

Big Picture Resource Kit

Planning a course around what your learners want to be able to do · ECALA Professional Development

This kit supports the Big Picture: Beyond Individual Lesson Planning session. Every file is editable: change the topics, examples and wording to fit your learners and program.

Resource	What it's for	When to use it
01 Icebreaker Cards	Six low-stakes activities to learn names and build a welcoming group. Each card has an online version and a beginner tip.	Sessions 1–3
02 Needs Assessment	Find out what learners want and need to learn. Standard and low-text (picture) versions, plus an instructor tally sheet.	Sessions 1–3
03 Goal Setting	Learners set one course goal and plan steps. Standard (SMART) and low-text versions.	Sessions 3–4, check in at midpoint
04 Self-Reflection	Exit tickets, an “I can...” checklist, and an end-of-unit reflection.	Every session and end of each unit
05 First-Unit Plan	A ready-to-run plan for Unit 1: getting to know learners and planning together.	Before teaching begins
06 Course Skeleton & Unit Menu	Plan a course with a fixed first unit, learner-chosen middle units and a fixed final unit.	Before teaching, then update after the needs assessment
07 Writing Learner Objectives	Turn topics into “Learners will be able to...” objectives, with examples across programs.	While planning each unit

Standard and low-text versions

Worksheets for learners come in two versions:

- **Standard:** for learners who read and write with some confidence.
- **Low-text:** larger print, pictures and symbols, and space to circle, tick or draw. Use it with beginner EAL learners, literacy learners and learners new to computers.

Tip: pictures in the low-text versions are symbols. Swap in photos or clip art that match your learners' lives if you can.

Using the kit online

- Share a worksheet on screen and have learners answer aloud, in the chat, or on a shared whiteboard.
- For learners with low digital skills, keep it on paper: they hold their page up to the camera, or send a photo.
- Use polls, reactions or a dot vote on a whiteboard for needs assessment choices.

Icebreaker Cards

Six ways to learn names and build a welcoming group · in person, online and for beginners

Show Us Something

5–10 min

How it works

- Everyone finds one object near them that they used today.
- Each person shows it and says one sentence: what it is and what they use it for.
- Instructor goes first to model.

Online: Works as is. Camera off? Type it in the chat.

Beginner tip: Show the object and say one word. No reading or typing needed.

Snowball Name Game

10 min

How it works

- Pass a ball around the circle.
- Each person says the names of everyone before them, then adds their own.
- Write names on the board as you go.

Online: No ball: follow the order on screen. Type names in the chat as you go.

Beginner tip: Allow “Hi, I’m ____” only. Point to people as you say their names.

“Are You...?”

10 min

How it works

- Everyone writes their name on a slip of paper.
- Collect, mix and hand out the slips.
- Learners walk around asking “Are you ____?” to find the person on their slip.

Online: Send each person a classmate’s name by private chat. They ask “Are you ____?” in the main room.

Beginner tip: Practise the question “Are you ____?” together first.

Find Someone Who

15 min

How it works

- Give each learner the grid (next page).
- Learners ask each other the questions.
- When someone says yes, write their name in the box.

Online: Share the grid on screen. Learners unmute or use a reaction for “yes”; write names on a whiteboard.

Beginner tip: Use the picture grid. Learners can point, nod and write only first names.

This or That

5–10 min

How it works

- Call out two choices: “Tea or coffee?” “Morning or night?”
- Learners move to one side of the room, or hold up 1 or 2 fingers.
- Ask one or two people “Why?”

Online: Hold up 1 or 2 fingers on camera, or use a poll.

Beginner tip: Show a picture for each choice. No talking needed.

My Name Story

10–15 min

How it works

- Model first: tell the group something about your name.
- Learners share: What does your name mean? Who gave it to you? What do you like to be called?
- Practise saying each name correctly.

Online: Works as is. Add names and pronunciation notes to the chat.

Beginner tip: Frame: “My name is _____. Please call me _____.”

Find Someone Who

Ask your classmates. When someone says yes, write their name.

Find someone who...	Name	Find someone who...	Name
has a pet		likes to cook	
was born in the same month as you		speaks more than two languages	
takes the bus		has visited another province	
likes winter		plays a sport	
has a big family		drinks tea every day	

Picture version

Ask: "Do you ____?" Write the name.

 a pet Name: _____	 cooks Name: _____	 takes the bus Name: _____
 likes winter Name: _____	 plays sports Name: _____	 drinks tea Name: _____
 has a phone Name: _____	 likes music Name: _____	 big family Name: _____

What Do You Want to Learn?

Needs Assessment · Standard version

Name: _____ Date: _____

Part A: Choose your topics

Tick one box for each topic.

Topic	Very important	A little	Not now
Talking to people (neighbours, coworkers, strangers)	☐	☐	☐
Reading forms, letters and signs	☐	☐	☐
Writing notes, messages and emails	☐	☐	☐
Using a computer, tablet or smartphone	☐	☐	☐
Staying safe online	☐	☐	☐
Money: budgeting, banking, bills	☐	☐	☐
Numbers and math for everyday life	☐	☐	☐
Finding and keeping a job	☐	☐	☐
Health: appointments, medicine, pharmacy	☐	☐	☐
Housing: renting, landlords, repairs	☐	☐	☐
Getting around: transit, maps, driving	☐	☐	☐
Your child's school	☐	☐	☐
Community services and government	☐	☐	☐
Other: _____	☐	☐	☐

Part B: Tell me about you

1. Why are you taking this class?

2. Where do you need these skills most (work, home, family, community)?

3. What is hard for you right now?

4. How do you like to learn? (circle)

with a partner in a group on my own with pictures by doing / practising

Part C: My top 3

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

What Do You Want to Learn?

Needs Assessment · Low-text version

Name: _____

Circle 3 things you want to learn.

 Talking	 Forms	 Writing	 Computer
 Phone	 Money	 Numbers	 Work
 Health	 Housing	 Bus	 School

My top 3

1	2	3

Draw, write, or tell your teacher.

Needs Assessment: Instructor Tally & Class Ranking

Use this to turn learners' answers into your unit menu choices

Three-step process

1. **Individually:** learners mark their own top topics (Part A or the picture version).
2. **Small groups of 3:** learners discuss and agree on their group's top 3.
3. **Whole class:** groups share; the class ranks #1, #2, #3. Online: use a poll or dot vote.

Topic	Very important (count)	A little (count)	Group top 3 (tick)	Class rank
Talking to people (neighbours, coworkers, strangers)				
Reading forms, letters and signs				
Writing notes, messages and emails				
Using a computer, tablet or smartphone				
Staying safe online				
Money: budgeting, banking, bills				
Numbers and math for everyday life				
Finding and keeping a job				
Health: appointments, medicine, pharmacy				
Housing: renting, landlords, repairs				
Getting around: transit, maps, driving				
Your child's school				
Community services and government				

Notes about this group

Strengths, experiences, needs I noticed, things to follow up on:

If many learners join late, repeat the needs assessment at the midpoint of the course.

My Goals

Goal Setting · Standard version

Name: _____ Date: _____

My big goal

What is your main long-term goal (for work, family, study, or life)?

Why is this goal important to you?

My goal for this course

By the end of this course, I want to be able to...

Check your goal:

	Ask yourself	Yes?
Specific	Is it clear what I want to do?	☐
Measurable	How will I know I did it?	☐
Attainable	Can I do this with help and practice?	☐
Realistic	Does it fit my life right now?	☐
Timely	When will I do it by?	☐

How I will get there

Steps I will take:

Who or what can help me? _____

Check-in

	Date	How am I doing? (circle)
Midpoint		  
End of course		  

My Goal

Goal Setting · Low-text version

Name: _____

1. My goal is about... (circle)

 Work	 Family	 Health	 Computer
 Money	 Reading	 Talking	 Home

2. I want to be able to...

3. Draw your goal.

How am I doing? 🙄 😐 😊

Exit Tickets

Quick reflection at the end of a session · low-text · cut along the middle

Exit Ticket **Name:** _____

Today I feel: 😞 😐 😊

One thing I learned today (write or draw):

A question I still have:

Exit Ticket **Name:** _____

Today I feel: 😞 😐 😊

One thing I learned today (write or draw):

A question I still have:

"I Can..." Checklist

Write 3–6 "I can" statements from your unit objectives or learners' goals. Learners tick where they are.

Name: _____ Unit: _____

I can...	Not yet	Getting there	Yes!
Example: I can send an email with a photo attached.	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐

Picture version

I can...			

What I Learned in This Unit

End-of-unit reflection · Standard version

Name: _____ Unit: _____

Before you start: review what we covered in this unit together as a class.

Part 1: Questions

1. What was the most useful thing I learned?

2. How can I use it outside of class?

3. My favourite activity was _____ because...

4. What improved the most for me?

5. What do I want to work on next?

6. Rate yourself:

	1	2	3	4	5
My participation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My attendance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Progress on my goal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Part 2: Paragraph (optional)

Put your answers together into one short paragraph about your learning.

First-Unit Plan

Unit 1: Getting to Know You and Planning Together · the same in every course. It builds the group and gives you what you need to plan the rest.

Why this unit comes first

- Adults need to be involved in planning and evaluating their learning (Knowles).
- You only have these learners for one course, so get to know them quickly and on purpose.
- The needs assessment results become the units learners choose for the middle of the course.

Session-by-session plan

Session	Activities	Kit resources	What you learn about learners
1	Name icebreaker (Show Us Something or Snowball). Introduce the course: “we’ll plan it together.” Needs assessment Part A, individually.	01 Icebreakers 02 Needs Assessment	Names, comfort level, first topic priorities
2	Find Someone Who. Life story activity (Identity Card or Tree of Life). Needs assessment in groups of 3.	01 Icebreakers 02 Needs Assessment	Backgrounds, strengths, experiences
3	Class ranking of topics (dot vote or poll). Introduce goals: short-term vs long-term, SMART.	02 Tally sheet 03 Goal Setting	The class’s unit choices
4	Goal-setting worksheet. Introduce reflection: why it matters; practise as a class. First exit ticket.	03 Goal Setting 04 Exit Ticket	Individual goals
End of unit	Review activity (quiz or game). End-of-unit reflection. Share the course plan built from learners’ choices.	04 Self-Reflection 06 Course Skeleton	What learners took from Unit 1

Sessions are about 2 hours. For a short course (6–8 sessions), combine sessions 1–2 and 3–4 so Unit 1 takes 2 sessions.

Adapting it

Learners	Try this
Beginner EAL	Use the picture versions. Model everything first. Allow home language in pairs.
Literacy learners	Keep writing short: circle, tick, draw. Read questions aloud.
Basic digital skills	Use paper first. Introduce one digital tool at a time (e.g., a poll) with a demo.
Online classes	Use the online version on each icebreaker card. Use a whiteboard or poll for voting.

Before session 1

- ☐ Print or share the icebreaker grid and needs assessment (both versions).
- ☐ Draft your unit menu (06) so you know what learners can choose from.
- ☐ Prepare a whiteboard, poll or dot-vote sheet for the class ranking.
- ☐ Copy exit tickets for every session.

Course Skeleton & Unit Menu

Fixed first unit → learner-chosen middle units → fixed final unit

Course / program		Sessions (number × length)	
Learners (level, program)		Required outcomes (if any)	

Step 1: My unit menu (draft before the course, 4–6 units I can teach well)

#	Unit (theme)	Learners will be able to...	Real-world end task	Votes
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

After the needs assessment: record the class votes and pick the top 2–4 units.

Course Map

Fill in after learners choose their units. Plan for about 80% of your sessions and keep a flex session.

Week / Session	Unit	Focus	Objective it serves	Checkpoint (how I'll know)
	Unit 1 (fixed): Getting to know you	Icebreakers, life story, needs assessment, goals		Needs assessment + goals done
	Unit 1 (fixed)			
	Chosen unit #1			
	Chosen unit #1			
	Chosen unit #2			
	Chosen unit #2			
	Flex session	Catch-up, review, or learner request		
	Chosen unit #3			
	Chosen unit #3			
	Final unit (fixed)	Review, reflection against goals, next steps		End-of-unit reflection

Flex points: if... then...

If the checkpoint shows...	Then I will...

Writing Learner Objectives

Start with one question: “What do you want your learners to be able to do?”

From topic to “able to do”

Topic only (hard to see)	Able to do (you can watch it happen)
Learn about banking	Learners can read a bank statement and spot an error.
Understand the health system	Learners can book a doctor’s appointment.
Computer skills	Learners can log in and join a video call.

Three checks for every objective

- **Could you see it happen?** If you can’t watch or hear a learner do it, rewrite it.
- **Does it connect to learners’ lives?** Tie it to a real task outside the classroom.
- **Is it realistic in the time you have?** One unit usually = 1–2 objectives.

Words to use and avoid

Use action words	Avoid (hard to see)
read · fill in · ask · tell · write · send · find · book · compare · choose · explain · calculate · describe · log in	understand · know · learn about · be aware of · be familiar with · appreciate

Examples across programs

Program	Topic	Learners will be able to...
Digital skills	Email	send an email with a photo attached.
Digital skills	Online safety	spot three signs of a scam text message.
EAL / ESL	Health	book a doctor’s appointment by phone.
EAL / ESL	Work	answer three common job interview questions.
Literacy	Medicine	read the instructions on a medication label.
Literacy	Forms	fill in a school permission form for their child.
Numeracy	Shopping	compare two phone plans and choose the cheaper one.
Numeracy	Banking	read a bank statement and spot an error.

Your turn

Topic from my course	Learners will be able to...