

## LESSON PLANNING FOR YOUNG LEARNER CLASSES

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Teaching young learners can be a fascinating job because generally children are very enthusiastic and willing to learn. They are warm, spontaneous and have great admiration for their teacher. Every day is like a new experience. When planning a class for Young Learners the teacher has to take into account many different factors such as age and ability. In this document I will give an overview of what those factors are. I will also explain how you can best plan a class for your Young Learners.

Before we begin, let's define what we mean by a Young Learner. In the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) world Young Learners are children between the ages of 3 and 18 years old who are learning English. They can be broken into two groups. Very young learners are generally considered to be children aged between 3 and 5 years old. They study at a preschool or kindergarten. Perhaps they have 1 hour of English a week. Perhaps there is an English assistant helping the teacher in the class. They are introduced to English through games and songs and rhymes. Young learners are generally considered to be children who are between 6 and 13 years old. In some countries, Young Learners may go up to 16 or even 18 years old. They generally study English for 4-5 hours per week. They generally follow a course book and they are assessed on their ability. This group has the biggest difference in age and ability! Who do you teach -Young Learners or Very Young Learners? There are many differences between these two age groups. You will have to be very careful when you plan your lessons for each group[1]. Think about what children in each age group are interested in and what can they do? For example, Very Young Learners probably can't write or even hold a pencil. How will this affect your lesson planning?

What is the role a Young Learner teacher?

As a Young Learner teacher, you have a very important role. You are responsible for activating learning. Children will learn if they understand what they are doing. They must understand the message in order to develop a new language. Consequently, when you are planning your classes, you must use materials that are appropriate for the children's age and reality. Experience is very important. For example, if you try to teach 6 year olds language for ordering food in a restaurant they will have trouble. This is because the language is not related to their lives. How many 6 year olds have you seen ordering food in a restaurant? Can you think about things that children do have experience of that you can use in your classes? The best example would be games. It is essential that you include games and fun in the classroom to help Young Learners learn in an environment appropriate for their age. Also, we must remember that learning is cyclical. This is especially important for the Young Learner teacher to remember. What children know today, they may forget tomorrow, and then remember again next week. You, as the teacher are in charge of recycling the content of each class. Don't think that because you taught some words today your Young Learners

will remember them easily! You are fundamental in the child's development. You will help and guide the child in every class. You will ask them to talk to their partners, to work in groups, to speak to other teachers. This is the social function of language, since language is for communication[4].

What do children like?

When thinking about planning classes for Young Learners it help to think about what children like. Here is a list of some things I know that many children like. Can you think of anymore? Many children like to make a noise and move around! Don't worry, simply do activities where you can utilize this noise and movement. Children like learning 'by doing' or learning through experience. Many children love listening to stories and songs. They are very good at imitating sounds. Give them lots of songs, rhymes and poems. Sing to them, tell them stories! They will soon join in and sing with you Children are very spontaneous. They like to use their imaginations. Why not ask them to prepare their role-plays, poems and songs? Children are very competitive. Make sure you give them lots of games. Divide them into groups. Make sure they know who the winner was!

What don't children like?

Of course it is also important to think about what many children don't really like. This can also help you plan your classes. Can you think of anymore? Children don't like structured classes. Repetition of the same concept over and over again may lead to bored students. And if students are not paying attention, they can't learn! Children don't like boring classes. Make sure you give them a variety of activities. Change the order of activities as much as you can to ensure that they don't begin to feel bored. Children don't like to listen to the teacher all the time. Let them participate and get involved. Children's attention span is relatively short and varies according to age. Generally, the younger the child the short their concentration. If you are working with 6 -7 year olds for example try to change activities after 5-10 minutes. This doesn't mean change the language focus. You can still practice the same language but use a different activity or game to do it[2].

During the first few years of life, a child learns a lot about themselves and the world around them, and parents are their first teachers. Parents teach them how to speak, how to walk, how to feed themselves. They teach them the alphabet, shapes and colors, and even how to count and spell very simple words. But for healthy development, children need active stimulation and interaction with others. This is where early childhood education is the most beneficial. It is in these classrooms where children apply what their parents have taught them to a practical setting and have their first interactions with people outside of their family. Beginning with children as young as two, teachers guide them through an important transition and oversee their adjustment. Early childhood education focuses on "learning through play" by providing a hands-on, interactive atmosphere where children learn about themselves through playing with other children. As a teacher of young children, you become somewhat of a surrogate parent, their first source of guidance in playing with others and forming friendships. You teach them how to share, how to take turns, how to have manners—lessons that stay with them and evolve with each crucial phase of their life.

Children this young also have more physical demands than older students. Many preschools incorporate a nap time into their schedule or are on half-day schedules to accommodate a child's exhaustion after a long morning of playing and learning. Snack time is also built into these schedules, which serve as a great opportunity to teach your students table manners. Teaching young children requires nothing short of complete devotion and perseverance. It can be a daunting task, but to a truly committed teacher, it is worth the effort[3].

There is much debate over what is covered by an ideal preschool curriculum, but in actuality, early childhood is a period of such tremendous growth and curiosity that it is hard to decide exactly what, and when, a child needs to learn. Many preschool curricula establish the teacher as a guide, allowing children to discover for themselves while the teacher leads them through the process. Much research goes into preschool curricula, and organizations such as the National Institute for Early Education Research [External link: open in new](#) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children [External link: open in new](#) strive to preserve and advance the education of some of our country's youngest students, as well as increase awareness about the importance of early childhood education.

So far we have talked about what children like and don't like but it's also very important to think about what children generally can and can't do. Remember I said that ability differs according to age. Very Young Learners can do less than Young Learners. What kinds of things can Young Learners do?

- Children are very creative. They can tell stories and imagine new worlds.

- Children can learn unconsciously. They have a capacity for indirect learning. This is learning that happens through play or interaction. They are able to learn unconsciously. Children can relate to activities based on real things: their school, their home, their games, their interests. Older children can classify, sequence, match and draw. Children aren't good at understanding grammatical categories. These are abstract concepts they find difficult to identify.

- Children can't understand how language works

- Children can't understand abstract concepts.

- Children can't memorise extensive lists of vocabulary very well.

- Children can't concentrate very well if they have to do certain activities for too long.

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