

Lesson Planning for One-on-One Instruction

Why Make a Lesson Plan?

Long- and short-term planning gives your meetings direction. It's easier to identify skills to practise and to assess your learner's success. You'll also have a record of topics that you've covered.

Where Do I Begin?

Start by setting goals with your learner.

Make goals specific and measurable. Break vague goals like "I want to learn grammar" into smaller and smaller substeps. "I want to use the past tense correctly" is easier to achieve, and "I want to use 20 new irregular verbs correctly" is even better. Then ask yourself how learners will demonstrate that skill. Will they **recall** 20 irregular verbs? Will they **categorize** the verbs by grouping them into similar patterns? Do you want to hear them **used correctly** in spontaneous chat?

Setting long-term goals can be especially useful for one-on-one tutoring. If a learner surprises you with a document or task that he or she needs help with, you can still work toward your goals. It'll just be with different materials than you might have planned.

General Planning Tips

- However you spend your time, aim to maximize interaction and your learner's use of English.
- Provide opportunities to practise and use material in more than one way.
- Build a repertoire of teaching methods and incorporate them into lessons.

Specific Tips for One-on-One Tutors

Because group work isn't an option for you, it's especially important to provide opportunities to improve both fluency and correctness. Plan opportunities for relaxed chat or free writing that will not be corrected. If your learner insists that he or she wants you to correct every error, try pointing out that fluency itself is a critical skill. Let him or her know that you still pay careful attention to mistakes and will do activities that focus on correcting them.

What Do You Want to Work On?

There's a lot to fit into your one- or two-hour meetings. Let your learner's needs and goals determine your focus. Luckily, most activities can be adapted to work on all of these skills. Focus on reaching two or three major goals each day.

- Spelling and pronunciation
- Listening
- Reading
- Speaking
- Writing
- Vocabulary
- How to use a dictionary

A Typical Lesson Cycle

At each meeting, begin by talking about your goals for the day. Do a quick warmup about your upcoming topic. You could watch a video clip on the theme, read a story title and make predictions about the story, brainstorm about the topic, or pre-teach some vocabulary. Then go over instructions and work on your activities. When your learner finishes, give feedback and make any corrections. End with a brief review. Connect the activities back to the goals you set, point out improvements that you noticed, ask your learner for the three points that he or she remembers best from the lesson, or suggest related practice.

How Long Should Each Activity Take?

Once you get to know your learner, pacing is easier to plan. For a start, try limiting activities to 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Warmups will take even less time.

- For example, brainstorm a typical shopping list, trace or copy food names, say the names, match them to flyer pictures, write simple sentences together, and end by reading the sentences aloud.
- Talk about what you both did over the weekend, jot down new or useful vocabulary, pick some words or phrases for pronunciation practice, write about the weekend in sentences or paragraphs, and pick one or two types of error to correct. Next time you meet, you could bring a reading related to your learner's topic.

Activity Ideas

- Read and listen to a news story. Be sure that it is already mostly understandable. Allow time for your learner to ask questions about new words, phrases, or grammar from the story. Use this for some informal time to talk or write about the story.
- Talk about safety issues and procedures in his or her workplace at home. Read a set of related Canadian safety manual instructions. Discuss similarities and differences. Stop for vocabulary and pronunciation discussion. Highlight any important new language used in the instructions. Scramble a set of pictures or symbols, and have your learner use them to repeat the instructions to you in order.
- If you visit stores, cafes, libraries, or leisure centres, stop to look at how staff used different language at each place. Work on vocabulary before you go, and after the visit, your learner can build a phrase book. Look for ways to use these phrases in new situations.
 - ♦ What words and phrases did they use as greetings or closings? How formal were the interactions? Did staff or other customers make any small talk? What related words or phrases did they use? Were there idioms, slang, or local expressions? How did speakers take turns? Did you have to interrupt staff? Point out language that you used.
 - Use a mobile phone camera to take pictures and, in your next session, write a picture book or glossary to help the learner remember the phrases.
 - Record yourself saying key words and phrases. Your beginner can listen and repeat for practice. Make more challenging recordings for more confident learners.
 - Create a worksheet where learners match the beginning of a phrase to its correct ending.

- Try combining these visits with movie or TV clips to review or just use the clips if field trips aren't practical.
 - ♦ Teach your learner how to shadow the speakers. Practise together, and then he or she can practise all week long.
 - ♦ Watch the video clip together and turn the sound down at key points. Can your learner "fill in the blanks"?
- List some adjectives that describe good employees. Ask your learner to list and rank important qualities an employee should have in his or her home country. Ask what might be valued here. Talk about similarities and differences. Find a related article to read. The Canadian Immigrant online magazine has great material.
 - ♦ Ask your learner to list the qualities that he or she remembers best. Reread and repeat the process. The learner can turn the last list into a paragraph or longer article for you to correct and discuss. He or she could summarize the whole article or just focus on new ideas.

Helpful Resources

Snow D. (2012). Lesson planning and classroom survival. In *More than a native speaker*. (pp. 61–73). Annapolis Junction, MD: Tesol Press. Retrieved from http://www.tesol.org/docs/books/bk_morethannative_325

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