

# PREPARING LESSON PLANS

This job aid provides guidelines for planning each stage of a lesson, identifies appropriate teaching techniques to suit the lesson, and provides a sample lesson plan template.

This job aid will help you to:

- help people learn, based on an understanding of how people learn
- structure your lessons for deeper and richer learning



## What is a lesson?

A lesson is an organized set of activities designed to present one manageable-sized piece of your course.

Don't confuse *lesson* with *lecture* as it is commonly used in the expression *lecture/lab* when describing course hours. You may have more than one lesson in a 50-minute lecture or lab. A lecture is just one teaching technique that you may use in a lesson.

## The stages and flow of a lesson

Each lesson should be a complete segment in itself, providing new learning. Try to keep your students in mind as you plan your lesson—ask yourself:

- Who are they?
- What do they already know?
- Why should they learn about this?
- What must they learn?
- What must they do to learn?
- How will they demonstrate their learning?

What the instructor and students do varies at the different stages of a lesson. The stages of a lesson plan—beginning, middle, end—reflect the three stages of learning:\*

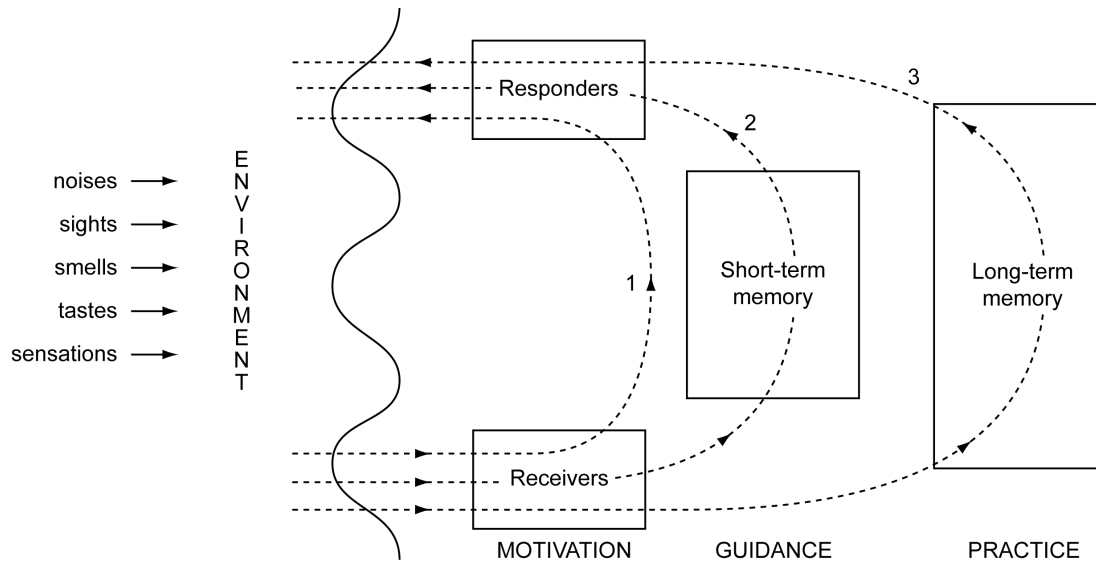
1. Motivation (beginning)
2. Guidance (middle)
3. Practice (end)

Each stage should flow smoothly into the next, which builds on the previous. If students do not have an opportunity to go through all three stages, learning may not occur!

## Three stages of learning

Science has not determined fully how the brain works. Memory as we understand it can best be explained in terms of short-term and long-term memory.

Refer to the diagram on the next page as you read about the three stages of learning.



A model of the learning process

## Motivation

First, there must be the need or desire to learn something specific. This is the first stage of learning. We see, hear, taste, smell, or feel millions of stimuli every day. If the information you receive is not needed or used, it goes right back out again or is discarded. For example, while driving your car on the highway you see many signs on the side of the road. Most of these you take a quick look at, and if the information doesn't apply to you then it just fades away in a second or two.

Even though there are countless things in the environment to learn about, we can only deal with *one piece of information at a time*. You've probably noticed that you cannot read something while listening to someone speak. If you try, you will likely remember part of what you read and part of what you heard, but not enough of either one to have a complete understanding.

Naturally, we do not remember everything that we are exposed to. We only remember those things that we pay attention to. Our receivers (eyes, ears, nose, hands and skin, etc.) have very limited memory. The information will only last for 1/2 to 2 seconds unless you do something to move it to the next component, the short-term memory.

## Guidance

The guidance stage is where most of the learning happens. Information that is received and moved to the short-term memory will be stored there temporarily.

When information comes in, you decide what to do with it. You can either use it immediately and then forget it, or try to store it for use later. An example of doing something with the information immediately and then forgetting it is typing or word-processing. You read a few words or a sentence from your work and then type it. As soon as your fingers (your responders) have typed the words they are normally forgotten and you are ready to type the next few words or sentence.

The capacity of the short-term memory is limited to about seven pieces of information at a time, and after about 20 seconds the information starts to fade. It is usually completely gone after that time unless you decide you need to keep the information. Then you will make a deliberate effort to transfer it to your long-term memory.

Putting information into long-term memory requires two things:

- connecting the new information with something that you already know
- doing something with the information repetitively

Connecting it to something that you already know is a bit like storing information in a computer. We create directories and then files where we store similar information so that we know where to find it again. Once we are motivated to learn something, we must somehow have access to the information again when we need it.

What you do with the new information will depend on your preferred learning style. You might find that you can remember something if you write it down and then read it several times. You might prefer to talk about it or say it aloud several times, or you may need to physically do something repeatedly in order to remember it.

## Practice

The third stage of learning is practice—applying what you have learned, largely on your own. Here is where you practice that new dance step or practice playing that new song on a musical instrument. Here is where you go on a nursing practicum or teaching practicum, or you work on a welding project for a steel fabrication apprenticeship course.

Practicing is as important for storing information in long-term memory as connecting it with something that you already know.

## Guidelines for making a lesson plan

You need to pay attention to the three stages of learning at the different stages of the lesson.

### Beginning stage

As an instructor, part of your job is to try to motivate the students—make them want to learn the new material. Tell them what the learning outcome of the lesson is and how they can use it on the job and in other areas of their lives. Remember that they can only concentrate on one thing at a time, so make sure they are concentrating on what you want them to learn.

### Middle stage

As an instructor, this is where you do the teaching and where most of the learning happens. Part of your job is to help your students connect the new information to something that they already know and to help them “file” it so that they can find it again later. People generally need a systematic way of organizing information in order to learn it. Your instructional aids, student learning materials, etc., are guides to help students store the information and reach it again when they need it. Make sure the information is ordered logically so that they can easily put it in their long-term memories.

Another important part of your job is to provide opportunities for your students to attempt to use the information and then give them your feedback.

### End stage

As an instructor, it is up to you to provide a variety of ways for your students to recall or practice with the information so they can commit it to memory.

When preparing a lesson plan, use the following checklist:

*At the beginning, I plan to:*

- Use a bridge-in to capture students' interest and motivate them to learn (make sure they are listening to you—one thing at a time)
- Make the learning outcomes clear (one thing at a time)
- Assess prior learning and student expectations (show why and how they can use this in real life)

*In the middle, I plan to:*

- Use strategies to actively involve students in the learning process
- Use a variety of media to illustrate concepts and processes
- Ensure that the lesson flows easily and logically (from simple to more complex)
- Ensure that students are learning material that is meaningful and new
- Provide many opportunities for students to attempt the task and receive feedback
- Review and build on related material

*At the end, I plan to:*

Provide the proper closure students find important. To do this, I will:

- Assess what students have learned
- Summarize the lesson (referring back to the intended learning outcomes)
- Connect the lesson to real life and/or the next lesson
- Suggest or provide opportunities for practice (homework, reading assignments, simulations, etc.)

## Using the appropriate technique

The techniques you plan to use in your lessons depend on:

- the types of students you have and their previous knowledge
- your physical teaching environment and the available equipment and resources
- the type of learning you are aiming for

Some of the possibilities are listed below.

*To convey information, use:*

- instructor or guest lecture/interviews
- field trips
- discussion groups
- interviewing experts
- selected readings
- case studies
- demonstration by experts

*To provide balanced presentation of a controversial subject, use:*

- discussion groups
- panel discussions
- selected readings
- simulations
- debates

*To involve people, use:*

- discussions
- written work
- field trips
- case studies
- role playing
- group work
- guided experience

*To teach a skill, use:*

- demonstrations
- shopwork
- labs
- guided experience
- practice with feedback (coaching)

*To pool thoughts and ideas, use:*

- discussions
- brainstorming
- group work

*To reinforce memory, use:*

- drill
- memory aids
- practice with feedback (coaching)
- written work

## Resources you can use

If you need help with any of the steps in your lesson plan, you can use one of the following instructional development job aids:

- *Increasing Student Motivation*
- *Managing Student Behaviour*
- *Making Large Lectures Interactive*
- *Preparing and Using Student Handouts*
- *Designing and Using Visuals*

They can be obtained from the Learning and Teaching Centre ([www.bcit.ca/ltc](http://www.bcit.ca/ltc)). Also, colleagues in your own department may have suggestions to help you to develop lesson plans that are well suited to your subject matter and students.

The following page contains one type of template that is helpful for planning lessons. Adapt it to your own needs. It is followed by a one-hour example of a filled-out lesson plan of the same type.



## LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE

Course				
Learning Outcome #				
Stages	Techniques	Content	Resources	Time
Beginning				
Middle				
End				
			Total Time	

## LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE

Course		Instructional Skills Workshop		
Learning Outcome #		Write a learning outcome	Type of Learning Outcome	Intellectual Skill
Stages	Techniques	Content	Resources	Time
Beginning	Explain and Inform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write outcome on board and clarify</li> <li>- Explain policy and practices at BCIT</li> <li>- At the end of the lesson I'll ask you to write one outcome on a flip chart and we will review each other's in small groups</li> </ul>	Board	5 min
Middle	Lecture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define learning outcomes</li> <li>- Explain advantages of clearly defined outcomes</li> <li>- Explain characteristics of outcomes               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- observable and measurable</li> <li>- contain one verb</li> <li>- for discrete unit</li> <li>- covers 2-8 hours (average)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Explain terminology differences for trades/technology</li> <li>- Give some examples</li> </ul>	OHT #1 OHT #2 Board	1 min 4 min 5 min
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hand out verb list</li> <li>- Ask for questions</li> </ul>	Board OHT - ISW Outcomes Verb List	5 min 5 min 5 min
End	Individual exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Each person is to write one learning outcome on a half sheet of flip chart paper and tape it to the wall</li> <li>- We will break into two groups and critique each other's outcomes</li> </ul>	½ sheet paper for each person, roll of masking tape, lots of felt pens	10 min 20 min
<b>Total Time</b>				1 hour



