

The New Teacher's Guide to Creating Lesson Plans

Prepare yourself for the avalanche of lesson planning with these targeted tips.

By [Bonnie Murray](#)

- Grades: PreK–K, 1–2, 3–5



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Even if you had plenty of practice writing lessons during your teacher training, it's hard to be prepared for the avalanche of lesson planning you'll have to do once your first year of teaching begins.

To rev up the learning curve, here are eight questions to "think aloud" as you prepare lessons. The answers will help you create high-quality, on-target plans.

At the beginning of the year, you'll probably refer to the questions frequently, but after several months of planning, you'll be a whiz. The process will become automatic!

Eight Questions to "Think Aloud" as You Prepare Lessons

1. **Students:** What are the academic, social, physical, personal, and emotional needs of my students?
2. **Strategies:** Which teaching strategies will best facilitate my students' learning?
3. **Grouping:** Should I group heterogeneously or homogeneously? What size should my groups be?
4. **Timing:** When is the best time to do this lesson? Are there prerequisites my students should have mastered?
5. **Materials:** What materials and human resources do I need for the lesson to be successful?
6. **Success:** Was the lesson successful? Were my students interested? Did my students learn? What didn't work? What will I do differently next time?

7. **Sequence:** What can I do next to build upon this lesson? How can I make it flow?
8. **Rationale:** What is the reason for doing this? What objectives will be accomplished?

The Secrets of Daily Lesson Planning

Your daily lesson plans should detail the specific activities and content you will teach during a particular week. They usually include:

- lesson objectives
- procedures for delivering instruction
- methods of assessing your students
- student groupings
- materials needed to carry out the lesson plan

As with all planning, the format of lesson plans will vary from school to school. Many school districts provide lesson-plan books, while others allow teachers to develop their own format. Regardless of the format, here are the key components of successful lesson planning:

- Your lessons should be readable and detailed enough that a [substitute teacher](#) could teach from them in an emergency.
- Consider making a copy or two of each week's plan. I used to take one copy home and place others at key areas in my classroom so I could leave my actual lesson-plan book on my desk at all times, available for the principal. This also allowed me to work at home on preparing materials for upcoming lessons and on planning for the following week without fear of misplacing my lesson book!
- Try scripting your lessons. It was time-consuming, but in my first few years of teaching, it helped me be better organized and more confident in front of my students.
- As a general rule, begin working on plans for the next week no later than Thursday. By then you will have an idea of which lessons weren't completed, the objectives that need to be reinforced, and which upcoming school-wide activities need to be integrated into your plan. If you leave the planning until Friday after school, it may not get done!
- Make a master copy or template of the planning pages you use, and write or type those activities that stay the same each week and the times they occur. Make several copies of the new page to replace the blank lesson-plan pages, but don't copy them too far in advance, in case you change your weekly schedule. Then just fill in the blanks on the copies with specifics for the week.
- Balance [grouping strategies](#) and activities in each learning style or multiple intelligence type so you are meeting the needs of all your students.

- Check with your principal for guidelines on when he or she will want to look at your lesson plans. Some principals make a point of viewing new teachers' lesson plans on a weekly basis so they can provide on-the-spot assistance throughout the school year.