

Differentiated Lesson Planning Template

Plan one strong lesson, then adjust support, practice, grouping, and challenge where evidence says students need something different.

Keep the goal in view: Differentiation is not 25 separate lesson plans. Start with a shared learning goal, use evidence of readiness and need, and make only the adjustments that help students reach it.

1. Start With the Learning

Learning objective What should students know, understand, or be able to do? 	Success criteria What would convincing evidence of success look like?
Essential prerequisite knowledge What do students need to already know or be able to do? 	Evidence I already have What assessment, observation, work sample, or conversation informs this plan?

2. Anticipate Where Students May Need Something Different

Likely barriers or misconceptions Where are students most likely to get stuck - conceptually, linguistically, procedurally, or organizationally? 	Students who may need more challenge Where might some students already be ready to apply, extend, compare, create, or work more independently?
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3. Plan the Shared Core Lesson

Model / explain What will I make explicit? What example or worked model will I show? 	Guided practice What will students try with support before working more independently?
Student task What will every student actually do with the content? 	Check for understanding What quick evidence will tell me who is ready to move on and who needs another approach?

Differentiation Decisions

Choose adjustments because of a real instructional need - not because every student must receive something different.

4. Decide What to Adjust

Area	Keep the same	Possible adjustment	Who needs it / evidence
Content	Core concept / standard	Text complexity, vocabulary support, examples, background-building	
Process	Learning goal	Scaffold, chunking, guided practice, pacing, modality, partner support	
Product	Success criteria	Format, amount of support, complexity, audience, choice of demonstration	
Practice / Challenge	Essential skill	Additional practice, reduced scaffolds, extension, transfer, deeper application	

5. Flexible Grouping Plan

How will students be grouped today? Whole class, partners, mixed-readiness, temporary skill group, independent, teacher-led small group... 	Why this grouping? What evidence or task demand makes this grouping useful?
What will the teacher do? Who needs direct support, prompting, conferencing, or observation? 	What will other students do productively? What meaningful work can happen without waiting for the teacher?
When will groups change? What evidence will tell me that a student no longer needs this support or is ready for a different challenge? 	

6. Supports and Extensions

Temporary supports Examples: vocabulary preview, sentence frame, visual model, worked example, manipulatives, chunked directions, reduced task load when volume is not the goal. 	Extensions / deeper challenge Examples: justify, compare methods, transfer to a new context, create an example, critique reasoning, solve an unfamiliar problem, teach a peer.
Accessibility / unrelated barriers What can I remove or adjust so students can demonstrate the intended learning? 	Student choice Where can students make a meaningful choice without changing the learning target?

During and After the Lesson

Differentiation improves when the plan changes in response to evidence. Use this page to decide what happens next.

7. Mid-Lesson Decision Points

What I notice	Possible response	What happened next

8. End-of-Lesson Evidence

Ready to move on Who met the success criteria and can transfer or extend the learning? 	Needs more practice Who understands the idea but needs additional supported practice? 	Needs a different approach Who is still confused, and what might I change next time?
Evidence I will carry into the next lesson 		

9. Quick Reflection

Which adjustment actually helped students learn - and which one added complexity without much benefit?
Did any support become unnecessary? What can I fade or remove next time?
Did any student need more challenge, more time, a clearer model, or a different type of practice?
What is the smallest useful change I should make before teaching this lesson again?
Four reminders: Use evidence, keep groups flexible, preserve a shared learning goal when appropriate, and do not differentiate by fixed “learning styles.” Good differentiation should make learning more accessible or appropriately challenging - not make planning impossible.