident speaker, grammar lacks accuracy



From this class profile, you can start to make the following decisions about your lessons to appeal to the different learners in your class:

- Include a range of kinaesthetic, visual and auditory activities to appeal to different learning styles. Mohammed and Simon will be more motivated if given kinaesthetic activities to complete.
- 3 of the students' L1s share Latin script with English but one learner speaks Arabic. More support may need to be given to this learner.
- Cristina and Maria are both stronger at grammatical accuracy and weaker at fluency. Mohammed and Simon are the opposite. It might, therefore, be good to pair Mohammed with Maria/Simon with Cristina so the pairs have different strengths and weaknesses and can help each other.
- 3 of the students have specific reasons for learning English so you may want to take this into consideration

when planning the lesson. If you are teaching a reading lesson, how can practising reading help Mohammed achieve

- his goal of going to university? You could mention the importance of reading when preparing essays and so on.
- 2 of the students share the same language so you may want to separate these students in pair work activities to avoid them being tempted to use their L1 in class.

There may be other decisions you could make about teaching this small group of learners but the suggestions above show that considering your class profile helps to shape your lesson and help cater for your different learners.

Of course, you do not need to write such a detailed class profile for each learner for each lesson though you will find it useful when you start teaching or when planning a formal observation.

You could write a less detailed class profile as follows, highlighting general considerations about your group as a whole:

### Class Profile

There are 4 students in class ranging in age from 18-30. The class is mixed gender and multi-lingual – Spanish, French and Arabic. 3 of the students have specific reasons for learning English and, as such, are highly motivated. Attendance ranges from 70-100%. There are a mix of learning styles so I need to include a range of VAK activities. The female students are good at accuracy but weaker at fluency. The male students are the opposite. Mohammed is weaker at reading.

## Board Work

An important resource in class is the whiteboard. This can be used effectively to record vocabulary, target language, miscellaneous vocabulary, drawings and so on.

It is important to practise your board work writing as it can initially be tricky to get used to writing on a board. It is also important to consider board work organisation in the planning stage, planning out your board on paper or on the computer.

Board work provides students with a clear record of the work studied in class. Students can write down board work and refer to it in the future. If board work is poorly organised or messy, it will be confusing for students and would not be a useful record of the lesson.

Generally speaking, it is good to divide your board into different sections – in this example, a section for your situational context, target language and vocabulary. It is also a good idea to use different colours on the board, perhaps black for language work, red to show form and green to highlight phonological features.

### Board Work and Example

- Picture of a tourist
- I've been to Turkey
- Picture of Turkey
- I + have + past participle + to + place
- The word 'tourist'
- Have you been to Turkey?

The board can be organised as follows:



I've been to Turkey

I + have + past participle + to + place

Have you been to Turkey?



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# Planning : Outline of Procedures

# Planning–Outline of Procedures

After you have looked at the lesson globally in the background information section of the plan, you are then ready to prepare the lesson in detail, considering individual stages, linked to achieving the overall main aim, timing of each stage, procedures and interaction patterns.

## Staging and stage aims

It is a good idea to first decide what you want students to be doing at the end of the lesson and then work backwards, deciding what you need to do in the early stages to ensure that students are able to do the final stage of the lesson effectively, thereby achieving your aim.

It is also important to consider stage aims i.e. how each stage relates to the overall main aim. This will help you ensure that your main aim is achieved.

Please refer back to the lesson plan used earlier in this module, in the ‘formal lesson plan’ section. In this lesson, the teacher’s main aim was as follows:

- Use different prepositions of place accurately in spoken English to describe where things are.

Therefore, in order to achieve this aim, the teacher’s final lesson plan stage was:

10 mins	Freer practice	Hand out pictures of whole house labelled A and B (Sheets A and B have the mouse in different places). In pairs, students explain to each other exactly where the mice are without looking at each other’s pictures. Partners must draw mice in the correct places.  Teacher monitors and takes notes on errors and good uses of language	To provide freer oral practice in a communication activity	Pair Work
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By the end of the lesson, the teacher wants the students to be able to speak fairly independently in pairs, using prepositions in place to compare two pictures.

In order to achieve this end stage, it is clear that students need appropriate scaffolding and support

from the teacher including:

- Revision of vocabulary – stage 1
- Understanding of context – stage 1
- Target Language – prepositions of place – stage 2
- Controlled practice – stage 3 and 4
- Written record – stage 5



## Timing

Timing of lesson plan stages is key as your lessons will have a start time and end time. In order to achieve your main aim, you want students to complete the final and most important stage of the lesson. If time runs out before students have the chance to complete the final stage, students will not have received sufficient freer practice of the target language.

Timing is also important to make sure that students have sufficient time to complete each stage of the lesson. If stage timings are too short, students may not benefit much from the lesson. If stage timings are too long, the lesson will lose pace and students may start to feel bored and go off task.

Setting appropriate time limits and sticking to them will help avoid this problem. If you know that a stage should take 5 minutes, you know when to stop the activity and move on, thereby ensuring the pace does not dip. Giving the students a time limit for activities will also challenge learners and avoid them being tempted to chat about the weekend or go off topic.

Of course, always keep in mind that you are teaching the students not the plan, so all timings are suggested. You may feel that in the lesson students need more time to complete the stage or you may feel that students complete a stage quicker than expected. You can then adjust timings as you go on.

It is a good idea to think about flexi-stages, i.e. additional stages that can be added in or taken out without affecting the lesson. It is also a good idea to have a bank of warmers, fillers or coolers, up your sleeve, in case a lesson ends earlier than expected.

Once you know your class, you will be better able to gauge how long your students need to complete a certain activity. For example, if you teach a group of students who do not use the Latin script in their first language, they may need longer to read a text

### Procedures

Procedures are written descriptions of what will be happening at each stage of the lesson.

When you first start teaching, it is a good idea to make these descriptions as detailed as possible to give yourself the support you need to ensure your lesson is a success.

#### Procedures can contain information about the following:

- Student actions e.g. speaking in pairs, listening to the teacher...
- Teacher actions e.g. writing on board, monitoring...
- Materials used e.g. whiteboard, hand out, course book
- Written instructions e.g. 'work in pairs'
- Language taught e.g. 'I've been to Turkey'

When writing procedures, imagine that you are going to give your lesson plan to another teacher to use in class. Ask yourself if, by reading your plan, the teacher would have all the information needed to teach your lesson effectively.

# Interaction Patterns

A successful lesson is often a lesson that includes a variety of different interaction patterns and focuses, stimulating students in different ways.

A student-centred lesson should include a range of student-centred interaction patterns including pair work and group work.

A lesson that has a lot of whole class interaction patterns may become very teacher-centred while a lesson that has very little teacher direction may lack focus. It is a good idea to review your interaction patterns to ensure your lessons are balanced and varied.

Students can be organised in different ways. It is beneficial for students to change interaction patterns for different stages and activities to give learners a change of focus and provide variety.



**Whole class** – there are many occasions when a teacher working with the class as a whole is the best type of classroom organisation. The class can simply be encouraged to focus on the teacher for a particular activity or stage of the lesson. Unlike conventional teaching, whole class teaching does not mean that the teacher is the only active participant. Students can be asked questions and encouraged to participate by asking their opinions on a particular topic.



**Group work and pair work** – students work collaboratively and participate more actively with more individual speaking opportunities. Students have more chances to experiment with the language than is possible in a whole-class arrangement. Many more students will be doing the activity than if the teacher was working with the whole class, where, in most cases, only one student can talk at a time. Both pair work and group work give the students chances for greater independence as the students are working together without the teacher controlling every move. They can work without the pressure of the whole class listening to what they are doing. Another great advantage is that these interaction patterns give the teacher more opportunity to focus attention on particular students.



**Solo work** – individual work allows students to work at their own speed and provides welcome relief from the group-centred nature of much language teaching. For the time that solo work takes place, students can consider their own individual needs and progress.

In addition to these three main interaction patterns, there are some other variations which you may like to consider using to create more variety:



**Triads** – you may wish to replace pair work activities with triads, students working in small groups of 3s. Some students find it uncomfortable to speak all the time in pair work activities and enjoy having more reflective time by working in a group of 3.



**Pyramid** – this type of activity is useful to encourage less vocal students to take part in group work activities and also to encourage students to give opinions and negotiate. You start with an individual task, move to a pair work task then finish with a group task.



**Group-swapping** – this interaction patterns really encourages students to listen to other students in their group and practice summarising information. Students are organised in groups of 4 and asked to complete a simple task together. For example, telling their group about their last holiday, favourite film or an article they have read. After students have completed this activity, each group is split with each member of the original group forming new groups.

They then need to summarise the information they heard in their original groups.



**Debate** – a good way of generating ideas about a particular topic or practice giving opinions is to set up a debate in class. The class is split into two large groups and given a topic – e.g. should smoking be illegal – with one group instructed to agree with the topic and one group asked to disagree. Students can be given time to prepare and nominate a spokesperson. The spokesperson can then change as the activity progresses to allow all students the chance to speak.



**Mingles** – this is a whole class interaction pattern in which students are encouraged to speak to multiple partners in class. Students could be given a list of hobbies or activities and asked to find a different person who likes these activities. Students then need to speak to multiple partners to find a different name for each hobby or activity.



**Back to back** – a good way of practising telephone English is to encourage learners to sit back to back to complete speaking activities. This encourages them to really listen to what their partner is saying.



**Mill drill (or speed dating)** – this activity is similar to the interaction pattern used for speed dating where half the class remain seated while the other half move in an agreed direction to speak to different partners. This interaction pattern is good for speaking activities. It can also live up controlled practice of grammatical structures with the advantage being that students have repeated practice of the target language with different speaking partners.

**This list is by no means exhaustive but demonstrates the variety of different interaction patterns possible in the classroom.**

Depending on the teaching centre, you may find that students often sit in the same position in class and with the same group of students. While you may sometimes be happy for students to work with students they are sitting with, it is also good to encourage learners to speak with a wide variety of different speaking partners. Therefore, at times, you may want to change student groupings for different lessons or different stages of the lessons. One way of doing this is to ask students to sit with students they have not worked with. Students may be reluctant to do this so here are a few ways of quickly organising students into different groupings:



**Nominate students** – instruct individual students to work with other students by name.



**Matching halves** – you could give all students half of a common expression or a different coloured slip of paper. Students then find their partner. For example, the two students with red slips of paper work together.



**Numbering/lettering** – go around the room giving each student a letter or number e.g. A, B, C, D or 1, 2, 3, 4. Then instruct all student As to sit together and so on.



# **Lesson Plan Models**

# Lesson Plan Models

In this section, we will consider 3 different lesson plan models or ways to structure a lesson, used for different lesson types or with different language levels. All of these lesson plan models refer to language systems lessons i.e. lessons in which grammatical structures or vocabulary is taught or revised.

## Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP)

The 'P-P-P' lesson model was an essential feature of Situational Language Teaching and was widely taught to EFL teachers in the 1980s/1990s. It is also called a 'logical line lesson' as it follows a linear sequence in which students are taught the language, given controlled practice and then use the language in a freer way.

In the 'P-P-P' lesson plan model, the three P's stand for:

**Presentation** – introduction of the new teaching item in context

**Practice** – controlled practice of this item

**Production** – a freer practice phase

For example, a teacher could teach the Present Perfect tense used in the model sentence 'I have been to Turkey' in the following way using the 'P-P-P' model:

### Presentation

- The teacher draws a picture of a man, aeroplane, passport etc on the board plus a picture of Turkey or Istanbul.
- The teacher elicits or teaches the vocabulary
- The teacher asks simple questions to establish the context e.g. 'Where is the man?' or 'Where did he go on holiday?'
- The teacher elicits or teaches the modal sentence 'I have been to Turkey'

### Practice

- The teacher asks the students to listen to her say the modal sentence clearly
- The students repeat as a group
- This process is repeated with the teacher focusing on pronunciation
- The teacher asks individual students to say the repeat the modal sentence, correcting pronunciation if needed.
- The teacher writes the model sentence on the board.
- The teacher analyses the language on the board, showing students how to make the grammatical structure.
- Controlled practice continues with the teacher asking the question 'Where have you been?' and the students replying 'I have been to Turkey'
- Students then work in pairs and take turns to ask and answer the modal question and answer.
- The teacher monitors the pairs and helps if needed

### Production

- The teacher gradually introduces more freer practice activities, asking learners where they have been. Students answer giving personal answers, using the target language eg 'I have been to Spain'
- Students practise in pairs and groups with more freer activities introduced depending on the learner level.

The 'P-P-P' lesson plan model can be used effectively to teach new language, giving students the opportunity to see the language in context, providing them with support with using new language in controlled practice activities and then giving them the opportunity to use the language in a freer, more personalised way at the end of the lesson.

# Test-Teach-Test or Task-Based Learning

The 'P-P-P' lesson plan model works well with lower levels when you can assume that the students have not seen this language before. However, its use is limited at higher levels, when you can assume that students are already familiar with the grammatical structures you are planning to teach.

At higher levels, students may be familiar with certain grammatical structures but fail to produce them effectively when speaking. You may wish to check what students already know at the beginning of the lesson, provide practice in language gaps then assess how much they have learned. This model is called Test-Teach-Test and is also the model used in Task-Based Learning (TBL). The main phases of a 'T-T-T' or TBL lesson are as follows:

**Test/Task** – students are given a test to highlight the language they already know and any possible gaps

**Teach** – students are given controlled practice on any language gaps

**Test/Repeat task** – students are given another test or task to see how much they have learned.

A teacher could teach the Present Perfect tense used in the model sentence 'I have been to Turkey' in the following way using the 'T-T-T' model:

## Test

- Teacher puts a few visual prompts on the board and elicits phrases such as 'ride a bike', 'stay in an expensive hotel', 'eat something unusual' and so on.
- Teacher puts students in pairs and asks the pairs to ask and answer questions about past experiences using the picture prompts – no language input is given.
- Teacher monitors and listens to the students conversations taking notes to give delayed feedback

## Teach

- Teacher provides delayed feedback on the language used in the task
- Teacher elicits the correct tense to use for life experiences in the past with no time reference
- Teacher records model sentences on the board 'I've ridden a bike' etc
- Students do controlled written or oral activities perhaps comparing Present Perfect and Past Simple

## Test

- Students repeat the task at the beginning perhaps with some variation.
- Teacher monitors and provides feedback on better language production.

In the lesson above, the teacher will have some assumed knowledge of how familiar students are with the Present Perfect Simple tense so the initial phase helps reveal how much the students know about how to use the structure and what help they need in the 'Teach' phase. It may be that students are familiar with the Present Perfect Simple tense but when asked to speak about the past, resort to using the Past Simple structure incorrectly. They may be familiar with the structure but make errors with form or pronunciation. This initial phase reveals the gaps while the middle phase provides students with the additional knowledge they need to know. The last phase helps consolidate learning.



# Engage Study Activate (ESA)

Both the 'P-P-P' and 'T-T-T' models follow linear sequences. However, language lessons don't always follow this model and the 'E-S-A' lesson plan model was developed to describe such non-linear lessons. 'E-S-A' refers to the 3 elements present in a language classroom to help students learn effectively. A successful lesson should have a balance of these elements. These elements are: (6)

**Engage** – arousing the students' interest

**Study** – focus on language and how it is constructed

**Activate** – students using language freely and communicatively

When students are engaged or interested in what they are doing, they progress better. Activities and materials which engage students include:

- Games
- Music
- Discussions
- Stimulating pictures
- Dramatic stories
- Anecdotes

Engaging learners also involves getting students interested in what they are doing i.e. asking learners to predict the content of a text before reading it or guess someone's occupation before listening to it. Even the driest text or course book activity can be interesting if time is taken to fully engage learners.

Study activities refer to any activities in which the learner is asked to focus on language and how it is

- Controlled grammar practice
- Learning new vocabulary
- Receptive skills – reading and listening
- Controlled productive skills – speaking and writing
- Focus on pronunciation

The study element covers quite a wide area of language learning and can include a variety of different learning styles including listening to the teacher or taking part in group work guided discovery activities, in which learners try to work out the rules for themselves. It also includes activities in which students are asked to engage with the language through practising reading and listening skills as well as controlled writing and speaking activities.

Activate activities include all activities which are designed to get students using language as freely and communicatively as possible. Suitable activities include:

- Role-plays
- Debates
- Discussions
- Story writing
- Writing in groups

The activate element is important as it gives learners the opportunity to actively use the language. Activate activities focus on fluency rather than accuracy so delayed error correction is used.

The three elements of an 'E-S-A' lesson are all important and need to be balanced. A lesson with too many 'study' stages, for example, will not provide learners with sufficient freer practice of the target language while a lesson with too many 'activate' stages may be unsuccessful as students may not have sufficient language support to do the freer tasks effectively. An 'E-S-A' lesson may have a linear sequence but can also have a 'patchwork' (7) sequence in which stages have different focuses throughout the lesson. An example of a 'patchwork' sequence is below:

**Engage** – students look at pictures of sunbathers and respond by commenting on the people and the activity that are taking part in.

**Activate** – students act out a dialogue between a doctor and a sunburn victim

**Activate** – students look at a text describing different people and the effects sun has on their skin

**Study** – the teacher does vocabulary work on words such as 'pale', 'freckles', 'tan' etc

**Activate** – students describe themselves or people they know using the vocab

**Study** – teacher focuses the students' attention on the relative clause construction used in the text ('I'm the type of person who easily burns')

**Engage** – the teacher discusses advertisements with the students

**Activate** – the students write a radio commercial for sunscreen

Such lessons are common, especially at higher levels. Not only do they reflect how we learn, they also provide an appealing balance between study and activation, between language and topic.



## Longer Term Planning

Planning individual lessons is important but it is also important to develop the ability to plan a series of lessons to cover a week, a month or a term. In order to do that effectively, there are two main considerations:

**Syllabus** – what will I teach?

**Timetable** – How will the separate items be sequenced.

## Syllabus

A syllabus is a longer term overview of what teachers are expected to teach over a course of study. Syllabi for EFL courses are predominantly based on the CEFR Can-Do statements for learners at certain levels. Syllabi can be predominantly grammar or skills-based though most syllabi for General English courses have a balance of language systems and skills.

A language school may have developed their own syllabus which teachers are expected to refer to or they may use the course book as a syllabus. Specialist courses, for example Business English will have their own syllabi while, at times, syllabi for bespoke courses may be negotiated between the teacher and students.

A syllabus can be a great help as it clearly sets out what you as a teacher are expected to cover during a course of study.

## Timetable

The day-to-day and week-to-week decisions about how to interpret a syllabus into a series of lessons is usually the teacher's job. The process involves looking at the syllabus and mapping out how you will cover the content in the time available to you.

This is called a timetable – a teacher's translation of the syllabus into a balanced and interesting series of lessons. Timetables are usually written in advance and enables everyone to understand what is being done in your class.

A timetable may be a 'skeleton' i.e. providing basic information about what is to be covered in class or it may be more detailed. Timetables are useful for planning the overall shape of a week or course and can be adapted if needed.

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