

7: ACTIVITIES

Develop teaching activities that best engage students with the lesson's content.

THE
LESSON
DESIGN
TOOLKIT

What learning experiences might help students achieve the desired outcome?

What work do students need to do to prepare for this lesson?

What activities best help students meet the learning objectives?

What work happens before or after class?

EXPLORE & DEFINE

Explore the task and define the problem before making specific plans. Understanding this context will help avoid developing solutions to the wrong problems.

- Who are these students and what do they know? What do you need to find out?
- How much time is available?
- What will be the largest challenge in teaching this lesson?
- What's the toughest idea for students to understand? Why is that? What would make that the easiest idea of the lesson?
- What questions might be asked of students to check for understanding?

PROTOTYPE

Working from the content notes, gather the parts of a lesson into a rough plan that can be assessed and improved.

- How might the topic be introduced? What will engage students?
- What are the primary teaching methods? Lecture? Discussion? Group activities?
- How can the most important ideas be explained?
- What will students do to understand the content better?
- How might the lesson be concluded?
- What questions or activities will show whether the students are learning?
- How long will each part take? Does the content match the available time?

Write the main activities on sticky notes and add to the timeline on the results canvas. Add a guess for how long each activity will take.



ALTERNATIVE GENERATION

The first solution that comes to mind is rarely the best. Beginning with the prototype, form alternatives that can later be assessed.

- What's the most conventional way of teaching this content? What might the opposite be?
- What teaching activities do you usually select out of habit? Are those the best methods for teaching this content? Why or why not?
- How might this activity be reinvented as a group activity? As a lecture? As a take-home assignment?
- How might students apply the skills being learned in the classroom?

Consider the method bank at right. What techniques would be a good fit for the lesson?

Select one part of the lesson plan prototype to focus on, then explore the methods list at right and find alternative ways to teach that part of the lesson.

Learning Type	Description or Explanation	Sample Applications
Case studies, Role plays, Small group discussions	Participants discover learning points themselves. The individual assumes roles other than their real ones or is placed into settings that are different from the current one.	Problem based learning, psychodramas, sociodramas, group role play, practice in handling social interactions
Classroom training, Lectures	The individual acquires skills and knowledge through guidance from an instructor in a formal group setting, not in the workplace.	Seminars, conferences, workshops, lectures, demonstrations, online classes, webinars
Experiential learning	Individual or group participation in structured debriefings sessions to reflect on the experiences encountered and to draw conclusions.	Practicum, structured and mentored internship, field placement with coaching, supervised transitional work settings following training
Games & simulations	The individual performs as they would in practice. The setting, however, is an artificial creation designed to resemble the natural environment.	Physically realistic simulators, virtual reality environments, psychologically realistic settings, structured games, assessment centers
Projects & writing tasks	Participants reflect on their understanding of concepts, information, and ideas, allowing them to work with the content.	Reports, slide decks, articles, blogs, larger writing projects
Self-study	The individual acquires skills and knowledge through self-learning, guided by structured materials ranging from print to electronic systems.	Web-based tutorials, online courses, virtual labs, directive instruction, audio or video guides

Adapted from Effective Adult Learning: A Toolkit for Teaching Adults, developed by Northwest Center for Public Health Practice, University of Washington.

ASSESS & CONVERGE

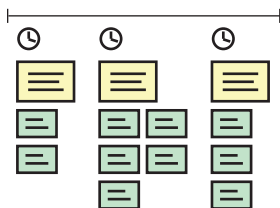
Critically assess each alternative, select the best option, and make improvements to the lesson plan.

- How might each activity be introduced?
- Are the students prepared to engage in this activity?
- What can be cut if behind schedule or extended if there's extra time?
- How does the activity help build student knowledge, practice skills, or reflect on their values?
- How might these activities bring students together to make meaningful personal connections?
- How do the activities connect to the homework and provide opportunities for feedback?
- How does each method use every affordance provided by being together as a group?
- What activities can be added or extended if there's extra time? What can be skipped if short on time?

Decide on the best teaching activity for each part of the lesson and update the prototype.

Under each activity, add the notes for the content to be covered.

Using more notes, add details like time and group size to the activities.



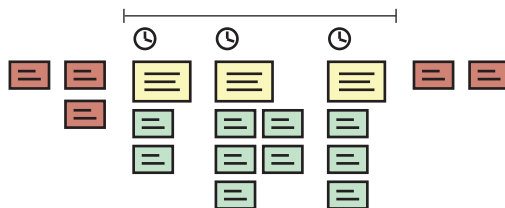
FRAME THE EXPERIENCE

The classroom experience is greater than the lesson itself. In addition to the lesson's core work, the experiences of entering, settling down, debriefing, and leaving can all be designed.

With the core of the day's plan established, frame the learning activities and integrate them into a cohesive whole.

- What happens as students enter the classroom? How will students be greeted and encouraged to interact with one another? Will assignments be handed in? How can students be encouraged to settle down and focus on the lesson's work?
- As class begins, how might students be engaged immediately, such as in short reflections or ice breakers? How might students be reminded of the previous lesson's ideas? How can expectations of the day's activities be established?
- After the main work of the lesson, how can students reflect on and consolidate what they just learned? How might uncertain points be cleared up?
- At the end of the lesson, how might the next lesson and long term goals be framed? Can expectations be reiterated and clarified?

Describe the opening and closing aspects of the day's experience. Write them to sticky notes and place on the timeline.



INTEGRATE

Assess how the activities support the other core components of the lesson plan.

- How does this lesson plan serve the objectives? Does each activity clearly link to an objective?
- How will you know if the lesson was effective? What behaviors will indicate this?
- Do the activities communicate the content? Do they neglect or overemphasize aspects of the content?
- What's the lesson about? Why does it matter? How has its purpose changed as your understanding has grown?
- How does the plan respond to challenges in the classroom?

Revisit the other components before continuing.

ITERATE

Using the critique workbook, find out how well the lesson plan works by exposing it to common classroom challenges.

What has testing revealed? It's tempting to pretend that issues don't exist. Embrace reality. If testing reveals a potential issue, acknowledge this first, then consciously decide if it should be addressed or ignored.

Using these new insights, update the plan and test again. Replace and rearrange notes as needed.

Once the plan accommodates common issues, fill in the activities with more detail.