

ETpedia™

Teacher Training

500 ideas
for teacher
training in
English language
teaching

input
sessions

support

feedback

teaching practice

engaging

Beth Melia-Leigh
and Nicholas Northall

Series editor: John Hughes

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ETpedia Teacher Training

500 ideas for teacher training in English language teaching

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Appendix



Introduction

10 contexts in which to use this resource

This resource is not restricted to use in one particular teacher training context. The suggestions and activities can be used by trainers involved in training and developing teachers in a variety of different contexts from formal teacher training courses to more informal professional development workshops. Many of the tips are applicable to a range of different levels from pre-service all the way through to experienced practising teachers; other ideas can be easily adapted for use in your own situation. Below are ten contexts in which this resource can be used.

1. Short, intensive pre-service courses

This is an invaluable resource for anyone involved in delivering an intensive pre-service course. This may be an accredited course or an equivalent. These kinds of courses are not only demanding for the trainees, but for the trainers too, and the tips and activities may save you some valuable time and help to reduce stress.

2. Part-time pre-service courses

Likewise, the advice and ideas you will find in this resource will be applicable for use on accredited or alternative entry-level courses that are delivered on a part-time basis covering varying periods of time.

3. Accredited in-service courses

The resource will also be useful if you are working with more experienced teachers who are taking in-service teaching qualifications. Most of the ideas are appropriate for use with in-service teachers as they stand; alternatively they can be adapted for use with teachers who already have teaching experience. Unit 41 focuses specifically on training in this context.

4. Non-accredited in-service courses

In-service courses do not have to be externally accredited for the materials to be relevant. Any experienced teachers taking a course to further their professional development will benefit from the ideas in this resource.

5. Training your staff

If you are a Director of Studies (DoS), Academic Manager or anyone with responsibilities on a training programme, you will find plenty of tips and ideas to help you organise and provide training and development opportunities for your team.

6. Teacher examination courses

Some teacher training courses are designed to prepare teachers to take an exam that tests their knowledge of teaching. Although practical in nature, this resource will help to expand teachers' knowledge of best practice by offering easily accessible advice and suggestions. Unit 44 contains explicit tips on preparing teachers to take a teaching exam.

7. BA and MA courses

TESOL modules are offered in a number of undergraduate and postgraduate courses at universities all over the world. Many of the ideas in this book can easily be adapted to these contexts or used to supplement core materials.

8. Tailor-made training courses

If you are responsible for designing bespoke training courses, this resource will help to guide you through the whole process, from designing your course to delivering it, to getting feedback and evaluating it.

9. Online or blended courses

Throughout this resource, reference is made to online and blended learning. Unit 43 is dedicated entirely to online training.

10. Workshops for practising teachers

The resource is not only relevant to those involved in longer-term training and development. If you are asked to deliver a one-off, standalone workshop at your school, you will find plenty of ideas to help you, particularly in Section 2.

10 reasons for using this resource

1. Everything in one place

Although there are some resources available for teacher trainers, these are limited and may take some searching for. The aim of this resource is to bring together a collection of 500 easily accessible tips, ideas, advice and activities all in one place for faster, more convenient access.

2. Overview of teacher training

If you are a teacher thinking about moving into teacher training in the future, or if you are simply interested in knowing more about this area of ELT, this resource gives an overview of the main aspects of the role.

3. From teaching to training

If you are currently transitioning from teacher to trainer, this resource will provide you with much-needed support to help you find your feet in your new role.

4. Supporting day-to-day teacher trainers

If you are relatively new to teacher training, this resource will provide you with practical advice to support and guide you through your work. If you are unsure how to approach a certain aspect of your job or are stuck for an idea, dip into the book for some inspiration.

5. Experienced trainers

If you have been training for a while, this resource may remind you of ideas you haven't thought about or used recently, or it might give you some fresh ideas to extend your repertoire.

6. Course designers

If you need to design your own courses, the ideas in this resource may provide a starting point and give you more confidence to write your own material.


7. Range of contexts

The ideas in this resource can be applied to many different training contexts from accredited pre- and in-service qualifications to bespoke courses for practising teachers and MA TESOL modules to standalone workshops. Whether you are a teacher trainer, senior teacher or Director of Studies responsible for staff development, you will find ideas and tips to use in your context.

8. Range of ideas

You will find a variety of ideas covering different aspects of teacher training. Many of the suggestions will be immediately applicable for your training situation, while others can be adapted so that they are more tailored to the needs of the teachers you work with.

9. Additional photocopies and quotes

In addition to the resources offered in the units, you will also find a bank of photocopiable worksheets in the appendix. These relate to the units, and can be photocopied for use in your training context. Photocopiable worksheets are indicated in the text by this symbol .

10. More time

It is hoped that offering a collection of practical, easy-to-use ideas for teacher trainers will free up more time for you to spend on other aspects of your job that you feel you would benefit from.

“I use the ETpedia books on my teacher training courses because they have lots of fresh ideas for those who want to be teachers of English as a second language as well as those who are beginning their teaching career.”

Magdalena Dygała, teacher trainer, Poland

10 ways to use this resource

This resource will be invaluable for anyone involved in English language teacher training (and trainers of other languages). There is help and advice for new trainers who are starting out as well as ideas for teachers who would like to move into teacher training but are unsure of how to do so. More experienced trainers will find it helpful for refreshing their input sessions and approaching training in alternative ways. It can be read and used according to your needs, interests and levels of experience.

1. Cover to cover

You may choose to start at the beginning and read all the way to the end. If you are new to teacher training, or considering moving into this area, this resource can serve as a useful overview of the different aspects involved in being a teacher trainer.

2. Read a section

Each section covers a different aspect of teacher training. Choose the ones that are most relevant to your current context and leave those that are not immediately relevant for later (when you might need them).

3. Go to the unit

Use the contents page to select specific units that deal with any immediate questions, concerns or interests.

4. Trainer's block

If you are stuck for new ideas to use in your training context, or struggling to come up with ways to develop your practice, dip into the resource for some inspiration.

5. Evaluate training ideas

Use this resource to develop your ability to evaluate training ideas. Consider their appropriacy in your context and think about how they could be adapted to make them more meaningful and useful for the teachers you work with.

6. Supplement your own resources

Many of the ideas and photocopiable materials in the resource can be used to supplement your own resources.

7. Develop new ways of training

Use the tips, ideas and suggestions to help you to develop your training techniques. If you have been training for a while and are at the stage where you feel ready for more of a challenge, the 'Further development' section (see pages 151–164) will help.

8. Help fellow trainers

If you are in contact with other trainers who are looking for ideas to develop their own practice, you could direct them to this resource. If your colleagues are searching for something specific to use in their training context, show them the relevant units or activities.

9. Last-minute sessions

If you find yourself in a situation where you have to cover a session at very short notice, you should find enough ideas in Section 2 to help you deliver a complete and useful workshop.

10. Write your own ten

Just like teaching, training is always evolving, and the ideas in this resource are by no means exhaustive. Why not write your own ten tips or suggestions and share them with your colleagues? There is a space to add your own ten at the back of this resource book (see pages 264–265).

“As an educational adviser I quite often have to give sessions for teachers on a particular aspect of English teaching. I frequently use the ideas in ETpedia as a kind of checklist when preparing those teacher training sessions.”

Mario Lecluyze, Educational Adviser, Belgium

10 facts about the authors

Beth and Nick ...

1. are English language teachers and teacher trainers at the English Language Teaching Centre at the University of Sheffield.
2. have taught for a combined total of nearly 40 years.
3. have taught and trained in the UK, Italy, Spain, Poland, Thailand, Slovakia, Turkey and Mexico.
4. give talks and workshops at teacher training conferences.
5. have written articles for a number of ELT publications including *English Teaching professional*, *The Teacher Trainer Journal* and *IATEFL Conference Selections*.
6. have experience of both face-to-face and online teacher training in a range of contexts, including Cambridge and Trinity pre- and in-service courses, undergraduate and postgraduate TESOL modules, bespoke training for practising teachers and train-the-trainer courses.
7. have a website called *Practical Teacher Training in ELT*.

Beth:

8. has previously written under the name Beth Davies, which includes writing a teacher training series in *English Teaching professional*.

Nick:

9. writes under the name Nicholas Northall, which includes writing a teacher training series in *English Teaching professional*.
10. This is their first book.

Thanks and acknowledgements

The 500 ideas, tips, questions, suggestions, advice and resources in this book are based on what we have learnt over the years as teachers, trainers, educators, presenters and materials writers. The whole collection is a mixture of new ideas and classic teaching and training activities passed from one trainer to another over the years. Many thanks go to all the people we have worked with and learnt from, whose ideas and suggestions have helped to create this book. We would like to thank John Hughes, Kirsten Holt, Penny Hands, Helena Gomm, everyone at Pavilion Publishing, and the trainers who shared their expertise and ideas provided in the quotes. We would also like to thank our colleagues at the ELTC for their support, and, of course, our children, Tristan, Olivia, Emily and Matilda.

*'It's the book we wish we'd had
when we first started training.'*

**Beth Melia-Leigh and Nicholas Northall,
authors of ETpedia Teacher Training.**



Section 1: Getting started

The first three units in this section explore the transition from teacher to teacher trainer, describing what a teacher trainer does and how this is both different from, and similar to, teaching. These units aim to ensure that anyone considering moving into this new role knows what to expect beforehand.

The first unit suggests some questions you might want to ask yourself when thinking about becoming a teacher trainer. The aim is to clarify the role and help you consider whether it would be the right fit for you. Unit 2 outlines the different routes available to teachers wanting to make the transition. The third unit offers tips to new trainers to help them settle into the role.

The aim of Units 4 to 6 is to make sure your training course gets off to a good start. Unit 4 provides tips and advice to ensure potential course participants are adequately supported before the course begins. Unit 5 goes on to consider ways in which you can successfully plan your training course, considering both the practical and the academic aspects of this important phase. The final unit in this section looks at ways to manage trainees' expectations from the outset to ensure that your course runs smoothly.

10 questions to ask about teacher training

Whether you are completely new to teacher training, or whether you are considering making the transition from teaching, you should ask yourself these 10 questions before going any further. If you are already a trainer, it's worth asking yourself these questions again; less experienced trainers will gain some ideas about how to become a better trainer, and more experienced trainers can ask them to reflect on their experiences.

1. Do I have in-depth knowledge of ELT?

Good language awareness and knowledge of current methodologies in ELT are essential attributes for a teacher trainer. If your ability to analyse language and understand underpinning theory has slipped over the years, or if you are not up to date with the latest approaches or techniques in ELT, you will need to brush up on your knowledge.

2. Do I have relevant experience?

Consider what experience you have. You are likely to have a lot of experience in different teaching contexts, which is essential for a good teacher trainer. Think about how you could exploit this when working with trainees. Do you have any training experience that you could draw on? This doesn't have to be formal training experience, but any work you have done supporting other teachers will be a useful starting point. For more information on getting relevant training experience, see Unit 2.

3. Do I like working with other teachers?

You may have an encyclopaedic knowledge of English grammar, as well as being aware of the most-up-to-date issues in our profession, but as a teacher trainer you will also need the interpersonal skills to be able to convey these ideas effectively. When working with teachers, pastoral care is just as important as knowing the intimate details of how to teach, so good people skills are essential. Dealing with difficult situations, creating rapport with your trainees and getting the most from your teachers are all vital aspects of this role.

4. Am I able to convey new knowledge and concepts clearly?

This is an important skill for teachers, who often need to be able to clarify complicated language points to language learners of different levels or backgrounds. It is also a skill that is necessary for a teacher trainer. However, there are some differences. Being able to clarify a language point to a low-level language learner can be a challenge, but trying to clarify the same language point to an inexperienced yet competent user of English, who may have little understanding of how English works, is quite different. As a trainer, you need to be careful not to patronise the teacher, while at the same time not over-complicate your explanations. Teachers not only need to understand how language works – which in some cases they might not – but they also need to know how to manage learners, how to correct errors and how to create rapport. For more information about how to aid teachers in managing the learning process, see Unit 15.

5. Am I able to deal with stress and tight deadlines?

If you have ever taught students on high-stakes exams courses such as IELTS, you'll know how stressful it can be. Similarly, a teacher training course, particularly one that results in a teaching qualification and involves teaching practice, can be demanding for the trainer as well as the trainees. Do you think you can work effectively with people who may be very stressed and emotional, but who need support, help and advice? Can you bring out the best in these people when they are under pressure, without making the situation worse? Teacher training courses can involve a certain amount of stress for the trainers, too. Are you prepared for this and can you work under such circumstances?

6. Am I prepared to work long hours?

As a teacher trainer you may sometimes have to work long and unsocial hours. For example, you could be observing teaching practice in the morning, giving feedback at lunchtime, delivering an input session in the afternoon and then marking assignments in the evening. This requires stamina and resilience.

7. Do I know what support is available?

If your school wants you to become a teacher trainer, it is likely that they will support you with time, resources and perhaps a mentor. On the other hand, if your school is not able to do this, you will have to find the support yourself. For example, think about a teacher training course you could do. A simple search on the internet will reveal what courses are available in your local area. If none are available, you may be able to take a course online. Consider the idea of supporting yourself carefully, as it can be a costly endeavour to become a trainer. See Unit 2 for more on routes into teacher training.

8. Do I know what teacher trainers do?

Read books and resources such as this one to find out what teacher trainers do. You could also attend relevant events and speak to people who are already working in the role. This will give you a different perspective from the one that is available in books, including the lowdown on the nitty-gritty of the daily duties expected of you and the realities of the job. As an extension of this, you could request to shadow a trainer informally, perhaps by observing them giving feedback or by watching them deliver an input session. This insight into the life of a teacher trainer may be invaluable in helping you to decide whether it's something you could imagine yourself doing.

9. Do I have good organisational skills?

As a teacher trainer, it is important to be organised and to have good time management skills. Marking assignments, checking lesson plans, meeting trainees to discuss their lessons and delivering input sessions all involve deadlines, and these in turn require good organisational skills. You will also need to keep on top of any necessary paperwork. As well as the organisational skills required while working on an intensive course, a trainer will also need to plan ahead. You may, for example, have to plan another course while working on the current one. In some cases, you may be working on more than one course at the same time. If you decide to go freelance (see Unit 50), you will have to plan your time so as to ensure that once one course finishes, you have another one lined up.

10. Am I ready for a steep learning curve?

You may have been teaching for several years and have a range of rich experience working in and outside the language classroom. However, working as a trainer requires new skills and knowledge as you take on this exciting role. These challenges may involve getting to grips with what is expected on the training course, remembering what it was like to be a trainee teacher and understanding the administrative side of the course, especially if it is an externally assessed one. If you are working with experienced teachers, you might also have to do a lot of reading before delivering input sessions and workshops.

“As you move into working as a teacher trainer, educator or mentor, I believe it's important to continue to learn something new (whether a language, a skill or something else), to teach language classes at different levels, and to stay humble and helpful.”

Tessa Woodward. The Editor, *The Teacher Trainer*. UK

10 routes into teacher training

Your route into teacher training will depend on the context in which you find yourself. Some of these are accidental, some require a conscious decision to make the next step; in other cases, the role might be thrust upon you. This unit looks at some possible routes to becoming a teacher trainer.

1. The managerial route

If you take on a more senior teaching role, such as being an assistant director of studies, senior teacher or coordinator, you will probably be expected to observe other, perhaps less experienced, teachers. This may come about as part of an appraisal system or for quality assurance, but part of the role will probably involve offering support and advice to teachers on both planning and delivering their lessons. This is perhaps more of a route into teacher development than teacher education, but may lead to further teacher training opportunities in the future.

2. The 'school needs a teacher trainer' route

This can be an accidental route into teacher training. Essentially, it means being in the right place at the right time. For example, you might be working for a language school that suddenly decides it wants to offer teacher training courses and needs an experienced and current member of staff to run these. Since you fit the bill, you are given the job.

3. The 'do you have any ideas for my lesson?' route

Another accidental route into teacher training comes about when an experienced teacher regularly finds themselves in the position of being asked by their colleagues for workable teaching ideas. This usually happens because they have a reputation for being a good teacher, or because they know where to find up-to-date, engaging resources and materials. Although this may not lead to a teacher training position in itself, it does show that you have a good knowledge of teaching and that you can help others develop their ideas and knowledge.

4. The mentor route

An extension of the above is when an experienced teacher takes on a mentoring role in which they are tasked with supporting a newer member of staff. Since this role entails supporting a teacher with their development and requires many of the same qualities involved in teacher training, it is a natural route into more formal teacher training. For more on mentoring, see Unit 45.

5. The teacher development route

If you work at a school that is particularly committed to teacher development, you could offer to run a series of training workshops. And if you work for a school that is not so teacher-development-friendly, perhaps offer to run some sessions anyway. Running workshops allows you not only to share your knowledge of teaching with other teachers, but also to have the experience of leading an input session.

6. The formal trainer-in-training route

Completing a formal trainer-in-training programme for an accredited external provider (such as Cambridge or Trinity) is perhaps the most direct way to become a teacher trainer. Taking this route is a lot easier if the school you are working for is already an accredited teacher training centre and if they are looking for a new trainer. You may have to apply for the position, giving details of your experience and qualifications. Once you have been accepted for the role, you might initially have to shadow an experienced trainer before you are asked to lead an input session or give feedback following a teaching practice session.

7. The conscious route

Another direct way is to approach teacher training centres or institutions and ask them to take you on as a teacher trainer. You can also look for job advertisements for teacher trainers and apply for these. Although you may not initially be able to get a job working on an externally accredited course, you will see some advertisements for experienced teachers to work on in-house training courses. You are likely to find that there are fewer training jobs than teaching jobs advertised, so consider contacting schools individually to offer them your services.

8. The conference presenter route

Another way into teacher training, and one that also gives you experience of speaking to experienced teachers, is to present at conferences. Each year, most TEFL-related institutions, as well as many regional and international schools and groups, hold conferences, symposiums and other similar events. Putting in a proposal is not usually difficult. Your proposal could be about any aspect of teaching you are interested in, and which you think others will be keen to hear about, too. Another option is to present online via a webinar. For more on this, see Unit 50.

9. The 'I don't want to be a manager' route

For some, deciding to become a teacher trainer may be a more attractive alternative to a career progression into management. If you don't want to manage other people, moving into teacher training is another way in which you can challenge yourself and continue to develop professionally.

10. The ELT expert route

Many ELT professionals, thanks to being active online (e.g. via a blog, online forums or social media), attending and presenting at conferences, or being published in ELT magazines, become well known in the field. If this sounds like you, you may find that, sooner or later, you get approached to share your enthusiasm for teaching by working with other teachers. This route into teacher training may begin with your being asked to share your ideas at in-house teacher development sessions or to present at conferences. If you find you enjoy doing these things, you may seek opportunities and be asked to deliver bespoke teacher training courses or to work on accredited teacher training courses.

10 tips for new teacher trainers

If the two previous units have helped you decide that teacher training is for you, this unit will help you to get the most out of your new role and really enjoy it. Here are ten tips for new (and perhaps not-so-new) trainers.

1. Model good practice

The way you train your teachers will be seen as a model and is likely to be emulated in the classroom, especially by new teachers. This means that you should demonstrate good practice at all times to give your teachers ideas and suggestions they can use in their own classrooms.

2. Make sure you are familiar with the course

You need to be explicitly aware of the aims and learning outcomes of the course you are working on. This will help you guide the course participants towards getting the most from the course. If you are delivering a formal teacher-training qualification, make sure you are familiar with the course requirements, syllabus and assessment criteria – and that you know where to find this essential information easily. If, on the other hand, you are delivering a series of in-house workshops to a group of experienced teachers, consider what areas of teaching you want to help them to develop and why. For more on planning courses, see Units 4 and 5.

3. Familiarise yourself with core texts

If course participants are going to be required to read a number of set texts, you will also need to read them to get an overview of their contents. This will enable you to not only guide the trainees to further information, but also ensure that you are aware of what they are reading and perhaps why they do or say certain things. For entry-level courses, remember to exploit any key texts the trainees have been asked to buy pre-, during- or post-input session. With in-service teachers, refer them to relevant, up-to-date literature and encourage them to make links between theory and practice.

4. Brush up your knowledge of methodology and language

Know your subject. If you're working with pre-service trainees, go back to basics and remind yourself of what you didn't know when you started out, such as subject-specific terminology, how to present boardwork clearly, how to give effective instructions, grading language, and so on. Make sure your language awareness is up to scratch and that you are familiar with key approaches, procedures and techniques. Keep abreast of the latest developments in the field. Just like when you're teaching learners of English, consider how you can convey your knowledge to your trainees in a way that will be accessible and meaningful to them.

5. Get support and advice from other trainers

No matter what kind of course you are working on, always try to get tips from other trainers who have worked on this type of course before. You will probably have some suggestions that you could share with them, too. Create a bank of resources to allow you to share ideas on this and future courses. Another way to get support is to observe more experienced colleagues delivering an input session or giving feedback. Remember: experience and sharing count for a lot, so make sure you tap into this rich source.

6. Gain as much experience as possible

Just as it can be possible for teachers to get stuck in a rut, a trainer who is repeatedly training teachers in one context and on one course can also fail to develop or see the bigger picture. Therefore, if possible, try to train on a variety of courses and in different contexts. If you get the opportunity, work at different schools, deliver different course types (e.g. both pre-service and in-service) and experiment with different modes of delivery (e.g. full-time and part-time; face-to-face, purely online and blended). This will allow you to gain a wealth of varied experience and find out how things are done elsewhere.

7. Keep teaching

In an ideal world, even the most experienced teacher educators would teach as often as they can. Unfortunately, this is not always possible due to the demands of the role; there are many teacher trainers who, upon taking on the position, rarely, if at all, teach learners any more. However, if at all possible, try to continue teaching. This will give you credibility in your role, ensure you put into practice what you preach and help you to empathise when advising and supporting teachers.

8. Network

There are several online forums and groups aimed at teacher trainers; joining one or more of these is a great way to develop professionally and to get to know other like-minded people in the field. Develop an online presence by being active in forums and setting up a blog. This ensures you are aware of and able to discuss any topical issues and situations that may arise. Consider attending conferences where you will be able to meet other teacher educators, giving you an opportunity to share ideas and raise your profile.

9. Continue your own professional development

Just as your own professional development is key to a successful teaching career, the same is true once you are working as a teacher of teachers. Make the most of continuing professional development opportunities that come your way, both formal and informal. For more on continuing professional development, see Section 8.

10. Remember what it's like to be a trainee teacher

It is really important to remember your own route into teaching. How did you cope with this? Did you find it easy? Was it a challenge? It might be some time since you completed your initial teacher training qualification, and you may have forgotten what it is like to be a completely new and inexperienced teacher. Similarly, you may not have undertaken any formal teacher education courses for a while. Take a step back and empathise with your trainees. Remember what it was like to be overwhelmed with new ideas and information. By putting yourself in the shoes of your trainees, you will be able to better relate to the stress, pressure and, possibly, resistance to change that some of them may be feeling.

10 things to do before a course begins

Ensuring that candidates know exactly what your courses involve allows potential course participants to decide whether your course is the right fit for them. Before a course starts, there are several ways to help ensure that potential participants are able to find out as much about the course as possible. Giving them plenty of information about your courses early on ensures that they are both informed about the course and less likely to face any unpleasant surprises later on. Your role may not cover all of these aspects; however, having all of them in place will give your candidates some idea of what to expect.

1. Ensure your school's website is up to date

As internet searches are usually the first port of call for most prospective course participants, the information displayed on your school's website needs to be accurate and relevant. The kind of information a prospective candidate needs includes: course dates and times, fees, location, some information about the tutors, how to apply, and who to contact. Details of the contents of the course – assessment, aims, outcomes and a timetable – should also be available. If the course is an externally accredited one, it is a good idea to include links to the relevant course accreditor.

2. Provide testimonials from previous course participants

Prospective trainees should be made aware of the contents and challenges of the course in advance. Gaining an insight into the realities of the course from someone who has actually completed it ensures that new candidates know exactly what they are letting themselves in for. One way to do this is to video-record past trainees talking about their experience of the course, what they found challenging and what advice they would pass on to potential trainees. These recordings are then posted online or made available to new and potential trainees. Excerpts or selected quotes from the interviews could also be posted on the school's website.

3. Provide a straightforward application form

Once a candidate has decided that they want to apply for a course, the next step is for them to complete an initial 'expression of interest' form. An easily accessible application form gives every type of trainee – even those who are not particularly good with IT – the opportunity to apply for the course. The contents of the application form will vary depending on the course being advertised, but most will ask for personal details about the candidate, including their qualifications, relevant experience and reasons for taking the course. Again, if you are running an externally accredited course, it is essential to check the course requirements with the external body to ensure that only candidates who meet the requirements are allowed to proceed with their application.

4. Set pre-interview tasks



If you decide you would like to meet a potential candidate, you can give them several tasks to complete before the interview. These could involve some language-related tasks, perhaps a short explanation of why they want to take your course and, depending on the course in question, a short teaching demonstration to be delivered either to you or to a group of learners. If the course is blended, you could ask trainees to find out as much as they can about the course, or indeed to complete a webquest with guiding questions. This will allow you to ascertain potential trainees' level of IT knowledge. There is an example webquest on page 168 and some example pre-interview tasks on page 169.

5. Conduct an interview



Many teacher training courses involve a pre-course interview. This is a chance for an experienced trainer to meet the potential trainee and to allow both parties to ascertain whether the course is a good fit. In the interview, the trainee teacher can ask questions about the course, complete a language task or short piece of writing and, if relevant, teach a demonstration lesson. For some examples of interview questions to ask potential trainees, see page 172.

6. Provide a taste of the course

Once the interview is over, give the candidate a tour of the school, showing them where input sessions and teaching practice take place. Where possible, and to give potential candidates more of a feel for what ELT involves, have them observe part of a real lesson. This is especially important for pre-service trainees, who may not have experienced a language lesson for a long time, or who may have learnt languages in a very different manner. If this is not possible, consider sharing videos of lessons with tasks to complete.

7. Ask them to sign a declaration



At the end of a successful interview, it is a good idea to give the trainee teacher some key information about the course highlighting what is expected of them, and to ask them to sign a declaration to show they have understood. The contents of this declaration should reflect the contents of the course, and will include such items as 100% attendance, the number of hours of self-study, the assessment and the amount of support available. You will find an example declaration on page 173.

8. Pre-course communication

In the lead-up to a new course, trainees like to be kept informed about what they need to do beforehand, when the course begins, what they should expect on the first day, and so on. This communication could take place via email or online (see Tip 10 on page 25). During such communication, outline what they need to do to prepare, and what is expected of them. Also, try to put them at ease.

9. Pre-course tasks

Pre-course tasks can help to prepare trainees for the course. On pre-service courses, these may involve language awareness tasks or directed reading from core methodology books in order to provide a grounding in the subject. On in-service courses, teachers may be encouraged to reflect on their existing beliefs and practices, or to read more advanced literature in the field.

10. Virtual learning environment orientation

Even on face-to-face courses, setting up a virtual learning environment (VLE) can be a good way to manage tutor–trainee and trainee–trainee interaction. Popular platforms include Moodle and Google Classroom. Pre-course trainees (and trainers) are able to introduce themselves online before meeting face to face, and you can also post any important pre-course information and documentation here. Later in the course, it could be used as a repository for course materials and a medium for ongoing communication.

“TEFL tasters provide an opportunity for possible trainees to find out more about English language teaching and different courses without having to commit. It also helps the course provider to deal with FAQs and concerns early and efficiently, as well as a marketing tool for your courses. Keep them general, fun and avoid the 'hard sell'.”

Will Nash, Academic Director Teacher Training and Development, ELTC, University of Sheffield, UK

10 tips for planning courses

Planning a course can take some time, especially if you're doing it for the first time, or if it is new to you or your school. Although it is possible to adapt certain aspects of a course depending on your context and participants, some courses, such as four-week intensive pre-service courses, contain a number of fixed elements. Courses that are specially designed for a particular group of teachers will probably need a little more thought. Here are some ideas for making the planning process as smooth as possible.

1. Previous courses in your centre

If a course has been run at your school before, you could simply repeat the same model. This is a particularly useful option if it is the first time you are working on a course and you want to get to grips with the structure. You might decide that you want to tweak parts here and there – for example, the time of sessions, or the input covered – but if it ain't broke, then why fix it?

2. What works and what doesn't

Once you have run a course, it's a good idea to reflect on which parts were effective and which weren't. This could involve considering anything from the logistical areas of the course to the input delivered. You might find that some workshops weren't delivered early enough, or that you didn't give your trainees enough time to complete an assignment. If you gave your course participants on the previous course an end-of-course questionnaire, use this to reflect on possible changes from your participants' point of view. For more on finishing courses and getting feedback, see Section 8.

3. Ideas from other schools

If you have worked on similar training courses in other schools, think about what worked, and then incorporate these elements into your courses. However, remember that, although the training course might be similar, the context might be very different, so some aspects might not be transferable.

4. Dates and times

Consider whether the dates of the course are workable. For example, are there any clashes with festivals or holidays that might prevent attendance? Have you planned enough time to cover every topic you want to include? If the course is run at a language school, will there be any clashes with other lessons that might affect the availability of classrooms?

5. Trainers

Think about who is going to teach on your course. Do you have the right number of staff at your school? Are they suitably qualified or experienced to deliver the course you want? Are they available to do so? If your answer to any of these questions is no, you might need to hire externally.


6. The number of trainees

How many trainees are you expecting on the course? Knowing this will help you decide on the number of trainers you need, the size of the classrooms and how you organise teaching practice.


7. The aims of the course

When planning your course, don't forget what the aims are. A practical course with a teaching practice element for pre-service teachers will have very different aims to a language development course for a group of teachers with a couple of years' teaching experience. Ask yourself whether your proposed timetable meets the course aims. If the course is one that is externally validated by an examination board, there will be guidelines on what to include; you must ensure that you cover the core areas for it to be valid.

8. The needs of the trainees

 Probably the most important aspect of course design is to ensure that the course addresses the needs of its participants. On some courses, the needs of the trainees might be quite uniform; however, on others there could be a variety of needs. Consider how you are going to find out what these needs are before you design the course. For example, you could use a questionnaire, you could get participants to carry out some pre-course tasks (i.e. tasks focusing on language to assess their language awareness), or you could use the interview process to carry out a needs' analysis. There is an example needs analysis questionnaire for an in-service course on page 174. Unit 42 also contains ideas for working with trainees with different needs.

9. Timetable fit

 Most training courses are likely to include various different elements, such as teaching practice, trainer input, assignments, lesson planning, and feedback. When planning the course, consider how each part fits together: think of it like a jigsaw. For example, on pre-service courses with teaching practice, it would be logical to provide input on how to teach a grammar lesson before asking your trainees to try doing this. Consider, also, how focused your trainees will be on the course. If you are offering an intensive course with a practical element, it might not be a good idea to have input all day and then teaching practice in the evening, as this may result in trainees thinking about their upcoming lesson rather than focusing on your input. See page 175 for an example of a part-time and an intensive course outline.

10. The availability of learners for teaching practice

If your course includes teaching practice, think about who the learners will be and whether the students you need will be available to attend at the time you want. Learners who have jobs, for example, might not be able to attend during the day. It is generally a good idea to offer these lessons for free, or for a nominal amount. Offering free lessons could mean that you initially get a lot of interest, but then attendance might drop off. Asking for a small payment (perhaps even a refundable deposit based on a certain number of lessons being attended) usually means that your learners are more likely to continue attending. It's a good idea to have a dedicated administration person available to organise learners and free classes, as it can be a time-consuming task.

10 things to focus on at the beginning of a course

At the beginning of every course, whatever its mode of delivery, there are several things that you need to make trainees aware of. Some of these relate to academic content, such as completing written work or deadlines for preparing lesson plans, while others relate to housekeeping, and even to how to deal with emergency situations. Trainees may also have expectations about the course and it is important to manage these from the outset by being explicit about what the course entails, what level of support they will receive, and when they will receive this. Making it clear what is expected of both trainers and trainees helps to ensure the smooth running of the course.

1. Your availability

Many teacher trainers work on more than one course at a time. They might also be teachers themselves, with several classes throughout the week. And even if a trainer is only involved in one intensive teacher training course, they still need time to prepare input sessions, look at lesson plans – and eat! Therefore, letting trainees know your availability ensures that you are not disturbed in the middle of your lunch. This also applies to online or distance courses in which some trainers might not want to work at the weekend or in the evenings. If you tell trainees your office hours, they will be less likely to send you a barrage of emails on your day off.

2. The amount of support available

Be clear with your trainee teachers about how much support you are prepared to give them. This will depend on the type of course you are involved in, with pre-service trainees usually needing more support than teachers on in-service courses. The stage of the course might also determine how much support is available, with less support being available as the course progresses. Remember to consider each trainee teacher on an individual basis: some might need a lot more support than others.

3. Task completion and deadlines

Your trainees need to know the date by which they must have completed their work. Setting clear deadlines ensures that your trainees can plan their time more effectively. On some teacher training courses, there might be many tasks, such as lesson planning, writing assignments, reading, and possibly completing homework. Try to ensure that deadlines for several tasks do not all fall at the same time.

4. Aims of the course and assessment

Although many teacher training courses assess teachers by how well they perform in a practical component of the course, not all do: some courses are more theoretical and some focus on preparing candidates for some form of written examination. Make it clear to trainees how they will be assessed on the course, and explain what elements count towards their assessment and what criteria you will be using. Note that assessment is not usually the only aim of an assessed course; there will also be an element of teacher development. The main aim of courses that do not include any form of assessment is for their participants to develop in terms of teaching or in terms of knowledge about teaching techniques and concepts. Making the aims of the course explicit allows trainees to consider their progress at the end of the course and hopefully – if formal assessment is included – not become too obsessed with grades and marks.

5. Details of the course timetable and attendance

Course participants should be informed of the structure and content of the course, as well as where they need to be and when. In addition, many teacher training courses require 100% attendance, especially in terms of input and teaching practice. As such, trainee teachers need to know what they should do if they have any unavoidable planned absences or if they are unable to attend due to illness. They also need to be made aware that they are expected to make up any work they miss.

6. Getting to know the building

Start the course with a tour of the building. Knowing the location of the classrooms, the toilets, the computer suites and, if there is one, the café, will help your trainees settle into their course without having to worry about the practicalities.

7. What to do in an emergency

It is vital that course participants know what to do in case of an emergency such as a fire. Having a clear evacuation plan in place is essential in any context. Inform your trainees what they need to do in case of a medical emergency or an accident. In most cases, this will simply involve informing them who the first aider is or, if one isn't available, who they should call. Obtain emergency contact details from each candidate and keep them on file for the duration of the course.

8. Plagiarism



Plagiarism and other unfair means of completing work are a growing problem, and trainees need to know that this will not be tolerated. Some centres, such as universities, have access to software like Turnitin, which trainees have to run their written work through before submitting it. It is also good practice to ask trainees to sign a declaration form, such as the one on page 177, informing them of the consequences of completing work by unfair means. For more on assignments and written tasks, see Section 6.

9. How to use the technology

If course participants will be using some form of technology, set aside time for training them in how to use it. Bringing trainees up to speed might be as simple as giving them access to the school's WiFi or informing them of their computer login details. If they will be expected to use a smartboard, you might need to give the trainees a tutorial on how to use the software.

10. Candidate agreement



Once all of the above has been completed, give the course participants a summary of what the course consists of (perhaps in the form of a list of bullet points) for them to sign. See page 178 for an example of a candidate agreement form. By doing this, you have a written record that the candidates have understood what the course entails and what is expected of them and their tutors.



Section 2: Input sessions

In this section, the term ‘input session’ is used to refer to any training session that involves working with other teachers. This type of session can come in various forms. It may be part of a practical course, or it may constitute a series of bespoke workshops, perhaps focusing on a particular theme or topic. It can also come in the form of a standalone teacher development session or a day set aside for training in a busy language school.

Input sessions can serve a number of purposes. For practising teachers, they can provide a space in which to discuss their current or relevant teaching practice and to share experiences with their peers. For novice or inexperienced teachers, they can be an opportunity for learning about how to teach – from both a practical and a theoretical point of view. They can also be a place to practise teaching techniques or an occasion for new ideas or developments in teaching to be introduced and discussed.

Input sessions are usually one of the first aspects of teacher training that a new trainer experiences (see Unit 2 for routes into teacher training), either as part of a larger course or as a standalone workshop. The aim of this section is to raise awareness of what an input session might involve, and to suggest some practical ideas for materials and activities that can be used.

Unit 7 begins by describing the different aspects of an input session, suggesting what to include in your workshops to ensure they are accessible to your trainees. Unit 8 considers how to plan a successful session, while the following unit suggests some ideas for delivering the sessions. Unit 10 then introduces some practical activities that you can use to break the ice and get to know your trainees at the beginning of a course.

Unit 11 suggests some ways we can start each input session by offering some effective warmers and lead-ins. This is followed by Unit 12, which considers sources of material we can use in an input session to engage our trainees and promote learning. The next three units in this section present a variety of ideas that can be used to teach skills, language and classroom management.

In the final two units in this section, we look at activities and tasks for use outside the training room: Unit 16 suggests activities that we can give our trainees to complete before an input session, while Unit 17 introduces some post-input session activities to promote consolidation and reflection.

10 key aspects of an input session

This unit provides an overview of what happens in an input session. It introduces some common features of an input session and suggests reasons why it is important to include these different components in your sessions. Many of the ideas introduced in this unit will be explored more fully in later units in this section.

1. Getting-to-know-you activities

In your first input session, just as in your first lesson with a new group of learners, it is essential to get to know your trainees. This not only creates rapport, but it can also help to manage expectations about the course and to model good practice. In later input sessions, it is important to continue getting to know your trainees in order to further develop relationships and to create a positive learning environment. For more on getting to know your trainees, see Unit 10.

2. Warmers

At the beginning of an input session, include an activity that will engage the trainees' interest and create a positive classroom atmosphere. As in language lessons, warmers can be used to recycle previous learning, to check understanding, to ask about other elements of the course or simply to get members of the group talking to each other. For more information and some examples of effective warmers, see Unit 11.

3. Lead-ins

Like warmers, lead-ins are used at the beginning of an input session to engage trainees' interest and to create a positive learning environment; however, unlike a warmer, the content of a lead-in is related to the topic of the workshop. For example, if you are planning to look at receptive skills in your workshop, the aim of your lead-in will be to engage the trainees' interest in receptive skills, usually in a fun and relatively easy way. For more information and some examples of effective lead-in tasks, see Unit 11.

4. Presentation materials

Presentation materials, which help to put the topic of an input session into a meaningful context, can take several forms. The trainer could have the trainees read a text (such as one from a coursebook or other ELT publication), get them to observe an experienced teacher, or give a demonstration or mini-lecture. Alternatively, materials can be supplied by the participants; for example, trainees could talk about some ideas they have researched. Whatever the source of the presentation materials, they should be used to describe or demonstrate good practice or to create discussion and reflection. On pre-service courses, presentation materials are sometimes seen as giving the trainees a workable model that they may wish to use initially in their own teaching. On courses for more experienced trainees, they are seen as a way to compare and contrast different approaches and methodologies. For more on the types of material that could be used in an input session, see Unit 12.

5. Analysis

Once trainees have received some form of presentation material, they should analyse it, discussing their reactions to it and how it could be implemented in their own teaching. For example, after watching a video observation of a reading lesson, they could discuss what they think the typical structure of a reading lesson is. Alternatively, after looking at various coursebooks and how they present language, they could discuss which coursebook would be more appropriate for their learners and why. This stage provides an opportunity for trainees to respond to the input by answering questions, making suggestions, offering ideas or alternatives and considering how the technique could be used in their own teaching. For some example activities focusing on analysis, see Units 13, 14 and 15.

6. Practice: peer-teaching

Probably the most important part of an input session – especially for pre-service teachers who may have never taught before – is the opportunity it gives trainees to practise what they have just learnt. Use the time available for trainees to put into practice what they have learnt by teaching each other. For example, if you have just been looking at how to present grammar, ask them to practise presenting language themselves. Trainees work together to plan the lesson and share ideas about what to include. They then teach another group of trainees. During the lesson, the trainees who are being ‘taught’ could also be given tasks to consider how they felt or how clear they thought the teacher’s classroom management was. For a peer teaching task example, see Tip 3 on page 50.

7. Practice: micro-teaching

Another way to put teaching skills into practice during the input session is to include micro-teaching. Micro-teaching is similar to peer-teaching, but it involves focusing on a single aspect of teaching (such as giving instructions) rather than teaching a complete activity or a whole lesson. It can give trainee teachers the opportunity to practise teacher skills, such as correcting errors and eliciting or clarifying language, without being assessed in a formal TP situation. It also gives trainees the opportunity to make mistakes and get feedback from both their peers and their trainer. There are examples of micro-teaching tasks in Units 13 to 15.

8. Reflection tasks

At the end of the input session, include some reflection tasks to encourage trainees to think about what they have just experienced, what they could use in their own teaching and what would they like to know more about. Reflection tasks are a good way for trainees to process the content of the input session. For examples of post-input reflection tasks, see Unit 17.

9. Consolidation tasks

Following an input session, it is important to give trainees consolidation tasks or homework. The benefits are the same as those for learners in a language lesson, namely the opportunity to deepen their knowledge by reviewing material at their own pace and further developing autonomy – something we hope trainees will instil in their future learners. For examples of consolidation tasks, see Unit 17.

10. Recycling learning

Unless you are delivering a one-off input session, consider how your workshops work together and complement each other so they do not stand in isolation. Sessions should constantly build on and recycle previous learning, and lay the foundations for subsequent input. In addition to providing opportunities for important recapping and reviewing, this provides continuity between the sessions and models good practice for language teaching. A series of sessions on the same topic can also be used to build on learning; for example, an early workshop might look at what lexis is, a further one might consider how to teach it, and another one might look at ways of recycling vocabulary. See Unit 8 for more on how input sessions should link with the rest of the course.

“The ideal input session marries theory and practice by helping trainees discover the what and why and demonstrates the how.”

Emma Jones, Munich Volkshochschule, Germany

10 questions to ask yourself when planning an input session

When you are planning an input session, consider how effective it is likely to be and whether it will be suitable for the target audience. Taking time to plan your workshop carefully means you will think about what your trainees' needs are, how you can meet those needs, what potential problems you might meet and how you can overcome them. Considering the following 10 questions as you plan your workshop will help to ensure you session is relevant, engaging and effective.

1. Are the aims of the input session appropriate?

As when planning a lesson, the first thing to do is to identify the aims of the session and to consider how these fit in with the overall aims of the course. You will need to take into account the course syllabus, the stage of the course and/or the needs of the trainees. On some external courses, many of the input sessions a trainer is required to deliver are dictated by an external provider. However, even on these types of courses there is the opportunity to create sessions to meet the diverse needs of your trainees. On non-accredited courses, there will be more opportunities to deliver bespoke workshops which both meet your trainees' specific needs and fit with the context in which you are working. For more on planning courses, see Unit 5. For more on meeting the needs of groups with varied needs, see Unit 42.

2. Do the tasks help to achieve the aims?

When planning your session, consider tasks and activities that will help meet the session's aims. Consider what the aims are and what your trainees need to know. For example, if you are delivering an input session to pre-service teachers on how to teach writing, you might include an example of a writing lesson, some writing tasks and some micro-teaching to provide practice. An input session on discourse analysis would probably include examples of different types of discourse with some ideas about how to use these texts with learners. Try not to have too many activities – as most input sessions last around 60 to 90 minutes, it can be easy to overload trainees with lots of information and handouts, which may go over their heads, leaving them confused and overwhelmed. For more on the key aspects of inputs sessions, see Unit 7.

3. Have you researched the area thoroughly?

Before an input session, ensure that you research the subject of the session thoroughly. This is important when dealing with all levels of trainee, but perhaps even more so when working with experienced teachers on an advanced teacher training course. When you are working on courses aimed at newer teachers, you should still reacquaint yourself with theories or ways of doing things if you have not recently practised them yourself. Finally, before the course, complete any background reading the trainees themselves have been expected to do – it can be embarrassing if you haven't done so and you are asked questions about a pre-input task. For more on pre-input tasks, see Unit 16.

4. Is there an appropriate balance of theory and practice?

Include activities that focus on both the theory of teaching and on practical activities. The balance can differ depending on the type of course you are working on. For example, although some background to ELT is important on pre-service courses, trainees do not need to be overwhelmed with too many different methods and approaches to language learning. On the other hand, for experienced teachers wishing to understand the link between theory and practice, there should be a more of a focus on the principles underpinning teaching methodology. Theoretical courses such as MAs will also involve a thorough overview of the theory, perhaps with some limited focus on practice, depending on whether the course has a practical element.

5. Are input sessions linked to the rest of the course?

If the input sessions you are delivering form part of a longer training course with different components, remember to link your input to the rest of the course by including references to these. For example, refer to (or, better still, elicit) how the current session builds on previous learning and how it will prepare trainees for future course content. If the trainees are required to do teaching practice, ask them to reflect on this; similarly, if they have a specific lesson-type coming up, cover this in your input session before they deliver that lesson. If your trainees have to complete assignments or self-study tasks, these can be set up in a workshop.

6. Is the content accessible to the audience?

Depending on who you are teaching and the course they are following, you need to decide how you are going to convey your knowledge to your trainees in an accessible, meaningful and engaging way. As experienced classroom teachers will already have a lot of knowledge about teaching, you can expect them to already be familiar with teaching terminology and ideas, and to be able to draw on their existing experience. However, some pre-service teachers could be overwhelmed by too much information and instead need a few clear examples and models. Therefore, take time to think about how you can make new concepts clear to them.

7. Does the input session exemplify good teaching?

As you plan, think about which teaching techniques you could use in your input session. Although the content may not be specifically focused on a teaching technique, still ensure that you demonstrate good models of teaching at all times. For example, in an input session on learner needs, demonstrate clear instructions when you ask your trainees to brainstorm different learner characteristics. Similarly, when eliciting answers from trainees, model a variety of techniques for getting feedback. Even though the 'audience' in your input session is different from the one you have when you teach, using the same techniques that you use with learners will give your trainees clear models of good practice that they can emulate.

8. Is there a list of points to highlight during feedback?

When you are giving an input session and are focused in the moment, it is easy to forget to cover something. Before an input session, make a list of points you want to cover during the session. Note that these points are not the same as aims. For example, in a session for inexperienced teachers on reading, your aim might be to exemplify the structure of a basic reading lesson and to give your trainees practice in teaching one themselves. Your list of things that trainees need to know about might include, for example, setting a gist reading task before a detailed reading task and giving and checking instructions before handing out the text. You could include such reminders in your trainer's notes (see Tip 9 below) so as not to forget the most important elements of the input session.

9. Could another trainer deliver it?

To ensure another trainer would be able to deliver your input session, consider including teacher's notes to accompany your material. These notes may include instructions about how to deliver the session, including aspects of classroom management such as pairwork or groupwork, as well as an answer key and approximate timings for each stage. This is particularly useful if, for some reason, you are unable to deliver your session and another trainer has to cover you.

10. Is there a takeaway?

It is a good idea to give your trainees something concrete to take away from your input sessions, i.e. something they can instantly apply to their own teaching. No matter what the focus or aim of your input session is, try to give the participants some practical ideas, activities or suggestions that they can immediately put into practice. As trainees can be under a lot of pressure, they may not actually remember much from your session, so a takeaway might simply constitute a summary of the main points or a list of 'dos and don'ts'. For example, at the end of an input session on listening, 'dos' might include 'do provide gist listening before detailed listening' and 'do ensure the audio equipment is working', while 'don'ts' might include 'don't play the recording before clarifying your instructions'. An alternative to this is to write on the whiteboard at the end of an input session, 'What's your takeaway?' and then allow participants five minutes to discuss which ideas from the session they would like to use straight away. For more on encouraging trainees to reflect on the content of input sessions, see Unit 17.

"As an online teacher trainer, I always need an answer to the question: 'What is my contingency plan if the technology fails?'"

Jude Richardson, Oxford Education Consulting

10 tips for delivering effective sessions

As well as ensuring that you plan your input session thoroughly (see Unit 8), it is also essential that you deliver your workshops effectively. Many of the suggestions that you will read about in this unit describe techniques that would constitute an example of a good language lesson. They could also be used as advice to trainees when they are planning a lesson.

1. Model good practice

Give your trainees plenty of models of good teaching practice. This is especially important when you are working with inexperienced teachers, who may have a different understanding of what good practice means. It might even be the first time they have had to do certain teacher tasks, such as setting up activities or checking understanding of new concepts. These skills do not always come easily and, although trainees need as much practice as possible, they also need consistent models of how to do it. Even experienced teachers may have forgotten certain ways of doing things, so seeing you demonstrating these techniques may remind them of different ways of teaching and managing learning.

2. Provide variety

Ensure that you include variety when delivering an input session. Vary the ways in which you deliver information. Include a range of interaction patterns using groupwork and pairwork, whole-class activities, getting trainees to work on their own, and so on. Provide trainees with input, but also elicit ideas from them. Ensure, also, that you vary your pace: having the same pace throughout may result in disengagement and boredom. With revision activities, tasks can be quite pacy; however, when you are introducing new concepts and difficult ideas, you may want to slow down a bit. In any case, ensure that you move at the trainees' pace, especially during reflection and discussion tasks. For more on reflection tasks, see Unit 17.

3. Be flexible

Although you might feel that you have planned the perfect input session, be aware of sticking too rigidly to your plan. Unexpected questions, tasks that take longer than planned or discussions that dry up can also impact on your plan. As with any teaching and learning situation, ultimately, you are there to teach your learners (i.e. your trainees) and not your plan, so be prepared to be as flexible as necessary. Consider including some flexi-stages, factoring in time and space for discussion and reflection. Finally, remember to respond to your trainees' needs as they appear. It is far better to react to essential and important situations than to ignore them in an effort to teach to the plan.

4. Create a positive learning environment

Just as we want to ensure that our learners are involved in a lesson, we also want our trainees to be engaged in our input sessions. While the use of lectures and other forms of telling are sound tools to be used in input sessions, they are not the only ones. Skimping on groupwork, elicitation and feedback could result in a lack of engagement. By involving your trainees as much as possible, you will find that they are more likely to want to continue being part of the course. Keep in mind their needs, listen to their answers, respond to their questions and give your attention to everyone in the training room. Finally, remember to use your trainees' names.

5. Make things explicit

Let your trainees know why you are doing things in a certain way and get them to think about the rationale behind the tasks you give them to do. For example, why do we monitor? You could tell your trainees the answer or, better still, elicit ideas from them about what constitutes good practice. It can be very easy to assume that certain aspects of teaching are common sense, but some inexperienced trainees may not be able to see this. More experienced teachers may have forgotten, or even be unaware of, the rationale behind many teaching practices. Part of your job as a trainer is to ensure that your trainees gain an understanding of why, as teachers, we do certain things.

6. Allow time to reflect

Rushing through tasks can be overwhelming and confusing for trainees and, to a certain extent, trainers themselves. By giving trainee teachers some breathing space, you are allowing them time to think about what they have done and learnt, and how they can apply this in their own classrooms. Giving your trainees space to exchange ideas will help them to put into practice the contents of your session. See Unit 17 for more on this.

7. Give trainees lots of comprehensible input

When working with experienced teachers, you may find that a lot of the material you are working with is quite academic and sometimes difficult to understand. If this is the case, break the tasks down into more comprehensible ideas and activities. That way your trainees are more likely to understand and retain the message. Pre-service trainees, who may be overwhelmed with the number of new ideas coming their way, will also benefit from such an approach. For more on different types of material that can be used in an input session, see Unit 12.

8. Include things that you do

As well as exemplifying teacher qualities, skills and procedures that are generally considered good practice, it is also a good idea to demonstrate less conventional techniques that you have found to work for you. Ensure that, where possible, you justify your activities and tasks, drawing on experience or research. In a similar vein, avoid doing things that you wouldn't naturally do in the classroom as this may come across as contrived or unnatural.

9. Borrow ideas

Asking your colleagues to share their session plans with you is an excellent way to not only save time planning and preparing a workshop that already exists, but also to see how other trainers prepare. For example, they might approach a session from a different angle or they might include different task types and activities. Instead of using their session wholesale, you might decide to borrow just some of the tasks – it can sometimes be quite difficult to deliver an input session prepared by someone else, especially if their style is different from yours. Instead of using a fellow trainer's plan, another option might be to speak to them about their session to get ideas. If no other trainers are available in your area, you could use networking websites or social media channels to exchange ideas.

10. Reflect

After you have delivered an input session, think about what went well and what didn't. If something went well, you might want to try the same activity next time – although be aware that the next group of trainees might have different needs. If something didn't go well, think about why this was the case: was it because you didn't prepare the session well, or was it because it wasn't appropriate for your trainees? It may simply be that the trainees were tired or more focused on their upcoming teaching practice. As well as reflecting on your own practices, it is a good idea to get feedback from your trainees: this could be in the form of an informal chat with one or two of them after a workshop or through a more formal questionnaire at the end of the course. For more on finishing courses, see Section 8.

“Once you've become a trainer, it can be easy to slip into routines. Keep questioning what you're doing and reflecting on the training you're giving to ensure that you stay up to date with developments in the field.”

Sandy Millin, IH Bydgoszcz, Poland