

# Tools for Instructional Teams and Teachers



Creating Unit Plans

## Seven Steps for Developing a Unit Plan

Developing a unit plan can seem like an overwhelming task. But, we've outlined seven steps that you and your instructional team can follow to manage the process and to make sure that all your bases are covered. At the end, you will have a standards-aligned Unit Plan that includes SMART objectives, criteria to determine mastery of objectives, and assessments to measure mastery.

In this workbook, we provided you with a Unit Plan Template. This template provides a way to organize and align the components of the Unit Plan. It will be helpful as you follow along with this content.

Before we go into detail with each step, they are listed here for your review.

1. Identify the Units of Instruction that will be covered in a year.
2. Determine the concepts, principles, and skills that a unit will cover.
3. Identify the standards and benchmarks that apply to the grade level and unit topic.
4. Develop all objectives that clearly align to the selected standards and benchmarks.
5. Determine the best objective descriptors.
6. Consider the most appropriate criteria for mastery.
7. Develop pre/post test items that are clear, specific, and would provide evidence of mastery consistent with the established criteria.

### **Step 1: Identify the Units of Instruction**

Identifying the Units of Instruction for the year is a helpful way to organize all that has to be accomplished. It's a good, easy first step.

We've provided you with a "Defining Units of Instruction" template in your workbook to guide your team in listing all of the Units that will be covered for your subject and grade level.

### **Step 2: Determine the concepts, principles, and skills that a unit will cover**

Once the team has identified the units, list the concepts, principles, and skills that the unit will cover. Your district or state may have already done this work in the form of curriculum guides. If so, use them as your foundation.

### **Step 3: Identify the standards and benchmarks that apply to the grade level and unit topic**

The standards and benchmarks are established by the state or district and communicate what mastery of a particular concept or skill includes. They are the "skeleton" of the curriculum and will inform the development of objectives.

A Standard is a broad description of what students in a particular grade level should, at a minimum, know and be able to do.

A Benchmark is a more specific description of what students in multiple grade levels should, at a minimum, know and be able to do.

Use of the "Aligning Units to Standards" template helps Instructional Teams match Units of Instruction with the appropriate district or state standards and benchmarks.

### **Step 4: Develop all objectives that clearly align to the selected standards and benchmarks.**

This step is so important it has there is an entire Success Indicator dedicated to it. Using the benchmarks will help ensure that the objectives are standards-aligned. They will also assist instructional teams in:

- Determining what the "target" for learning within a grade level is
- Selecting the verb that defines exactly what students should be able to do at that grade level
- Determining the level of student action they expect
- Once these three points are defined, Instructional Teams are ready to formulate them into a TARGET objective.

A target objective is specific and:

- Aimed at a benchmark and appropriate to the grade level
- Specific enough that it can be taught and mastered within a week



- Expressed as, “The student will be able to...(insert observable or measurable student action)”
- Descriptive of the student’s performance behavior—what the student shows he/she knows or can do

Here’s one example of a well-written target objective:

*The student will be able to name the four primary directions on a navigational compass.* (This is an objective at the level of general knowledge).

#### **Step 5: Determine the best objective descriptors**

The objective descriptor is for recordkeeping. It allows a teacher/team to give identification of an aligned instructional objective in minimal words.

Target Objective: The student will be able to name the four primary directions on a navigational compass.

Objective Descriptor: name directions on compass

#### **Step 6: Consider the most appropriate criteria for mastery**

The objective states what the student will be able to do.

The criteria for mastery gives the conditions under which the objective will be met and the level of accuracy that is expected.

Target Objective: *The student will be able to name the four primary directions on a navigational compass.*

Criteria for mastery: *Given a blank compass face, the student will write the name of the four primary directions on the correct locations.*

If the student solves 8 out of 10 (80%) the teacher may decide that the student has mastered the objective but made a couple of calculation errors.

Other objectives may not leave room for error. For instance, if the objective is for students to write their name, the teacher may expect 100% accuracy.

#### **Step 7: Develop pre/post test items that are clear, specific, and would provide evidence of mastery consistent with the established criteria.**

There is one final step in the process: The development of pre- and post-tests to assess student mastery of standards-based objectives. The pre-test and the post-test are the same test; the difference is in the timing of their administration.

The pre-test is a quick assessment at the beginning of the unit or period of instruction to gauge each student’s readiness for an objective and inform the need for “leveled objectives” and/or assignments. The pre-test should not be graded.

The post-test is a way to get a quick read on students’ mastery after the completion of the unit or after completion of the period of instruction allotted for the objective. When instruction is aligned, teachers will have several other ways to determine mastery as well.

Between the pre-test and the post-test, students will complete a variety of learning activities and possibly other assessments. The results of the post-test may be graded, or included as part of larger graded tests.

To develop a pre and post-test item, let’s return to our target objective and criteria for mastery:

Target Objective: *The student will be able to label the four primary directions on a navigational compass.*

Criteria for Mastery: *Given a blank compass face, the student will write the name of the four primary directions on the correct locations.*

Pre-Test/Post-Test Item: *Mark the four primary directions on the blank compass face.*

Be sure to note that a pre/post test is Instructional Team created and may include both verbal and written questions and answers as appropriate to the grade level. It is one means for quickly checking each student’s readiness for a unit (pre-test) and mastery of unit objectives (post-test).



## Breaking the Code

In order to connect the components in aligning instruction to curriculum and standards, a system of codes and descriptors/titles is helpful.

Grade Level  
Subject  
Unit Sequence  
Objective Sequence  
Objective Level

# 3R01-01T

**Standard/Benchmark Code:** The code designated by the state or district for the standard/benchmark.

**Standard/Benchmark Descriptor:** Two to four words that describe the entire standard/benchmark.

**Unit Code:** Grade level, Subject, Sequence Number of Unit (example: 3R01 for third grade reading, first unit)

**Unit Title:** A phrase that describes the overall theme of the unit.

**Objective Code:** Unit Code plus a hyphen and a sequential number for each objective in the unit followed by a T, P, or E for Target, Prerequisite or Enhanced (example: 3R01-01T for third grade reading, first unit, first target objective). The Prerequisite and Enhanced levels for this objective would carry the same sequence number (3R01-01P for Prerequisite; 3R01-01E for Enhanced).

**Objective Descriptor:** Two to four words that describe the objective.



Unit Plan EXAMPLE

Page: 1

Grade Level: 3rd Subject: Reading Unit of Instruction Code: 3R01

Unit of Instruction Title: Effective Communication

Standard/ Benchmark (Code)	Target Objectives (with Objective Code Prefix)	Objective Descriptor	Criteria for Mastery	Pre-Test/ Post Test Items
A3	3R01-01T Construct proper sentences using correct grammar, punctuation, capitalization.	Sentence structure	When given a rubric that provides proper sentence structure, the student develops properly written sentences with 80% mastery.	1. Given a bank of vocabulary words, the student writes two proper sentences.
A3	3R01-02T Determine the appropriate use of imperative and exclamatory sentences.	Oral reading	The student marks the correct punctuation for imperative and exclamatory sentences with 80% mastery.	2. Given a variety of unmarked sentences, the student correctly marks and identifies sentence.



### Unit Plan Template

Page: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit of Instruction Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit of Instruction Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Standard/Benchmark (Code)	Target Objectives (with Objective Code Prefix)	Objective Descriptor	Criteria for Mastery	Pre-Test/ Post Test Items

