

Creating a session plan

This handout will cover:

- Creating a session plan
- Aspects to consider when planning a session
- Aims and objectives
- Teaching and learning activities
- Assessment activities
- Resources
- Timings
- Reading list
- Website list

Creating a session plan

A *session plan*, also known as a *teaching and learning plan*, is a document which should be created prior to each session and relate to your scheme of work if it's a series of sessions. Although it's very similar to the scheme of work, it is much more detailed and helps you manage the time that you are with your learners. It should also state the activities you use to assess your learners, which can be formal and/or informal. Formal activities will count towards learner achievement, whereas informal activities demonstrate learner progress.

It should be prepared in advance and referred to during the session. It's a bit like an 'agenda' of what will be covered, when and how. It should state what you want your learners to be able to *know* or *do* by the end of the session and it should ensure all learners are included during the session.

Try not to prepare too many session plans in advance, as circumstances may change and you will want the information to be fresh in your mind. Once you have a set of session plans, you can adapt them in the future for different groups of learners.

Each plan should have an introduction, development and conclusion/summary (three stages). In other words, a beginning, middle, and end, with times allocated to the activities within each. A pro forma or template could be used to structure the content.

Your introduction should include the aim of the session and a recap of the previous session (if applicable). This should hopefully arouse interest and link to previous learning. You could carry out a *starter activity* to gain attention and focus learning. If this is your first meeting with your learners, make sure you introduce yourself, explain the facilities of the organisation, the requirements of the programme, carry out an icebreaker and agree the ground rules. You can also carry out any practical matters such as taking the register, or reminding learners of any important issues.

The development stage is the teaching of your subject which should be in a logical sequence, with appropriate timings for learning to take place. Don't forget to allow time for a break if necessary. You should also be assessing ongoing progress and achievement throughout the session.

Your conclusion should include a summary of your original aim and relate to the objectives, which will hopefully have been achieved by your learners. You should allow time for any questions and to discuss any homework or other issues. You could also include a *closing activity*, perhaps a fun quiz, and state what the aim of your next session will be (if applicable).

Example session plan (part of the first session with a new group)

Teacher/trainer <i>A G Smith</i>		Venue: <i>Room 3</i>			
Programme/qualification <i>Introduction to Information and Communication Technology Level 1</i>		Group composition <i>10 adults with little or no previous computer experience</i>		Dates From: <i>8 Sept</i> To: <i>13 Oct</i>	
Number of sessions <i>Six</i>		Number of hours <i>18 (3 hours per week 6-9 pm) plus 2 hours self-study/homework</i>			
Aim of programme <i>To enable learners to use a computer (for basic word processing, spreadsheets, database, internet and email)</i>					
Dates	Learning outcomes/objectives <i>Learners will:</i>	Teacher activities	Learner activities	Assessment activities	Resources
<i>Week 1 8 Sept</i>	• <i>obtain and discuss information regarding the organisation, programme content and assessment</i> • <i>switch on a computer and use a keyboard and a mouse</i> • <i>complete an online initial assessment and learning preferences questionnaire</i> • <i>discuss previous knowledge/experience of using ICT</i> • <i>use the ICT applications</i>	<i>Facilitate induction, icebreaker and ground rules</i> <i>Explanation of programme and organisation</i> <i>Show video</i> <i>Practical and theoretical demonstration and discussion</i> <i>Recap of session</i> <i>Explanation of next session</i>	<i>Discussion</i> <i>Initial assessment</i> <i>Differentiated activities based upon results of learning preferences and to meet individual needs</i> <i>Practical activities</i> <i>Listening and questioning</i>	<i>Oral questions</i> <i>Observation</i> <i>Online initial assessment</i> <i>Discussion</i> <i>Quiz</i>	<i>Computers</i> <i>Interactive whiteboard</i> <i>Workpacks</i> <i>Internet access</i> <i>Flipchart</i> <i>Handouts</i> <i>Exercises</i> <i>Quiz</i>
<i>Week 2 15 Sept</i>	• <i>create, save and print documents using a word processing program</i>	<i>Recap previous session</i> <i>Demonstration of word processing</i> <i>Discussion of uses of a word processor, link to learners experiences</i> <i>Recap of session</i> <i>Explanation of next session</i>	<i>Discussion</i> <i>Differentiated activities based on learners' experience</i> <i>Practical activities</i> <i>Listening and questioning</i>	<i>Observation</i> <i>Oral and written questions</i> <i>Gapped handout</i> <i>Practical activities</i> <i>Quiz</i>	<i>Computers</i> <i>Interactive whiteboard</i> <i>Workpacks</i> <i>Handouts</i> <i>Exercises</i> <i>Quiz</i>

There are different ways of displaying the content in a session plan, one is the *three stage session plan* where all the information is listed as part of the beginning, middle or ending stages. There is also the *five minute session plan* which is like a flow chart, and so called as it should only take five minutes to complete.

Aspects to consider when planning a session

- The overall topic aim – what you expect your learners to achieve during the session.
- Objectives – how your learners will achieve your aim, are they SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound), how do they link to the programme, job tasks or qualification, in what order will you deliver them, what timings will you allocate to each activity? Remember to include breaks if applicable.
- Group composition – details of individual learners, their needs and learning preferences to enable differentiation to take place.

- Teacher activities – what you will be doing. Use a variety of theory and practical approaches to meet all learning preferences and retain motivation.
- Learner activities – what your learners will be doing and for how long – how will you keep them active and interested? How will you ensure inclusion and differentiation? Do you have spare activities in case some learners finish before others? What could you remove or cut down on if you run out of time?
- Assessment activities – how will you assess that learning has taken place?
- Resources – what do you need to effectively deliver your session – do you need to check equipment is working, or reserve anything in advance? Do you have a contingency plan in case something goes wrong?
- The next session – how will you link to this (if applicable)?

Aims and objectives

These are terms used to express *what* you want your learners to achieve and *how* they will go about it. The aim is a broad statement of intent of *what* you want your learners to achieve: for example, *to enable learners to use a computer*. The objectives are *how* your learners will achieve the aim, for example, *switch on a computer, use a keyboard etc.* Once you have your aim for a particular session, you can plan what you want your learners to achieve i.e. the objectives.

When writing objectives, try not to use words such as *know, learn* and *understand* i.e. don't say... *Learners will know how to use a computer* because *how do you know they know?* The only way you will know, is if your learners can do something to prove it i.e. they can *use* a computer. The key to good writing of aims and objectives is to use words which are *verbs* i.e. things that the learner has to *do* to prove their understanding.

Objectives should always be SMART to enable you to deliver and assess learning effectively. This is an acronym for:

Specific – the objectives are clearly defined to meet the required aim

Measurable – they can be achieved at the right level for the learner

Achievable – they can be met by all learners

Relevant – they relate to the programme of learning or the qualification requirements

Time bound – the agreed target dates and times can be met.

SMART objectives enable you to teach and assess learning effectively. Always make sure the words you are using are of the right level for your learners, e.g. *list* is easier than *evaluate*. Objectives should be challenging enough to ensure learning is progressive, yet inclusive to all learners.

When writing objectives, try not to use the words *know, learn, or understand*. These are not SMART and you would find it difficult to assess that learning has taken place.

Teaching and learning activities

You will need to engage, motivate and include your learners throughout your session. Knowing their learning preferences or any particular needs they have, will help you plan what activities to use. These should be varied to stop learners becoming bored, lose concentration or become disruptive; and ensure that learning can take place.

There are many different approaches and activities you can use to teach your subject.

For example:

- Demonstration
- Discussion
- E-learning
- Group tasks
- Instruction
- Presentation
- Project
- Role play

Assessment

Assessment is a way of finding out if learning has taken place. It can be informal throughout the session i.e. by asking questions, and observing what is happening. Informal activities assess ongoing progress and will usually be created and assessed by you.

Assessment can be formal i.e. an assignment or an exam. Formal activities are usually issued by the awarding organisation (for a qualification), or created by you according to their requirements. Formal assessment usually counts towards achievement.

All assessment activities should be fit for purpose, at the right level and achievable by the learners.

Before concluding your session, you might like to ask open questions to check knowledge (one aimed at each learner if you have time). This could be part of a closing activity. If you have a large group, you could split them into teams and ask questions in the form of a quiz, this is a fun way of ending the session and can show you how much learning has taken place.

Resources

Resources are all the aids, books, handouts, items of equipment, objects and people that you can use to deliver and assess your subject. They should stimulate learning, add impact and promote interest in the subject. Resources should be accessible and inclusive to all learners, whilst enabling them to acquire new skills and knowledge.

Resources should be appropriate in terms of level, quality, quantity and content, and be relevant to the subject and the learning expected. When using or creating resources, you will need to ensure they promote equality of opportunity, reflect diversity and challenge stereotypes. For example, text and pictures in a handout should portray all aspects of society.

Handouts and visual presentations should be checked for spelling, grammar, punctuation and sentence construction errors. If a resource you are using is not effective with some learners, try changing the experience rather than the resource.

Examples of resources include:

- audio/visual equipment
- books, catalogues, journals, magazines
- computerised presentations
- computers, tablets and mobile devices
- digital cameras
- flip chart paper and pens
- handouts
- interactive or electronic whiteboards
- people: specialist speakers; colleagues
- physical resources, models and apparatus
- projectors
- radios/televisions
- text books
- worksheets, puzzles or crosswords.

Timings

Time management of a session is crucial to ensure everything you want to cover is achieved within the allocated time.

You will need to consider how long each activity will take e.g. 5 minutes to introduce a topic, 20 minutes for an activity, 5 minutes for questions etc. Timings might need to be adjusted, if something is not going well, can you reduce the time?

It's easy to misjudge how long something will take. Activities can take longer with some groups than others, perhaps if the learners are asking a lot of questions. These need to be carefully managed and a check kept on the time. Having a watch or clock handy will help with this.

It's not a problem to increase or decrease timings as you progress through the session, as long as the content is achieved, or can be carried over to another session if necessary (or set as homework if not).

If you have a break, how long will it be? If you plan to teach a session for three hours, a break in the middle will help to refresh your learners. However, if learners are late back by only 5 minutes, this will affect the rest of your timings. Always allow time for questions, from you, and from your learners.

Reading list

Bloom BS (1956) *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The classification of educational goals* New York McKay

Curzon LB & Tummons J (2013) *Teaching in Further Education* (7th Edn) London Bloomsbury

Duckworth et al (2010) *Successful Teaching Practice in the Lifelong Learning Sector* Exeter Learning Matters

Gravells A (2017) *Principles and Practices of Teaching and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Gravells A (2013) *Passing Assessments for the Award in Education and Training* London Learning Matters SAGE

Petty G (2014) *Teaching Today A Practical Guide* Cheltenham Nelson Thornes Ltd

Website list

Ann's YouTube video *planning learning* –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmbtez1nd74>

Objective writing (from TeachOnline) - <http://tinyurl.com/ge5r3t6>

Planning a training session - <https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/planning-training-session.htm>

Reading list for teaching and learning - www.anngravells.com/reading-lists/teaching

Resources such as session plans and more - <https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk>