

# Lesson planning

**ROSS MORRISON MCGILL**  
MANAGING DIRECTOR, @TEACHER TOOLKIT

**A**s a new teacher, you may be expected to write a detailed lesson plan for your school or training provider. Of course, you want to be prepared, but where do you start, and how should you go about planning lessons throughout your career?

Effective teaching, which is crucial for students' understanding and progression, is supported by effective planning (DfE, 2017). However, detailed lessons plans are not required by OfSTED (2018a, 2018b, p. 12). Lesson planning, is not a form-filling exercise – it's a process of thought and reflection. Planning a lesson should begin with what you want students to learn, rather than what they should do – it should fit into your broader scheme of work, involving the topic you are teaching, the knowledge students already have, and what you want them to take away from the lesson (McGill, 2017; Mccrea, 2015).

What does this mean in practice? There are a range of options to consider in the planning process that can help to make it efficient and effective for you and your students:



## 1 Get to know the students you'll be teaching

Before planning your lesson, you need to be sure about who it is you are teaching. Of course, you need to know the basics – year group, subject, set – but what other information can you find out about the individuals in your class? What are their names? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Are there any children with SEND? What are their likes and dislikes? Look at their details, but also ask other teachers who teach these students for anecdotal evidence to help build up a full picture.

## 2 Find out what they know

This is particularly important if you are teaching a one-off lesson. Find out what was covered in the last few lessons. You don't want to be repeating content the students have already studied or steaming ahead to something they won't understand. Find out what these students have learnt and ensure the content you decide to teach fits chronologically with the previous lessons.

## 3 Decide what your aim for the lesson is

Avoid lesson-planning traps – particularly ones that focus on interesting activities. One may come across (or try to find) a 'good' activity and then reverse-engineer the lesson objectives to match the likely outcomes of the activity. Over time this can become an exercise in keeping students busy.

## 4 Focus on the reality

The need for planning lessons will never go away, but this doesn't mean you have to spend hours making individual lesson plans.

## 5 Keep the objectives simple

Over-planning generally leads to 'under-learning'. Be wary of including too many activities and objectives. Break objectives down, and don't try to cover too much content.

## 6 Focus on the learning


Too often, lesson planning begins without a focus on the learning; the bigger picture is not examined. Try asking yourself these questions:

1. **Where are the students starting from?**
2. **Where do you want the students to get to?**
3. **How will you know when they are there?**
4. **How can you best help them get there?**

Finally, and perhaps most importantly...

## 7 Don't try to do everything!

As a teacher in your first few terms of teaching, there is a lot to learn. It's better to focus on one or two elements that you want to practise and refine in this lesson than to try to cram in everything you've learnt so far and not really do any of them properly. If you refine, for example, your Assessment for Learning (AFL) techniques in one lesson, then next time they will come more naturally to you and you can move on to adding in a new technique without overloading yourself.

 **Ross Morrison McGill** is the founder and Managing Director of @TeacherToolkit. He taught in state schools across London for over 20 years. In December 2015, he was nominated for The Sunday Times '500 Most Influential People in Britain 2015' and remains the only classroom teacher to have featured to this day.

## REFERENCES

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