

When you have to write a lesson plan is it sometimes difficult to write down your aims? This lesson will give you ideas on how to write better aims when you need to.

### Task 1 – Milly’s dilemma.

Milly is asking for help from her Director of Studies.

**Milly:** I’m going to teach this lesson using a reading text. The students will spend quite a bit of time reading and then working on vocabulary-in-context. The only thing is there are some really good examples of the past continuous in the text. I want them to underline these verb forms because we studied them last week and it would be good revision. The problem is I’m not really sure what my main aim is – reading or grammar?



**Can you answer Milly’s question and tell her why? Jot down your answers on a note pad, then check the answer key below. 🗝️**

### Task 1 Feedback 🗝️

Milly indicates that her students will “spend quite a bit of time reading”. Her focus on grammar looks like she will only get students to underline and notice the past continuous without doing a detailed focus on this verb phrase. This suggests that the main aim of Milly’s lesson concerns the development of reading skills and the grammar focus is a subsidiary (or secondary) aim.

### Key skill

Sometimes it is necessary to write detailed lesson plans, for example, when you are going to be observed by another teacher. Writing main and subsidiary aims for the lesson as a whole as well as writing aims for each step or stage in a lesson can help you to think carefully about what you are trying to achieve with your students.

### Task 2 – Writing clear aims



**Some of the following aims are well written, while others are not clear or do not contain enough detail. Put the aims into the appropriate column below.**

**Aims**

- a) For learners to distinguish between ‘will’ and ‘going to’ used to make spontaneous decisions in the context of stating intentions after a lottery win.
- b) By the end of the lesson learners will have had practice in using strategies to guess the meaning of new vocabulary in context.
- c) To clarify the present perfect continuous using a taped dialogue.
- d) For learners to practise the present continuous with the attached picture.
- e) To provide practice in scan listening skills in the context of listening to flight departure information at an airport.
- f) By the end of the lesson students will have had speaking practice and clarification of some tenses.
- g) To provide freer writing practice in the context of mini paragraphs.
- h) By the end of the lesson learners will have an understanding of which kinds of words can have both a weak and strong phonological form in authentic spoken language.
- i) For learners to practise detail reading and the inferring of opinion from a newspaper article with political bias.
- j) To focus on linking as per page 27 ex. 3
- k) To clarify the form and meaning of the future perfect in the context of speculating about technology in the future.
- l) By the end of the lesson learners will have done a great variety of reading practice around the topic.

Well written aims	Aims are not clear or lack detail

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

### Task 3 – Aims in the procedure



**Sometimes it can be difficult to write aims in the procedure of the plan. You need to be sure you are stating an aim and not just describing what the students are going to do. For example:**

- 1) To get students to read and answer question 1.
- 2) To make sure students have a gist understanding of the text.

**Comment:** *1) is just describing procedure, but 2) is clearly stating an aim.*

**Decide whether the following statements are (A) aims or (D) merely a description of activities. Put A or D in the column on the right.**

Statements	A or D?
a) To check learners' understanding of the activity.	
b) To identify and highlight irregular simple past forms.	
c) To complete the second task.	
d) To discuss the answers in pairs.	
e) To provide oral fluency practice	
f) To underline examples of the present perfect in the text	
g) To plan the essay before the first draft	
h) To provide controlled oral practice of the target language	
i) To complete the gaps in the sentences	
j) To brainstorm and share ideas for the first draft.	

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

Task 4 – Aims and description



Now describe activities that match the aims. The first example has been done for you.

Example activities

a) To check learners' understanding of the activity.

**Description:** The teacher asks oral asks oral questions to make sure the students know what they have to do.

b) To identify and highlight irregular simple past forms.

**Description:** \_\_\_\_\_

e) To provide oral fluency practice

**Description:** \_\_\_\_\_

g) To plan the essay before the first draft

**Description:** \_\_\_\_\_

h) To provide controlled oral practice of the target language

**Description:** \_\_\_\_\_

Check your ideas in the answer key. 

#### Thinking about your teaching ...

You probably do not write detailed aims for lessons that you teach on a day-by-day basis. However, it is often a good idea to think about what your aims are in a lesson. Think of some lessons that you have taught in the last two or three weeks. Decide whether your aims were clear for these lessons or whether they were a bit confused and resulted in lessons that you were not happy with. Do you think your students were clear about your aims?

Note your thoughts in your *Teaching Log*.

#### Taking it to the classroom ...

Try telling your students what your aims are at the beginning of each lesson. You can write them up on the board. Alternatively, you could ask your students at the end of the lesson what they thought the aims were. It might be interesting to see what they say. If their ideas are different from yours, it is interesting to explore why.

#### Want to find out more ... ?

Page 371 of *The Practice of English Language Teaching (4<sup>th</sup> edition)* by Jeremy Harmer (Pearson 2007) has an introduction to lesson aims.

On pages 124 to 128 of *Learning Teaching (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)* by Jim Scrivener (Macmillan 2005), there is further reading on lesson aims.

See also section 3 of *Language Teaching Classroom Practice DVD & Workbook* by Heather Richards and Karen Wise (AUT University 2007).

### Answer Key



#### Task 2 – Feedback

##### Well written aims

a), b), e), h), i) and k)

##### Aim not clear or lack detail

c) To clarify the present perfect continuous using a taped dialogue.

**Comment:** *There is no mention of the topic of the dialogue or the context.*

d) For learners to practise the present continuous with the attached picture.

**Comment:** *There is no mention of what kind of practice – oral or spoken, controlled or free. There is no mention of the context.*

f) By the end of the lesson students will have had speaking practice and clarification of some tenses.

**Comment:** *There is no mention of whether the speaking is language practice or more general fluency practice. The tenses are not named.*

g) To provide freer writing practice in the context of mini paragraphs.

**Comment:** *There is no mention of the text type (narrative, report, argument) or the topic of the text.*

j) To focus on linking as per page 27 ex. 3

**Comment:** *There is no mention of whether the linking is to do with pronunciation or grammar.*

l) By the end of the lesson learners will have done a great variety of reading practice around the topic.

**Comment:** *There is no specific mention of the kind of reading sub skills (scan, skim, intensive) that will be practised in the lesson.*

#### Task 3 – Feedback

- a. A
- b. A
- c. D
- d. D
- e. A
- f. D
- g. A
- h. A
- i. D
- j. D

#### Task 4 – Feedback

b) To identify and highlight irregular simple past forms.

**Description:** The teacher asks learners to underline simple past irregular forms in the text. She gives them a list of irregular verbs to help them identify new forms.

e) To provide oral fluency practice

**Description:** The students work in pairs to personalise the information in the text by telling each other about a recent holiday they have had.

g) To plan the essay before the first draft

**Description:** Students share their brainstorming notes and discuss the content of each paragraph of the essay. They write up a paragraph-by-paragraph plan.

h) To provide controlled oral practice of the target language

**Description:** The teacher uses white board prompts to elicit a four-line dialogue. Students then practise the dialogue in pairs.