

The Art of Lesson Planning

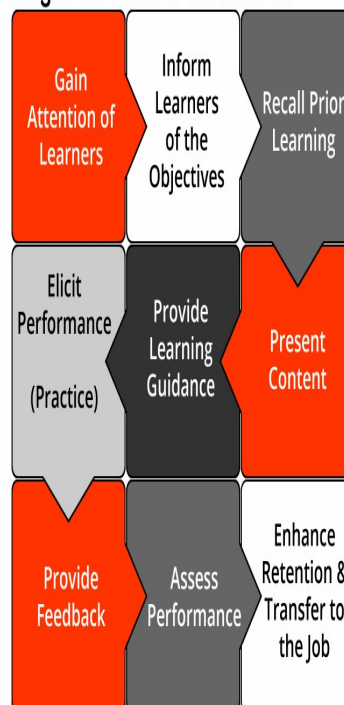
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Lesson plans provide the blueprints for successful learning experiences. A well-constructed lesson plan clearly communicates intended learning by articulating activities that enable students to achieve learning outcomes. Plans help create a cohesive flow to the delivery, mastery, and assessment of new knowledge and skills. Moreover, structured lessons promote effective use of time and the identification of required resources. Not only are lesson plans effective organizational tools for faculty, they also benefit students by supporting clear, consistent, and balanced course delivery.

Gagné's Events of Instruction



What's in a lesson?

Robert Gagné's nine events of instruction recommend the essential student-instructor interactions that should be captured in every lesson. At the simplest level, all lessons must

provide opportunities to **teach, practice, and assess** learning.

Teach – refers to knowledge and skills acquisition. Content can be presented using a variety of modalities, including lectures, presentations, videos, readings, podcasts, group work, problem-based learning, or other means of delivering information. Active learning strategies are effective ways to promote critical thinking and maintain student engagement.

Practice – involves to the application of the knowledge and skills. Opportunities to practice can occur inside or outside classroom hours. Setting aside class time for students to perform a task, solve problems, examine a case, write code, role play, or create prototypes encourages learners to critically engage with the content. Practice builds confidence and is essential preparation for assessment.

Assess – evaluates the degree to which students demonstrate the learning outcome. Formative assessment strategies enable you to monitor learner comprehension during the lesson and make adjustments to your teaching strategies. Meaningful feedback should accompany assessment to guide learners through the learning process.

A typical lesson plan will list the lesson **purpose**, objectives, and connection to course learning outcomes. A good practice is to begin with a **minds-on activity** to capture learner's attention, provide context, and illustrate the relevance of the lesson topic. Often, these initial activities incorporate a short **pre-assessment** of learner's prior knowledge and familiarity with the subject matter. The bulk of the lesson involves one or more **teaching, practice, and assessment** cycles, depending on the length of the class. A good rule of thumb is to spend no more than 20 minutes at a time on content delivery before switching tasks. A **summary activity** at the end of the lesson consolidates the learning and should connect the content to real-world applications or future lessons. Lesson plans also include a breakdown of **time** spent on each task and required **resources**. The [Lesson Plan Template \(.docx\)](#) from the Teaching & Learning Centre follows this layout.

The BOPPPS method (Bridge-in, Outcomes, Pre-Assessment, Participatory Learning, Post-Assessment, and Summary) captures these elements in an easy-to-follow [template](#).

Effective use of class time

How do we incorporate all of the above into a cohesive lesson, yet provide adequate time for each step of the learning process? It is important to remember that a lesson involves learning that takes place both during and outside of scheduled class time. Consider how you view your primary role as an instructor. Are you the source of information, a facilitator, a mentor, a trainer, or a guide? Your instructor role will dictate which learning activities are most appropriate to conduct in class and which can be assigned as self-directed learning outside of class.

In many cases, content delivery is readily adaptable to an out-of-class setting through the use of readings, notes, videos, and other multimedia, leaving class time open for more interactive, supported activities. Use the time together with your students to provide learning guidance by reinforcing key themes, clarifying difficult material, and making connections to real-world applications. Shifting portions of content delivery outside of the classroom creates space in the lesson for students to actively engage in the practice of skills, development of attitudes, and critical processing of knowledge, leading to deeper learner.

Crafting a well-structured lesson plan can be challenging, but pays off in the benefits to our students. For more ideas about your [Lesson Plan](#) and activity ideas, visit [The Teaching & Learning Centre](#).

Resources

Gagné, R. M., Briggs, L. J., & Wager, W. W. (1992). Principles of instructional design (4th ed.).
Forth Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

Hundey, B. (2015). BOPPPS Lesson Planner. Teaching Support Centre, Western University.
CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0 Adapted from ISW Handbook for Participants, 2006.

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