

OUTSTANDING LESSONS

Pocketbook



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Cartoons:
Phil Hailstone

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The lesson within the sequence of work

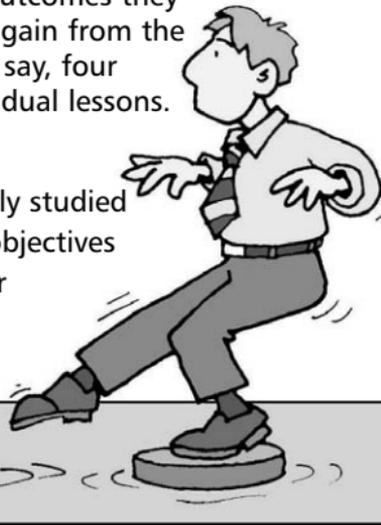


An effective lesson does not take place in isolation. It should be part of a series of learning episodes. Effective teachers have the 'big picture' in mind. This might be the learning for the whole year or term. They then break this 'long-term' plan down, through objectives or skills, into medium-term plans.

Excellent teachers think about this series first, deciding on the overall outcomes they want for their students. They are clear about what they want pupils to gain from the sequence of lessons and what skills they need to master by the end of, say, four weeks. In this way they create a series of effective and connected individual lessons.

An outstanding lesson usually makes use of prior learning by:

- Encouraging pupils to make links between what they have previously studied
- Relating individual lessons to the whole picture and overall lesson objectives
- Encouraging pupils to reflect on how the learning is connected over a series of lessons
- Helping pupils to think about what their next steps in learning are



Why sequences are important



If lesson planning starts with the overall picture of what pupils need to achieve and the skills they need to master over a particular period, it is more likely that individual lessons will:

- Form a coherent programme of study
- Make sense to the learner, as they understand the progression of skills and can see their own progress
- Cover all the skills, knowledge or competencies necessary for the programme of study
- Allow the learning to be staged to match the needs of the learner
- Show evidence of progression and mastery of skills
- Help the teacher plan well-focused lessons that show progression

FAST starts



You have already thought about what you want your students to learn and you are clear about the lesson objectives. Remember to do things **FAST!**

F **Focus** – Get the pupils focused on the task in hand, settled and in the right frame of mind for learning.

A **Activity** – Get them going! Activities need to be simple, quick to set up, but sufficiently challenging to make them worthy of completion.

S **Systems** – Have well understood strategies for managing homework, forgotten pens, latecomers, etc.

T **Teach!** – Get on with the **learning** and don't waste time! Remember, getting them settled and quiet is a means to an end, not the end in itself.



Developing effective systems

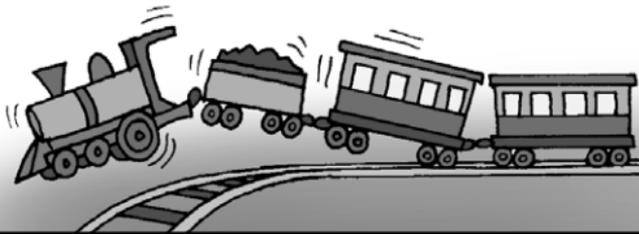


Many potentially excellent lessons are derailed by a lack of effective systems. Minor issues escalate into time-wasting and tempers fray. Before you know it 15 minutes (or more!) of the lesson have been wasted.

Your systems and 'hot spots' will be different according to what subject or age group you teach. However, you need to think about what can disrupt, and decide how you will tackle it so that the lesson and learning stay on track.

Don't let things like missing homework, not having pens, or other minor infringements derail your lesson. Set up systems for these that don't take your time and attention from the class, eg have a stock of pens for loan, but borrowers have to collect in the books at the end of the lesson; or record their names so you can track persistent offenders. Pick up homework or lateness issues once the class is well underway, rather than holding up the lesson in those crucial first few minutes.

- What are your 'hot spots' (issues than can derail your start)?
- How could you plan to manage these better or even prevent them altogether?



Effective systems – one teacher's ideas



Hot Spots

Year 8 pupils fail to bring pens to class.

Some pupils fail to complete homework and argue at start of lesson.

Pupils arrive late after lunch.

Short-term Action

Give out pens labelled with my name to get lesson started quickly.

Long-term Action

Raise with form tutor – suggest equipment checks.

Adopt rewards for those who regularly bring equipment.

Have a pen monitor.

Review

Many more pupils are bringing pens 26/30 – still good idea to have some spares to loan.

Pupils like being a pen monitor and tell each other off if they don't bring pens! Pupils don't like this and more bring pens.

Mystery and surprise



Routines can often be useful in settling behaviour and establishing teaching methods. They can reinforce clear expectations and steady a class so that they are ready to learn. Too much routine, however, can lead to boredom. Methods for starting and signalling the learning in the lesson need to be sufficiently interesting and engaging. This often means doing things differently and keying the pupils in to the learning, eg:

- Starting the lesson with a mystery. This might be a puzzle or a video clip or example of a mistake in a piece of work and asking pupils to solve it for you. This can be a way of stimulating students' curiosity and awakening their intellect
- Showing them interesting artefacts, getting them to pose questions or asking them to relate learning to their previous lesson will grab them in a way that referring them to the next page of their text book won't

Even if you do regularly ask pupils to complete a similar style of activity, liven it up by changing how you do it, eg using pair, individual and group tasks. Remember, variety creates interest and interest generates pupil engagement!



Get them hooked!

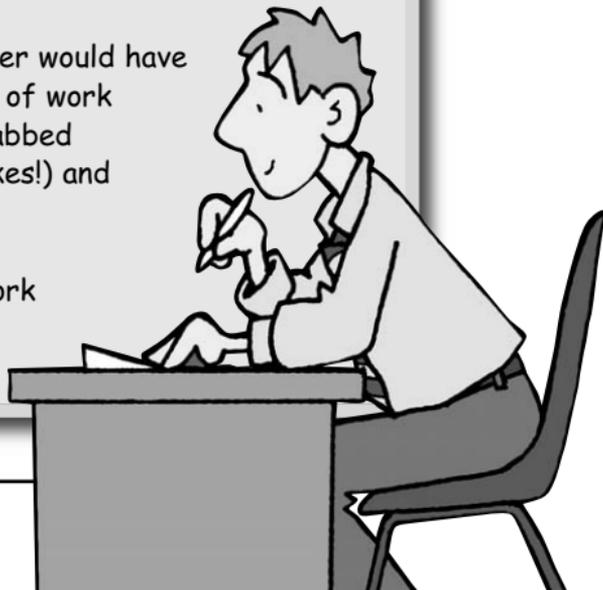


True story:

I was once asked to teach a lesson to a notoriously difficult class in a school in challenging circumstances. I was told, 'I doubt you'll be able to get them to write anything at all.'

Starting the lesson with a blank sheet of paper would have been a disaster. Instead, showing an example of work with some obvious and less obvious errors grabbed students' attention (they love spotting mistakes!) and allowed me an opportunity to praise them.

They went on to develop their own written work and showed some impressive progress.



About the author

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Caroline is an Oxford graduate who started teaching in the mid-1990s. She has been a middle leader in three schools, an Education Adviser for a Local Authority and an educational consultant across the UK and overseas.

Over a five-year period she has run demonstration lessons in over 80 schools. Caroline runs training sessions for teachers focusing on the skills of an outstanding teacher, assessment for learning strategies, motivating and improving pupil behaviour. Her reputation means that she has been invited to speak in schools from Dubai to Denmark. She has trained teachers from the United States to Russia.

For information about her training, consultancy and other books please see Caroline's website: www.bentley-davies.co.uk or follow her on twitter @Real CBD.

Caroline runs a range of training courses hosted by Osiris Education (www.OsirisEducational.co.uk) as well as training days directly with individual schools.