



We asked teachers for their

Tips on lesson planning

This is what they said:

- Take suggestions but have a clear idea of what you want to achieve in the short, medium and longer term and then discuss the stages with the pupil and parents to gain as much agreement as possible.
- Be flexible but keep long-term focus.
- Balance levels of challenge so not every new piece/study is harder than the last.
- Give short term targets and arrange regular performances with rewards (e.g. clapping, sweets, charts).
- Generally start with warm ups e.g. scales and exercises but mix things up so pieces get most of the lesson time. Keep things moving and upbeat, ask questions about time for work in the following week and adjust accordingly.
- Know when to deviate from the plan! This will often, though not always be self-evident.
- Shake things up - don't become hidebound by a certain order of learning or teaching, e.g. always starting with scales and ending with 'fun' things like duets/improvisation. Make a distinction between a plan and a formula - the former is a good starting point, but the latter is inflexible and not mindful of an individual's needs.
- Don't spend too long thinking about a plan - and be driven at least partly by what the pupil enjoys the most/is naturally best at.
- Watch some of the great teachers in action and see how adaptable they are. Read widely and be aware of older pedagogical methods, such as Matthey.
- Don't leap in with something hard _ move progressively from the known to the unknown (and dart back from time to time also, to relax tension).
- The best time to plan the next lesson is at the end of this one - a few notes jotted down (perhaps whilst the next pupil is unpacking their things) will ensure you have a clear plan on what to follow-up.
- Sharing your lesson planning with your pupil helps them to know exactly how to proceed and what is expected between now and their next lesson. Writing in a practice book (or ask pupils to, especially if you teach two or more at once) as a way of planning achieves this, and it avoids duplication (although this relies on the pupil to reliably remember to give the practice book to you at the start of the next lesson, and it may not, therefore, be appropriate in all cases).
- In planning for the next lesson, be specific and realistic. Too many tasks can set someone up to fail and might limit their practice instead of increasing it and they might not even turn up next week if they are anxious, however pupils will be keen to demonstrate challenges they have attained.



- At half terms and holidays, take the time to review your lesson activities and plan accordingly, to continue good practice but also re-focus on any neglected areas. If you notice the attention narrowing and becoming repetitive, readdress those wider musical activities of listening, theory, composing, improvisation, ensemble playing (the list goes on!) - these will be the skills of the future musician, when this term's pieces become just a memory.
- Be reactive; the benefit of a one-to-one setting allows for that once in a while, and it means you can put all your plans off and run with the latest inspiration from either pupil or teacher!
- Routine - establish a loose structure to each lesson.
- Choose one scale or technique and find lots of different ways to try this out in the lesson. E.g a new scale - find pieces which use this and learn them.
- Use pieces / studies from lots of different sources.
- Have a 3 year, 1 year termly and weekly plan and revisit all of them regularly with the pupil. Make sure there is a record of them that the pupil can see at all times, mention these in the context of your lessons.
- Keep a record of things you have covered but also things which are longer term projects, technically or musically, so they become a leitmotif in the teaching.
- Explain at the end of a lesson what they are hoping to achieve in the week and more importantly what you will hear or do first in the next lesson and stick to it! It shows you care and have a long term vision/plan.
- Begin by guiding the start of the next lesson to show it is part of a long-term strategy but also be responsive to changing if they have something special to play to you.
- Always be clear WHAT you are teaching, and communicate this to your pupil. At the end of the lesson they should have a clear idea of what they have learned. This is part of the lesson plan.
- Make sure you are creating holistic lesson plans that don't just focus on one area, but cover elements such as aural and sight-reading. This can be done within a musical piece, but ensure that in your planning there are designated moments for a clear focus on these areas.



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