

Trinity CertTESOL

Study Resource 6: Lesson Planning for CertTESOL

When teaching, whether using a course book or designing a lesson from scratch, we need a thorough plan of where we want to go and how we want to get there. It's a little bit like planning a journey: you need to determine what to pack, which route to take, as well as anticipating some of the problems you may encounter along the way. Effective lesson planning is one of the most important elements in successful teaching.

On the CertTESOL course, you will be required to write detailed lesson plans, which will be assessed on their quality and on their implementation. The detail required enables you to think carefully through every step, considering the timing, balance of activities, along with many other important factors.

This Study Resource for the CertTESOL will take a closer look at lesson planning for the Teaching Skills component of the course:

- What is a lesson plan?
- Why do we need to write lesson plans?
- What is the key to lesson planning?
- What are the main stages of a lesson?
- What are some questions to ask myself when planning?
- How can we anticipate problems and solutions?

For each **Reflection Task**, take a moment to think and make notes mentally or in writing before you continue to read.

Reflection Task 1

You're going to read about what goes into a lesson plan over this resource. Before you read, spend a few minutes noting down what information you think would need to go into a typical lesson plan, e.g. how long each task lasts, what you'll write on the board, etc.

When you've finished reading this resource, look back at your notes. How many of your ideas were written about? Were there any you didn't think of? Do you understand why it's important to include it in your plan?

WHAT IS A LESSON PLAN?

A lesson plan sets out what language and/or skills you intend to cover with your learners during the lesson (i.e. the objectives of the lesson) and how you intend to do this (i.e. the activities that the learners will be engaged in to help them achieve these objectives). In many ways, the lesson plan represents a mental picture of the thought and preparation that you have put into the lesson, and how you envisage it unfolding in reality.

Your plan should include details about:

- learners
- learning objectives
- context
- anticipated problems and solutions
- materials and aids
- procedure

The Procedure page may be laid out something like this:

Stage	Aim	Teacher Activity	Student Activity	Interaction	Timing

Reflection Task 2

Look at the information below. Which section of the Procedure page (above) would you put this in? You can check your answers at the end of this resource.

- a. 9.00am-9.10 am
- b. Students talk about what they think is happening in the picture.
- c. S-S
- d. Lead in
- e. Teacher makes sure all students are talking without getting too involved in any of the chats.

WHY DO WE NEED TO WRITE LESSON PLANS?

One of the most important reasons is for you to identify your objectives for the lesson. You need to be able to pinpoint exactly what language items and skills you want your learners to be able to use better by the end of the lesson, and how to gauge your success. You also need to make sure your objectives are realistic, focussed and achievable.

Careful planning and preparation will also:

- help you to think logically through the stages in relation to the time available
- keep you on target
- give you confidence
- give your learners confidence in you
- make sure that lesson is balanced and appropriate for class
- help you focus on teaching areas you need to improve in
- provide you with a useful record

WHAT IS THE KEY TO LESSON PLANNING?

Your learners

Think about their language level, age, educational and cultural background, motivation, strengths and weaknesses, learning styles, etc. Try to base your activities and materials around the needs and interests of your group to make learning relevant. The better you know your learners, the more you can personalize your lesson content and make it suit your group.

Objectives

One of the main principles of planning is establishing clear and realistic objectives that are achievable and meet the learners' needs. Your objectives specify language items that they will have learned and skills they will have improved by the end of the lesson. Objectives are stated from the learners' perspective, rather than focused on what the teacher is going to do.

Some examples are:

- *for learners to be able to use functional language to express opinions when talking about current events*
- *for learners to be able to read a news article for gist*

Clearly stated objectives, and achieving them, are key indicators of good plans and good teaching.

Context

To make it meaningful to our learners, it is important that language is always encountered in context. Consider how the language naturally occurs, who uses it,

about what, where, when, why, and how. Try to keep the situation relevant to your learners.

Variety

Variety keeps the learners motivated, and also helps you cater for different learning styles within your class. Plan to vary your teaching techniques, activities, materials and interactions to keep everyone in the group as engaged as possible.

Learner involvement

Try to engage the learners as much as possible: include plenty of student-centered activities and maximum student talking time, elicit language and concepts from the learners rather than tell them, and personalize language work so they can use English for describing their own lives.

Flexibility

It is never possible to predict exactly what will happen in the classroom and you will sometimes need to adapt your plan to suit the circumstances. Consider optional activities that you may do if time allows or that you can skip if necessary.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN STAGES IN A LESSON?

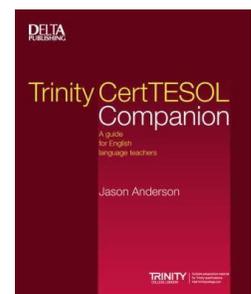
For learners to benefit from classroom language learning they need to be motivated, exposed to the language, and given opportunities to use it. There are different ways of approaching and describing the staging of lessons. One such way called C.A.P. is set out in the *CertTESOL Companion* (Delta Publishing, 2017), where Jason Anderson suggests the three stages of **Context**, **Analysis** and **Practice**.

Context: The context for the new language is established. This may involve the use of a text (e.g. listening, reading, video), a situation (in the classroom, on the board using pictures, etc.), or the learners (e.g. through a conversation).

Analysis: Learners notice the new language in the context and they analyse its features (e.g. meaning, form, pronunciation, use, text structure). This may involve teacher-led elicitation, guided discovery, text reconstruction, etc.

Practice: Learners practise using the new language. This may include controlled (e.g. a drill or a gap-fill) and free practice (e.g. a role play, letter or discussion) of the new language, using either speaking or writing activities.

Further information on CAP can be found in the *CertTESOL Companion* and online at:
www.jasonanderson.org.uk/resources.htm.



The role of the teacher

Before we go any further, it's worthwhile to consider teaching roles and what the teacher actually does in the classroom. Common styles include:

- Authority (lecture style)
- Demonstrator (coach style)
- Facilitator (activity style)
- Delegator (group style)
- Hybrid (blended style)

You can read more about the pros and cons of each of the above, and also about Grasha's five teaching styles on [this website](#).

Reflection Task 3

1. Think of some of the teachers you have had in the past. Which roles do they match?
2. In what role(s) do you think you'll be most comfortable in the classroom?

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN PLANNING YOUR LESSON

1. What is the **teaching point**?

- a. specific language (grammar, lexis, and pronunciation)?
- b. specific skills (speaking, reading, listening, writing)?

Think about what you expect the learners to be able to do by the end of the lesson (your **objectives**).

2. What is a good way to set the **context** for the language? This can be done by using a dialogue, a description, realia, pictures, mime, a story, questions, a reading text, etc. Consider when and how we use this language naturally.
3. How are you going to **highlight the language** to the learners? Tell the learners directly? Help them to discover it themselves?
4. What **activities** are you going to use? What order will they come in? How much time will each stage take? Suppose your learners take more, or less, time to carry out each activity? How could that affect the whole timing of the lesson?
5. What **materials** are you going to use: texts, pictures, CD, tasks? Are they relevant to your learners? Do they relate back to your aim?
6. What opportunities are you going to give learners to **practise** the language and **use** it in a meaningful way?

7. Consider your **class management**. How are you going to give your instructions? Are your learners going to work in pairs, groups, mingle? How can you give them a good variety of listening and talking to you, and working with each other?
8. How can you **engage** the learners at the beginning of the lesson? A good way of doing this is often through images, a warmer or an icebreaker.

ANTICIPATING PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

Even with the best preparation, unexpected difficulties and situations may arise. These may relate to both language and classroom management. As part of your planning, you need to predict pitfalls and suggest ways of dealing with them.

Reflection Task 5

- a) Look at the list of anticipated difficulties below. Think about what you could do in each case. Try to think of at least one solution for each point. When you've finished, compare your ideas with some suggested solutions at the end of this resource.

	Anticipated difficulties	Suggested solutions
Language: use	Confusion about the use of the present perfect simple and the past simple for completed past actions (<i>I have arrived last week.</i>)	
Language: pronunciation	Students may not remember to use rising intonation in polite requests and sound rude (<i>Can I have a coffee please?</i>)	
Language: form	Students may leave out the auxiliary verb in passive sentences when describing a process (<i>The flour mixed with the water.</i>)	
Class management: instructions	Some learners may not be clear on how to complete activity 2	
Class management: interactions	There may be an uneven number for pair work	

As a trainee on a CertTESOL course, you will be required to produce very detailed plans, as careful planning will help you process every aspect of your upcoming lesson. After teaching, you will reflect on your plan, and receive feedback from your tutor.

You will learn how to plan individual lessons that normally extend over 40 to 60 minutes. However, as you become a more experienced teacher, you will need to take into account what your learners have done in previous lessons and how your class fits into their whole syllabus or learning program.

Useful links

- Watch a [YouTube clip](#) by Jack C. Richards and read an [article](#) by Scott Thornbury, two experts in the field.
- [TeachingEnglish](#) and [onestopenglish](#) are some of the sites that have good ready-made lesson plans to adapt for your learners.
- For definitions of some of the terms used in this Study Resource, see [Elt World Wiki](#).

We hope you have enjoyed this introduction to lesson planning for the Trinity CertTESOL course and found it useful.

Answers Reflective task 2

Stage Aim	Teacher Activity	Student Activity	Interaction	Timing
Lead in	Teacher makes sure all students are talking without getting too involved in any of the chats.	Students talk about what they think is happening in the picture.	S-S	9.00am-9.10 am

Answers Reflective task 5

	Anticipated difficulties	Suggested solutions
Language: use	Confusion about the use of the present perfect simple and the past simple for completed past actions (<i>I have arrived last week.</i>)	Draw a timeline, prepare and ask concept check questions, monitor and prompt, encourage peer correction
Language: pronunciation	Students may not remember to use rising intonation in polite requests and sound rude (<i>Can I have a coffee please?</i>)	Drill, draw arrows on the board, monitor and prompt
Language: form	Students may leave out the auxiliary verb in passive sentences when describing a process (<i>The flour mixed with the water.</i>)	Drill, leave model sentences on the board, monitor and prompt, encourage peer correction
Class management: instructions	Some learners may not be clear on how to complete activity 2	Script and practice the instructions, demonstrate, ask questions to check understanding
Class management: interactions	There may be an uneven number for pair work	Have one group of 3 (including one weaker learner)