



Lesson Planning

Getting it right ✓

IN A WEEK

Keith and Nancy Appleyard
Series editor: **Susan Wallace**



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Susan Wallace

I am Emeritus Professor of Education at Nottingham Trent University where part of my role has been to support trainee teachers on initial and in-service teacher training courses. My own experience of classroom teaching has been mainly with 14 to 19 year olds, and I have also worked in a local authority advisory role for this age group. My particular interest is in the motivation and behaviour management of reluctant and disengaged learners, and I've written a number of books and research papers on this topic. My work allows me the privilege of meeting, observing and listening to teachers from all sectors of education. It is to them that I owe many of the tips and ideas contained in these pages.



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Introduction

Getting started

Teachers in all sectors of education are faced with the ongoing task of planning lessons for their learners. This can be a daunting experience. Novice teachers can struggle to get their heads around what is involved at a time when they are managing new information and skills. Experienced teachers are usually busy professionals with little time to develop their own lesson planning. Whether you are just starting your professional career as a teacher or you have been in the profession for some time, this book is intended as a guide to support and develop your skills in lesson planning.

So why should you plan? And should you write a lesson plan? After all, Ofsted no longer requires a written plan so why should you write one? Here are some of the reasons why planning is so important and why having your own written or electronic lesson plan is still the best course of action.

- **Ofsted still requires evidence of planning. It becomes more difficult for you to provide this evidence in your teaching if you do not have some documentation to illustrate your planning.**
- **Writing your plan encourages you to justify the choices you make.**
- **Your plan gives you a working document that you can refer to during the lesson. You can also use it to record important points that arise during the lesson as a reminder for you to return to later.**
- **A lesson plan is an important record to refer back to and has a number of uses in this context. For example:**
 - **At the completion of a lesson it provides a stimulus for evaluation.**

- **It shows which of your teaching and learning methods worked well and which didn't. Without it there is a chance you may forget and repeat a less useful method.**
- **It provides evidence that you have covered the intended topic, that objectives have been achieved (or not) and that your assessment methods were appropriate.**

What's this book about?

This is a practical guide for busy professionals. It is written in straightforward language and avoids using academic jargon wherever possible. The focus throughout is on suggestions and advice that you can apply to your own teaching. The book is strategy led, meaning that it doesn't emphasise ideal models in planning your lessons; rather, it suggests practical strategies you might try in order to plan them effectively. In simple terms, the emphasis is on a practical 'how to' approach.

One consequence of this approach is that there is relatively little emphasis on educational theory. This doesn't mean that theory is ignored. Indeed, each chapter contains extracts from educational theorists in manageable relevant chunks that are referenced at the end of the book if you wish to research further. However, the emphasis is on how experienced and practising teachers undertake lesson planning and how you can develop your own skills in this area. The examples of lesson planning strategies that you will find throughout the book are based on real-life situations. The intention is that you will be able to relate these situations to your own experience and try the strategies out in your own teaching.

The book sees lesson planning as a key skill which is applicable to all sectors of education in the UK. The examples are taken from the primary, secondary and further education sectors but are not sector specific. In other words, you should be able to see the relevance of the learning points in the strategies no matter where you are working.

Lesson planning is not a skill to be taught in teacher training courses and then left alone. On the contrary, it is something that effective teachers continue to develop throughout their careers. Good lesson planning is a process, subject to constant improvement and development as you gain experience. A basic tenet that is underlined in the book is that as a professional you are also a perennial learner, constantly evaluating your teaching, learning new things and revising your practice. Therefore, it is intended that the book should be helpful to you whether you are just starting your professional career or have many years of experience.

What's in it?

The book is in effect a seven-day course in lesson planning. It is divided into seven practical chapters plus this introduction. Apart from this introduction, each chapter covers one important aspect of lesson planning and is designed to be read in one day. Overall, the book suggests a range of tried and tested strategies for dealing with the most common issues and problems encountered by teachers when planning their lessons.

The first chapter, Day 1, covers the preliminary work that needs to be done before you start writing lesson plans. It covers the strategies needed to plan with a learner-centred approach, to research the course you are scheduled to teach, to design a scheme of work and to choose an appropriate lesson plan format.

The next chapters cover key components of your lesson plan, starting with Day 2, which is concerned with strategies for writing aims and objectives. Day 3 concentrates on strategies for choosing appropriate teaching methods and planning relevant learner activities. This is followed by Day 4, selecting the most reliable and valid ways of assessing how effectively your learners have learned the skills, knowledge and attitudes you intended them to learn. Day 5 is concerned with planning your choice of resources.

The final two chapters cover some aspects of monitoring how well your planning has been in practice. Day 6 gives strategies for managing or initiating change to your planning, while the final chapter focuses on how you can best evaluate the effectiveness of your planning.

How is it set out?

Each chapter of the book follows an identical, logical format that is easy to follow. The chapters are designed to be brief, accessible, entertaining and interactive, giving you an opportunity to try out strategies and record whether or not they are effective.

These are the features and structure that you will find in each of the chapters:

- an introduction to the day's aspect of lesson planning and a list of strategies to be covered;
- cartoons to provide graphic and humorous illustrations of one of the day's important learning points;
- a description of each strategy, followed by a brief cameo entitled *Strategy in action*. These cameos should give you some ideas about how you might use the strategy in your own teaching;

- a brief summary of key theories, headed *A Spot of Theory*. This underpins the strategies being considered;
- a section headed *If you only try one thing, try this*, which encourages you to select and try out the strategy that seems most relevant to your own teaching environment;
- a checklist of strategies in a grid format, allowing you to record how well each one has worked and whether you would use it again.

There are many terms in common use to describe teachers and learners: lecturer, trainer, tutor, instructor, student, child, pupil, client come to mind. Normally this depends on where you are working, but for the purposes of this book the generic terms *teacher* and *learner* are used throughout.

How might you use it?

How you use this book depends, to a large extent, on where (or if) you are teaching and the stage you have reached in your professional career. You may be a Newly Qualified Teacher, a trainee working towards a teaching qualification, a teacher trainer or an experienced teacher. You could be working in a primary school, a secondary school, a post-16 college or a commercial training organisation. Your teaching subject could be anything from art to zoology.

You will therefore want and need different things from your reading. If you are a trainee, you will probably want to work your way through the book from Day 1 to Day 7 as it is set out in a chronological order that follows the key stages of lesson planning in sequence. If you are an experienced teacher, you might want to dip in, focusing on the strategies that interest you as an experienced professional. If you are a teacher trainer, you might want to make use of some of the strategies and cameos to consolidate your trainees' learning.

However you choose to use the book, please remember that it is intended as a practical guide, not so much bedtime reading, but more an encouragement to get you thinking and to try lots of strategies out for yourself. Consequently, the value of the book lies not primarily in reading it in seven days, but mainly in the experience you gain from experimenting with new techniques and improving your lesson planning skills.

DAY 3: Methods and activities

Choosing your method

Now that you have a set of aims and objectives for your lesson, the next stage in planning is to consider how they can best be achieved.

There are plenty of teaching methods you can choose from. One way of sorting them out is to consider a spectrum with teacher-centred methods (such as lectures) at one extreme and learner-centred methods (such as discovery learning) at the other. The other factor to bear in mind is the well-established principle that people learn better when they are actively doing something rather than passively listening to a teacher. This means that it is a good idea to keep your learners actively involved in their learning.

Everyone has their own favourite teaching method, but this should not be the main reason for choosing a particular method. Your choice will primarily depend on the nature of the topic to be learned (for example, whether it is learning a new skill or learning facts), but also on the learning style and motivation of your learners, how learning will be assessed and what resources are available to you. This really means that you need to use a variety of methods so that interest is maintained and individual needs are met.

Whatever methods you choose, the lesson will need a structure with a clear beginning, middle and ending and this will need to be sequenced logically within the time available. Your planning will also have to consider how you can meet the needs of a range of abilities and achieve the objectives. Today's strategies are designed to help you on your way.

Today's strategies

- **Methods:**
 1. ASK
 2. The more the better
- **Level:**
 3. Simple!
 4. Horses for courses
- **Structure:**
 5. Bite-sized and joined up
 6. Beef up beginnings and endings
 7. Dry runs
- **Variety:**
 8. Get personal
 9. Appeal right and left



Strategy: Methods

1. ASK

In deciding which methods to choose, the first thing to consider is what type of objective you want your learners to attain by the end of the lesson. Are they going to learn facts? Are they going to learn a new skill? Do you want them to develop a particular attitude? This is important because some methods are more appropriate than others for objectives that are concerned with **A**ttitudes rather than **S**kills or **K**nowledge (hence ASK).

Here are some of the methods that are often quoted as being most appropriate for each category of the ASK domains.

A: Attitudes	S: Skills	K: Knowledge
Discussion	Instruction	Lecture
Question and answer	Demonstration	Question and answer
Role play	Projects	Presentations
Discovery learning	Practical sessions	Diagrams and graphs
Seminars	Supervised practice	Projects

These lists are not exhaustive. Consider the objectives of one of your own lessons and decide what would be the primary method you would choose to attain them.

2. The more the better

Learners learn in different ways. Some like verbal explanations, some prefer visual presentations while others prefer to learn through practical experience. This is often classified as VAK (visual, auditory and kinaesthetic) learning. This means that it is unwise to rely on one teaching method but you should instead supplement your primary method with lots of other approaches that serve to reinforce learning and appeal to a range of learning styles.

You can plan your teaching methods to teach the same topic in different ways that should appeal to VAK learners. For example, lectures and explanations will appeal to the auditory learner style; diagrams and demonstrations will appeal to visual learners; simulations and practical assignments work well with kinaesthetic learners. The best approach would be to use all three methods, which would have the additional benefit of developing your learners' learning styles.

A Spot of Theory

This is where the skills of planning a lesson become most significant. The tutor needs to consider activities and exercises that will move each learner... so that each one can become aware of and develop the important skills which lie in areas their natural inclinations may have led them to neglect.

(Hobley, 2003, p 54)

Strategy in action

Imagine you are planning a lesson for a class of 30 learners from Year 6 with the objective of being able to calculate the perimeter of a circle. Here is a list of possible strategies to achieve this objective. Consider which method, or combination of methods, would have the best chance of achieving this objective.

Strategy 1

- A. Tell the class that they can find out the perimeter of a circle by using the formula $3.14 \times D$ where $D = \text{diameter of the circle}$.
- B. Write this formula on the whiteboard and work out an example that the learners copy down.
- C. Give out a worksheet for the class to work through individually, containing 20 examples of increasing difficulty.
- D. Set more examples for homework, to be marked and returned by the next class.

Strategy 2

- A. Divide the class into groups and give each learner a worksheet with drawings of different sized circles and a piece of string.
- B. Get each group to use the string to find the distance round the perimeter and the distance across the circle through the centre. Copy down the answers on a group sheet of paper.

- C. Report answers to the whole class. Ask groups to divide the perimeter of each circle by the diameter and report back. Write answers on the whiteboard. The answer should be 3.14.
- D. Explain (or through a question and answer [Q/A] activity) that this means that if you know the distance across a circle at its widest point, you can find the perimeter by multiplying it by 3.14.
- E. Give out a worksheet of examples for homework.

Strategy 3

- A. Take the class to the sports field and get them to count the paces needed to walk round the centre circle and also calculate the distance from one edge of the circle to the other passing through the middle. Copy the answers onto a worksheet.
- B. Write the answers on the whiteboard. Through a Q/A activity show that the perimeter is always 3.14 times bigger than the diameter.
- C. Give out a worksheet of examples for homework.

Strategy: Level

The methods and learner activities that you plan to use also need to be appropriate to the level of complexity of your objectives. You saw in Day 2 how some objectives represent more complex learning than others and how they can be graded on a scale that starts at the simplest level of learning (the knowledge level) and moves upwards to the most complex (the evaluation level). As a teacher you will need to set high-order tasks in order to move from rote learning to fully understanding and being able to apply learning in a variety of contexts. This implies designing staircases of tasks as you move towards the more complex levels of understanding.

3. Simple!

Start simply. Learners need to achieve the simplest objectives before moving on to the higher and more difficult ones and your methods and activities should reflect this journey. Learning at the simplest level is often called surface learning, where the learner can solve problems without necessarily understanding the full meaning of the topic. For example, you can learn by rote that in French, *Comment vous appelez vous?* means *What's your name?* without knowing what each word means.

4. Horses for courses

At the higher levels of learning, learners must not only understand the concepts but also be able to apply them in a variety of ways, solve problems and make connections with other concepts. So, for the example above, they would be able to use the individual French words quoted in a range of scenarios, and hold conversations with native speakers using the words in different contexts.

Methods and activities for rote learning will not be appropriate for these higher levels. For example, at the synthesis level it might be appropriate to use the vocabulary in discussion, role play, translation or essay writing. Generally speaking, as you move towards these levels of the taxonomy, methods become more learner-centred, more participatory and with more responsibility being given to individual learners for their own learning.

A Spot of Theory

In his book, Stating Behavioural Objectives for Classroom Instruction (MacMillan, 1985), Gronlund contended that lower-level objectives served as prerequisites to further learning that learners had to achieve before moving on to higher-level ones. He saw higher-level objectives as predominantly developmental, representing goals towards which learners would show different degrees of progress and would require an extended period of development.

Strategy in action

Imagine that you are teaching your learners about Tennyson's poem, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, within the context of the Crimean War. Consider what would be the most appropriate teaching methods and learner activities for each of the following objectives.

Learners should be able to:

- A. recite the poem;
- B. describe the poem in their own words;
- C. explain why the Charge of the Light Brigade failed;
- D. write a newspaper report on the Charge of the Light Brigade;
- E. assess the effects of the Charge of the Light Brigade.

 **Compare your conclusions with the answers opposite.**

Answers

These objectives move from the simplest to the most complex and appropriate methods, and activities to achieve them reflect this progression, gradually introducing tasks that require an ability to analyse and solve problems and to work co-operatively and independently. There is no correct method for each objective, but the following suggestions are offered as appropriate methods and activities.

- The first objective could be achieved by text reading either individually, working in groups or whole-class reading.*
- Describing the poem could be done orally or as a written exercise.*
- Individual research followed by group discussion and essay writing could show understanding of why the Charge of the Light Brigade failed.*
- The combination of a project briefed by the teacher; internet and library research; debate or group discussion; writing of an essay or report could achieve the last two objectives.*

Strategy: Structure

It usually takes a little time and experience before lessons run smoothly to plan. Some activities take longer than you thought, others are completed too quickly, but a well-structured lesson plan, one that has a solid and logical structure, is the best starting point. Here are some strategies that will help.

5. Bite-sized and joined up

- Plan topics and activities in chunks with the easiest ones first. As your learners progress through them, highlight the transitions as milestones are reached on route to fulfilling their objectives.
- Make links between the chunks and link with previous work. As you plan, try to imagine each activity in progress, what you are doing and what your learners are doing and write in as much detail as possible.
- Think carefully about how long each activity is likely to take before you record timings on the lesson plan.
- Allow time for the practicalities of moving from one activity to the next to help you to move smoothly and unhurriedly through lesson transitions.

6. Beef up beginnings and endings

- Plan to begin with a brief, engaging starter activity to focus your learners' attention and interest and secure an upbeat pace and rhythm to the lesson. Starter activities could include: visual or verbal puzzles, a short piece of music or interpreting a picture.

- Finish the main event with time to spare. Use this time to summarise important points, get feedback and/or brief your learners about the next lesson.
- Finish the lesson with a flourish: plan a short interesting/enjoyable activity so your learners leave feeling positive. You might consider a topical/fun quiz, or a short Q/A activity.

7. Dry runs

A dry run, going through your lesson plan and imagining it in action, is probably one of the most useful strategies you can employ; it's especially good for getting the timing right. A dry run will also allow you to practise the art of appearing calm, confident and happy to be with your learners, even though you might be feeling anxious. Imagining is a powerful technique. Sportspeople, presenters and many others have made this discovery. Even with a dry run there is no guarantee that things will always go to plan; have some extra activities just in case.

A Spot of Theory

By having a clear set of... teaching sequences and planned progression you can see where new tools and approaches might fit in, secure in the knowledge that they add to... learning in a relevant and meaningful way.

(Caldwell and Honeyford, 2014, p 53)

Strategy in action

Which of the strategies from the previous page can you identify in the following scenario?

A teacher has planned a science lesson for a class of lively eight year olds. She plans a quick game of buzz as a starter activity and the main activity is to be an experiment where her learners will be discovering for themselves whether salt affects the temperature of ice. The plenary activity is a Q/A on the experiment. She plans to finish the lesson with a puzzling question about ice for the learners to think about as a lead-in to the next lesson.

Things don't begin too well. Almost immediately one of the learners is sick. The teacher decides to cancel the planned starter activity and instead she quickly gives the learners a word search they can do on their own while she sorts out the unwell learner.

The teacher starts the main activity by reminding the learners how they turned water into steam in the previous science lesson and asking them if they can think of water in another form. The learners quickly think of snow and ice. The teacher then takes a bowl of crushed ice around the class letting all the learners put their fingers into it. There are lots of squeals and giggles. She then poses some simple questions about what you can use ice for.

The teacher has prepared a worksheet which she hands out and goes through it, carefully explaining each point. Working in pairs the learners have to fill their cup with the ice, use the thermometer to measure and record its temperature, add five spoons of salt to the ice, mix it well and record the temperature once every minute over the next five minutes. They can then plot the results onto the graph on the worksheet.

The learners work well on their activity and when they have finished the teacher tells them to give their partner a pat on the back but reminds them not to thump. She then uses a Q/A activity to check the learners' understanding.

The teacher praises the learners again for their good work. Then she asks them whether they think that ice floats or sinks and to take a vote on it. After the vote, which is split fairly evenly, she chooses a learner to come to the front and place a lump of ice in a bowl of water. There are squeals of delight from those who guessed correctly and the learners leave chattering about the ice and why it floated.



Can you turn water into lemonade Miss?

Strategy: Variety

Plan activities that appeal to a variety of learners. On Day 2 you saw some strategies for planning aims and objectives to accommodate the different experience, knowledge and needs of learners. Here are two strategies that will help you to continue this theme by including activities in your teaching repertoire aimed at appealing to the diverse nature of your learning group.

8. Get personal

Tap into your learners' knowledge and skills. This strategy can help to legitimise their personal experiences, making them relevant and valued. It will also play to your learners' strengths and provide an opportunity for them to experience success. Learners have a wealth of variable knowledge, skills and experience which can be incorporated within your planning. Here are some suggestions for how you can use learners' knowledge, skills and experience. They could:

- lead a discussion;
- give a presentation;
- help another learner;
- give personal opinions;
- share personal history;
- demonstrate a skill;
- be a spokesperson/recorder for a group.

9. Appeal right and left

Appeal to both the right and left sides of your learners' brains, which process information in different ways. The focus of the left brain is analytical, looking first at the pieces and then putting them together. The right brain focuses on the visual, looking first at the whole picture and then the details.

A person who is more left-brained is often said to be more verbal and logical, whereas a person who is more right-brained tends to be more non-verbal and intuitive, using pictures rather than words. While no one is completely one or the other, most of us have a preference for either right brain learning or left brain learning. Learners will be more likely to engage in activities they find appealing and which play to their strengths.

Left brain learners prefer:

- **structured activities: using sequencing, building up from parts;**
- **written information: using language;**
- **analysis: using logic and number.**

Left brain activities include:

- lectures, discussions, speaking, listening, writing;
- following written instructions;
- individual research.

Right brain learners prefer:

- open-ended self-selected activities: seeing the whole picture;
- rhyme and rhythm: using intuition;
- visualising: using imagination.

Right brain activities include:

- pictures and diagrams, storyboards, cartoons, etc.;
- using rhythm to learn; music rhyme, etc.;
- using drama, art, design, working in groups.

Strategy in action

Getting personal

Here are two examples of getting personal.

- A. A lesson on social history is in progress. One of the learners is standing at the front of the class giving a talk. She is from a farming family and is describing the workings of a twentieth-century farm illustrated with old photographs from her family's collection.
- B. It's a GCSE science class and the learners are working in groups on an electronics task. One of the groups is struggling to complete the task. The teacher calls on one of the learners from another group who she knows has an aptitude for electronics and asks her to work with the struggling group to complete the task.

Think about the subject(s) you are teaching. Can you think of any opportunities for tapping into your learners' personal experiences, skills and/or knowledge?

Appealing to right and left

Read through the following three illustrations and decide whether they are examples of planning for right brain learning or planning for left brain learning.

- A. The teacher has provided a fun activity to finish the lesson. The learners are in pairs sitting back to back to ensure no peeking. One of each pair is describing to their partner a diagram of geometric shapes from a handout they are holding. Each partner is then attempting to draw the diagram from the description given.
- B. Some learners are working together on a story-writing project. The discussion is animated as they thrash out the storyline between them. They are recording the progression of the story in picture form on a storyboard.
- C. It's a geography class and there is a competition in progress. The learners are standing around a large detailed map projected onto the smart board. The teacher then turns the map off and calls out a number of place names and the learners have to locate these on their own blank copy of the map.

A Spot of Theory

Psychologist Howard Gardner in his book, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (Basic Books, 2000), coined the term multiple intelligences to make the point that there isn't just one form of intelligence but multiple forms. Each of us has a different mind and so each of us learns in our own way. In 2000 Gardner identified eight intelligences: spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logical-mathematical and naturalistic.

Answers

This is a bit of a trick question because all three activities are designed to appeal mainly to right brain learning. Many of the traditional teaching and learning methods such as lectures, discussions, writing and so on rely heavily on left brain learning and incorporating some right brain activities into your teaching repertoire will help you to engage more of your learners.

- How might you include some right brain activities with your learners?

**If you only try one thing
from this chapter, try this***

Checklist

Use this to keep a record of what works well for you and what doesn't. There's a line at the bottom for you to add your own most frequently used strategy, if it's not already included in the list.

Strategy	Tried it with...	On...(date)	It worked	It didn't work	Worth trying again?
1. <u>ASK*</u>					
2. The more the better					
3. Simple!					
4. Horses for courses					
5. Bite-sized and joined up					
6. Beef up beginnings and endings					
7. Dry runs					
8. Get personal					
9. Appeal right and left					
Your own strategy?					

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