

THE 13-SLIDE BLUEPRINT

THE SHAPE OF EVERY LESSON
+ THE TIMING BEHIND IT



BY DAVID & BRODI COLE



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INTRODUCTION

You do not need more ideas. You need a shape.

Most online lessons do not fail on content. They fail on order. A strong activity in the wrong slot loses the student. A vocabulary set with no comprehension check leaves you guessing about what actually landed.

After years of teaching ESL online and building a library of more than 600 lessons, we kept arriving at the same pattern. Thirteen slides, same order, every time. It holds for a 25-minute private class and for a 50-minute group. It holds for A1 children and for adult exam prep.

This book is that pattern, the timing that goes with it, and the production rules that separate a lesson that feels professional from one that feels thrown together.

Use it to build your own lessons. Or use it to judge the lessons you already teach from, including ours.



THE 13-SLIDE BLUEPRINT

WHY ORDER BEATS CONTENT

Every lesson we publish follows the same order. The number of slides inside each section changes with the level and the length of the class. The order does not.

The pattern does three things.

It front-loads the language your student will need before you ask them to use it.

It checks understanding twice, so you find the gap during the lesson instead of after it.

And it ends the same way every time, which is what makes a class feel calm and predictable to a young learner.

Once you have built a few, a lesson in this shape takes about an hour. The next page is the whole blueprint on one page. Print it, or keep it open while you build.

The whole thing on one page. Adjust the slide count inside each section. Keep the sequence.

- ✓ 1. Branding
- ✓ 2. Title / Welcome
- ✓ 3. Lesson Concept List
- ✓ 4. Ice Breaker (song, questions)
- ✓ 5. Vocabulary
- ✓ 6. Comprehension Check
- ✓ 7. Bulk Content (phonics, grammar, math)
- ✓ 8. Comprehension Check (each type)
- ✓ 9. Practice Activities
- ✓ 10. Wrap Up
- ✓ 11. Goodbye (repeat your song)
- ✓ 12. Bonus Activities, if any
- ✓ 13. Credits, including your name

Sections 5 to 8 are the body of the lesson. Everything before them exists to make those four slides land, and everything after them exists to make the student want to come back.

SLIDES 1 TO 4: THE OPENING

These four slides do one job: settle the student and tell them what is coming. Do not let them run long. Five minutes is plenty.

1. Branding. One slide with your name or logo. It signals a real class rather than a chat, and it matters more than teachers expect to the parent listening from the next room.
2. Title and welcome. Name the lesson in language the student already has. "Home and Life" beats "Unit 2: Domestic Vocabulary."
3. Lesson concept list. Three to seven items, no more. This is the promise you are making for the next 25 minutes, and it is what you return to in the wrap up.
4. Ice breaker. A song, two questions, a picture to describe. Its purpose is not fun. It is to get the student talking before they have to think, so the first English they produce is easy English.

SLIDE 5: VOCABULARY

Depending on the length of the lesson and the ability of your student, choose between three and seven words. Fewer words taught properly beats more words covered.

Give every word four things: the word, a plain definition, one simple example sentence, and an image. For beginners, keep the definition shorter than the example sentence.

Two or three images per word is the sweet spot. One picture teaches the word. Three teach the category, so the student learns apple rather than that particular red apple.

Say each word, and have the student say it, two to three times before moving on. The same rule applies to phonics. This is the most skipped step in the whole lesson, and it shows up later as a student who recognises a word but cannot produce it.

Then organise the words. For beginners, put them into a very short story so they appear in context. For stronger students, group them by similarity, or write a back-and-forth dialog of one or two sentences per turn.

SLIDES 6 AND 8: CHECK TWICE

Check once after vocabulary, and again after each type of bulk content you cover. This is the part that separates a lesson from a presentation.

A check can be small. A few questions about the story. A speaking task where the student explains a word back to you. A short quiz, online or offline. Visual prompts help students retell what happened in their own words.

What matters is that you learn something you did not already know. If the answer is always yes, the check is too easy and you are teaching blind.

SLIDE 7: BULK CONTENT, BETWEEN THE CHECKS

This is the phonics, grammar, or subject content the lesson is really about. It sits after vocabulary for a reason: the student now has the words to talk about it.

Keep each type separate, and check each one before you move to the next. A lesson covering both phonics and grammar needs two checks, not one at the end.

SLIDE 9: PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

Practice is where the student uses the language instead of receiving it. Keep the formats simple and repeatable, so you are never explaining the activity itself.

Fill in the blank, with the student typing or saying the missing word. For a harder version, have them write a full sentence using it.

Matching, pairing words to definitions or to images.

A short run of yes or no questions about the concepts you covered.

Games belong here too. Vocabulary tic tac toe, seek and find, a short video. Stronger or older students often enjoy crosswords.

If an activity needs more than one sentence of instruction, it is too complicated for this slot.

SLIDES 10 TO 13: THE CLOSE

10. Wrap up. Go back to the concept list from slide 3 and name what you covered. This takes thirty seconds, and it is the difference between a student who can tell a parent what they did today and one who cannot.

11. Goodbye. If you opened with a song, close with the same song. Predictable endings are calming, especially for young learners.

12. Bonus activities. Two or three extra slides after the goodbye. Students move faster than you expect, and dead air at the end of a paid class is expensive. Extra practice or one more comprehension check works.

13. Credits. Cite any images or content you do not own, and put your name on it. It is your work.

TIMING AND DELIVERY

Slides are not minutes. Start from these numbers and adjust to the student in front of you.

45 seconds to 1 minute per slide for beginners.

60 to 75 seconds per slide for mid-level students.

Upper levels run longer, depending on how much reading sits on each slide.

Run the arithmetic before you build. At roughly a minute a slide, a 25-minute class is closer to twenty-five slides than to thirteen. The blueprint is the sequence. The slide count inside each section is yours.

Always build two or three more slides than you think you need. A student who races through the material and hits an empty screen remembers it, and so does the person paying for the lesson.

Keep the production simple. A lesson should look finished, not busy.

Animate to emphasise, never to decorate. Slide transitions are fine. A hidden word revealed on click is useful. Everything zooming, spinning and flying in pulls attention off the learning objective.

On interactive platforms like Genially, learn the features properly. Drag and drop, and mouse-over to reveal, do the work that animation only pretends to do.

Keep it interactive even for adults. Adults do not want to be talked at any more than children do.

Be consistent. Choose backgrounds that go together, and use the same one on every slide. If this is your first lesson, do not go overboard.

Video needs a budget. Pauses for questions take real time, so five to seven minutes is often the entire video allowance for a 25-minute class. Shorter still if the video sits inside a slide as a quiz.

Images do more work than text in a language lesson. Treat them as content, not decoration.

Two or three images per vocabulary word, and vary them, so the student learns the concept rather than one specific picture.

Remove backgrounds when they are not part of the point. An orange basketball sitting on a white square on a black background teaches the student about the square. Use [remove.bg](#) for images and [unscreen.com](#) for gifs and video.

Stay on the right side of inspiration and plagiarism. Cite any image or quote you do not own, on the credits slide at the end. Sites like [Freepik](#) tell you exactly how to cite them.

Or avoid the question altogether with open-source imagery, where no credit is required. [Publicdomainvectors.org](#) is a good place to start, and [Canva](#), [Pexels](#), [Pixabay](#) and [Unsplash](#) all have strong free libraries.

CONCLUSION

The blueprint is not a rule. It is a default, so you stop re-deciding the shape of a lesson every time.

Build one this week and time yourself. Then build a second and notice how much faster it goes: you are choosing content, not structure.

And if you would rather not build them all yourself, that is the part we handle. A free account takes a moment.

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Every online lesson has a shape. Get the order right and the content takes care of itself. Get it wrong and a good activity in the wrong slot loses the student.

This is the 13-slide pattern behind every lesson we build, the timing that keeps students with you, and the production rules that make a lesson look finished.

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