

Using instructional sequences

Summary

Many students, including those on the autism spectrum, benefit from receiving instructions in a structured sequence. Having the lesson expectations visible, clear, and easy to continually refer to can ease anxiety and alleviate receptive communication difficulties. By providing an instructional sequence at the beginning of each lesson, teachers give students a road map of what will happen in the lesson.

A clear visual instructional sequence:

- keeps students more engaged and on track
- helps students understand lesson content, purpose, and objectives – what they are doing and why
- promotes a sense of predictability in the classroom
- demonstrates to students how to break bigger tasks into smaller components – a crucial organisational skill.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers related to this practice

- 1.6 - strategies to support the full participation of students with disability
- 4.1 - support student participation
- 4.2 - manage classroom activities

For further information, see [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers AITSL page](#)

Preparing to Teach

Present the instructional sequence to students at the start of a lesson, on the board and/or as a handout. The instructional sequence could include:

- information about the main topic and learning objectives of the lesson
- a numbered sequence of activities to be completed in the lesson
- homework requirements
- reminders about assessments or special events
- notification of the next lesson topic.

To prepare an instructional sequence for a student who has difficulty reading, the teacher could use individually tailored pictorial sequences.



Examples of instructional sequences

Lesson

Task	Time	Complete?
1. Watch introductory video: 'Rome'.	20 mins	
2. Whole-class discussion.	10 mins	
3. Read pages 35–41 from Ancient History textbook.	15 mins	
4. Start questions 1–10 on page 42 of textbook.		

Homework: Complete questions 1–10 on page 42 of textbook. Due Thursday 19 July.

Reminder: Assessment 2 is due Monday 23 July.

Lesson

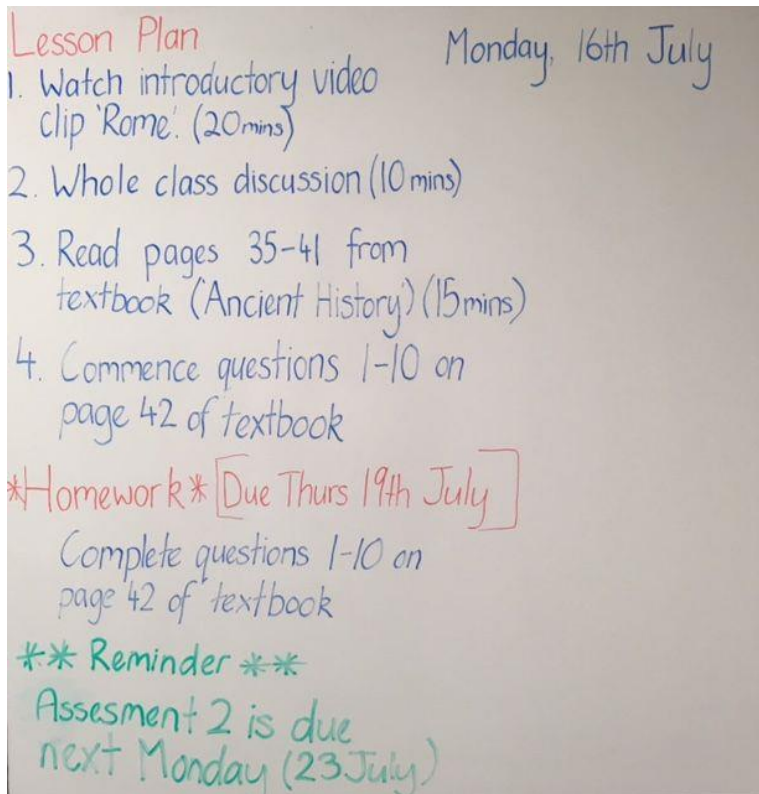
Lesson outline	18/10/2011	Homework
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Listen to introduction of levers.2. Write out theory – aim, method and results chart.3. Complete practical.4. Record results.5. Pack away equipment.	Science: Levers / Force Multipliers <i>Visual cues and lesson tracking can be written here.</i>	Complete text book work by Friday, 22/10/10. Reminder: Short answer quiz – 22 Oct Next lesson topic: Speed / Motion

The example above of an instructional sequence is from Costley, D., E. Keane, T. Clark and K. Lane. 2012. *A Practical Guide for Teachers of Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder in Secondary Education*. London: Jessica Kingsley, p. 65.





Example of instructional sequences



An example of a whole-class instructional sequence presented on a whiteboard.

It works better if the teacher:

- checks off completed activities on the instructional sequence, or assigns students to do this
- builds flexibility into the instructional sequence so that it can be adjusted during the lesson. If students on the autism spectrum understand that changes will be flagged on the written (or pictorial) sequence, they will learn to accept schedule alterations
- takes a few minutes at the end of the lesson to sum up key points, answer questions, and give a preview of the next lesson, i.e. how this topic relates to the next topic – previews promote students' interest in a topic and help them connect ideas in a larger context
- provides the instructional sequence consistently in the same format.

It doesn't work if:

- the instructional sequence is not followed
- too much or too little information is included in the instructional sequence.

In the classroom

At the start of the lesson

Show the students the instructional sequence and explain it to the class as a whole.

Check students are clear on how to use it.



During the lesson

Talk through the instructional sequence as appropriate during the lesson - this could be individual, small groups or as a whole class. Draw students' attention to the sequence of upcoming and completed activities.

At the end of the lesson

Seek feedback. Ask students how they used the sequence. Ask for input on any changes that may assist. You may like to ask students to share how they used the sequences- highlighting activities completed, ticking off completed activities etc.

Highlight what students have achieved and remind them about homework, assessments, or special events.