

Creating Effective Lesson Plans: A Guide for College Instructors

1. Define Clear Learning Objectives

- Focus on what students should be able to know or do by the end of the session
- Use measurable verbs (e.g., analyze, design, evaluate) rather than vague ones like *understand*
- When planning a class, refer to the learning objectives on the course outline. Each class should feed into the ‘whole’ of the course
- Take a look at **Classifications of Learning** to ensure inclusion of a variety of opportunities to engage with the intellectual, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of learning
- It’s impossible to address every domain of learning in one class. The idea is to create balance and variety across classes. Think of it as imaging what a painting will look like when it’s finished. Each class is an opportunity to paint one part of the whole painting
- Keep outcomes aligned with assessment methods

2. Know Your Audience

- Find out about students’ background, level of experience in this academic area, and other support they may need
- Adjust language, examples, and depth according to each cohort of students
- Explaining jargon, acronyms and any cultural references that may be unfamiliar to some students

3. Organize the Class Around Key Concepts or Objectives

- Avoid content overload
- Prioritize depth over breadth to build lasting understanding

4. Choose Engaging Teaching Strategies

- Active learning promotes retention and critical thinking
- Example activities include group work, debates, simulations
- Choose multimodal delivery: combine slides, visuals, demonstrations, and short videos
- Scaffold the learning: build from simple to complex concepts

5. Prepare Materials & Resources

- Slides, handouts, or digital tools (e.g., polling apps, collaborative boards)
- Use real-world examples or case studies relevant to the discipline
- Create backup activities in case of extra time or tech issues

6. Integrate Assessment

- Use formative assessment tools (quizzes, reflection prompts) during class to assess where students are in their understanding
- Align summative assessments (exams, projects) with learning outcomes

- Consider using multiple smaller low-stakes forms of assessment that offer opportunities for scaffolded feedback and learning

7. Map Out Time

- Plan segments (e.g., intro, activity, reflection)
- Leave buffer time for questions or discussion, or for some sections of the class to take longer than planned
- Have ‘back up’ activities in case the students get through the activities more quickly than anticipated

8. Make It Relevant

- Let students know the theme/objectives of the class
- Use examples from real-world contexts, industries, or current events
- Relevance boosts motivation and meaning
- Ensure ‘relevance’ does not inadvertently leave out some students

9. Use Technology Wisely

- Add value with tools like videos, polls, or collaborative platforms
- Keep it purposeful
- Take into consideration what tools your students have both access to and confidence in using. It’s fine to introduce a new technology if we give students time to learn how to use it
- Remember, any tool we use has to comply with BC FIPPA regulations

10. Be Flexible

- Plan for unexpected issues (tech problems, pace changes)
- Having adaptable content ready is essential in case we need to switch things up to meet our students where they’re at that in any specific class

11. End with Reflection

- Revisit learning goals and summarize takeaways so students can see their progress
- This also helps in identifying if there are potential gaps in learning
- Pose a reflection question or prompt for deeper thinking
- Use activities like exit tickets (students write on a piece of paper a question they still have, or one thing they learned etc. In online learning, these could be comments in the chat, or posted on an asynchronous discussion board)

12. Assign Pre-/Post-Class Work Intentionally

- Pre: Brief readings/videos or questions to set up the lesson
- Post: Activities that extend or reinforce learning
- Doing both above ensures time in class is meaningful. Students need to know that coming to class is worth their time

13. Review and Refine

- Reflect after each class: What worked? What didn’t?
- Make notes. We think we’ll remember later, but usually we don’t
- Use that input for future classes and for iterations of the course