

Submitting a lesson plan: Frequently asked questions

How do I submit a lesson plan?

You can email your lesson plan to our editorial staff¹ in a Microsoft Word or RTF file.

What do I need to include with my lesson plan?

Most of our lesson plans follow a standard template. See “The parts of a lesson plan²” for more information.

How much detail do I need to provide in my instructions to the teacher?

Don't ask another teacher to spend as much time preparing to teach the lesson as you did developing it. If you're developing your lesson plan as part of a workshop or course in a particular content area, keep in mind that other teachers may not be as excited about the topic as you are. Give them what they'll need to implement it. For example:

- Don't ask a teacher to excerpt a long document for students or to select photographs from a collection. Provide a suitable excerpt or selection in case the teacher doesn't have time to do this extra work.
- Before you ask the teacher to explain a concept to students, ask yourself whether it is a concept that an average teacher is prepared to explain. If you have any doubts, provide an explanation to the teacher or link to resources on the web.
- If a handout is needed, create one and submit it with your lesson plan. Even if you want teachers to be able to customize it, give them something to adapt (in a Word document, for example).

How can I make sure my instructions are clear to another teacher?

See our guide to instructional writing³.

Can I include images and other media with my lesson plan?

Yes, by all means. Please see our media submission guidelines⁴.

Can I include samples of student work?

If you include samples of students' work in your publication, U.S. law requires that you obtain parental permission. We ask also that you obtain parental permission if you use photographs of your students or of any child under 18 years of age. Please contact us⁵ about procedures for obtaining permissions.

In addition, please do not use students' names in your lesson plan. If you wish to refer to a specific student, please use a fictitious name, and include a note to the editor that you have changed the names of students.

Can I submit a Powerpoint presentation with my lesson plan?

Yes, but we frequently are unable to publish Powerpoints, for the following reasons:

- *Copyright.* Text and images (including clip art) in Powerpoint presentations must be created by the author of the lesson plan, be free of copyright or licensed for public use, or be accompanied by appropriate permissions. If you wrote the text and took the photographs yourself, we can consider it for publication; if you found the material on the web, we probably can't. See the section on copyright and permissions⁶ for more information.
- *Expectations of the teacher.* Powerpoint files are not actually presentations, but a presenter's slides and notes — they're designed to *accompany* a presentation. Unless the slides are very clearly and thoroughly explained, another teacher will likely not be able to make full use if them.
- *Usability.* Materials we receive in Powerpoint files often do not meet our standards for design and usability.

Instead of submitting a Powerpoint, consider the following alternatives:

- Include background information for the teacher in the body of the lesson plan. (Example: Spanish and Hispanic English in North Carolina⁷)
- Submit original or publicly licensed photographs as high-resolution JPEGs. See our media submission guidelines⁸ and our guide to finding free and publicly licensed resources⁹.

Can I link to resources on the web?

Yes, but we generally avoid lesson plans that cannot be taught without content from an external website. Websites change frequently, and we have had to remove a number of good lesson plans from our collection because they relied on content that was no longer available.

Content without which a lesson plan cannot be taught might include:

- background reading for teachers on topics or concepts unfamiliar to most K–12 educators (see above¹⁰)
- material students must read
- websites students must use to complete the activities in the lesson
- content to be used for a teacher presentation

However, we encourage authors to include links to *supplemental* information on the web. Supplemental websites might provide:

- background reading for the teacher on topics or concepts familiar to most educators
- further reading for interested students
- examples of products similar to those the students are asked to create
- guides to related strategies and techniques for instruction, assessment, and classroom management

If your lesson plan includes required materials for teachers and students, try the following:

1. Provide original materials.
2. Identify materials already available on LEARN NC.
3. Find materials on the web free of copyright or publicly licensed (see our guide to copyright¹¹).
4. Use materials on websites that are stable and reliable.
5. Use print materials available in most school libraries.
6. Provide alternatives in case preferred resources become unavailable. This is especially important when the resources are highly specific and alternatives will be difficult to find.

Finally, whenever you link to other websites,

- Provide not only the URL (web address) but the title of the page or website and a sentence or two explaining its relevance to the lesson plan.
- Don't give instructions for navigating websites — provide direct links to desired resources. When websites are reorganized, URLs will often be forwarded automatically, but paths and navigation will change.

What if I want to include material in my lesson plan that has been published elsewhere?

If you own the copyright to those materials — that is, if you created them and they are original to you — then you may include them in your lesson plan. If they were created by someone else, you must have the copyright owner's permission to republish them. Please read our copyright primer¹² for more information, and contact us¹³ before developing a lesson plan around republished materials.

What do I need to know about using primary sources in my lesson plan?

Building a lesson around primary sources is a great way to engage students and encourage higher-order thinking. But such lessons require significant preparation and planning, and teachers unfamiliar with the sources or collection you're using will need extra guidance.

- Provide questions to guide student reading or discussion. Ideally, these questions should guide students from basic knowledge to higher-order thinking (analysis and evaluation). Also provide guidance for the teacher about the kinds of answers towards which students should be working. A good example of a reading guide to

a specific primary source is Reading Amadas and Barlowe¹⁴. For a more general model of inquiry into primary sources, see “Reading Primary Sources: An Introduction for Students¹⁵.”

- Make sure your lesson plan really addresses the curriculum. It’s easy to get excited about a great primary source and want to find a way to make use of it in the classroom. While you may be able to incorporate it successfully into the curriculum, though, another teacher may not see the connection. Make sure the connection to required content or skills is clear.

Can I refer to specific technology or applications in my lesson plan?

Yes, but remember that not everyone will have access to the same hardware and software you do. Technologies also tend to become obsolete quickly, and instructions for one version of an application may be irrelevant in only a year or two. If your lesson plan uses specific technology, try the following:

- Write generic instructions. If, for example, your lesson plan uses a graphic calculator, write your instructions to refer to any graphic calculator rather than a specific model.
- Use free, open-source, or commonly available applications. If the application is available online, provide a link to download it.
- Provide alternatives for teachers unable to use a specific application.

If LEARN NC publishes my lesson plan, who owns the copyright to the plan?

Assuming that all of the materials you submit as part of your lesson plan are original and created by you, you retain the copyright to your lesson plan after its publication on LEARN NC. However, as part of the author agreement, you must grant LEARN NC certain rights to edit, publish, and republish your lesson plan.

Can I republish my lesson plan elsewhere?

You are free to publish your lesson plan elsewhere so long as its republication does not conflict with the rights granted to LEARN NC.

On the web

More from LEARN NC

Visit us on the web at www.learnnc.org to learn more about topics related to this article, including LEARN NC, lesson plans, and submissions.

Notes

1. See [http://www.learnnc.org/contact?name=Emily Jack](http://www.learnnc.org/contact?name=Emily+Jack).
2. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/1346>.
3. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/1349>.
4. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/925>.

5. See [http://www.learnnc.org/contact?name=Emily Jack](http://www.learnnc.org/contact?name=Emily+Jack).
6. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/lnc-collab-manual/3.o>.
7. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/4831>.
8. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/925>.
9. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/1354>.
10. See #detail.
11. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/4454>.
12. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/multimedia/7029>.
13. See <http://www.learnnc.org/contact?name=Emily+Jack>.
14. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/1983>.
15. See <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/745>.