



## How to set up a Lesson Jam!

by Tom Heaven

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**Activity:** Collaborative Lesson Planning

**Participants:** Working language teachers and trainers (native and non-native)

**Time:** 2- 3 hours. See variations at end.

**Materials:** Pens, paper. Whiteboard.

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## Introduction

A lesson jam brings language teachers together to work on planning lessons. By bringing teachers together, expertise can be shared. The lesson planning process should also be fun and include stages for critical feedback, which is not always the case when planning alone. The aim of the lesson jam is also to help in breaking the isolation that teachers often feel and is an event organised by Berlin Language Worker Grassroots association (Berlin GAS).

## Preparation

1. First of all you need a group of four or more participants. The larger the group, the more you need to think about a suitable venue and refreshments.
2. Make sure that you have enough materials for all participants to write down their ideas.
3. You will need a stimulus for each group.

## Lesson Plan

A lesson jam is a platform for participants to work together in producing a lesson plan (one per group). You do not need to specify how the plan should look, what language levels it should address, for what type of English it should be suitable or how long the lesson should last. These are all decisions for the groups.

As facilitator you just need to follow these eight steps. (These have been changed slightly as a result of experience of the first lesson jam. See the variation section at the end).

1. Introduce the participants to the idea of the lesson jam and take any questions (10 mins)
2. Ask participants how they lesson plan when alone. Let them discuss in pairs first (5 mins) and then in groups of four (10 mins)
3. Allocate participants to groups. There should be an even number of groups (otherwise the fifth step, Brain Share will not work properly).

Introduce the stimulus. Each group has a stimulus. The stimulus is the word, object, sound or smell that will start the lesson planning process. It is just a stimulus and does not have to be used in the final lesson plan (which might take a radically different direction). The planning process might feel uncomfortable for some participants as they are used to goal-focused planning. As facilitator, try to calm any worries. It's okay for the goal to be 'fuzzy' at this stage.

4. Brain Jam. The participants have 30 minutes to brainstorm. During the first three to five minutes, they should generate ideas alone, without talking to anyone else. Make sure that



participants have plenty of pens and paper to make notes with. The rest of the time is spent brainstorming in groups. No concrete planning needs to take place in these 30 minutes - just ideas and possible themes.

5. Brain Share. After 30 minutes of brainstorming, each group joins with another group to get feedback on their ideas so far. One group presents their ideas to the other group for 15 minutes and then the roles are reversed. This part of the session lasts for 30 minutes.

6. Jam to Plan. After separating again into their original groups, each group decides on their best ideas from the first stages and turns them into a lesson plan that could be used by any one of the participants at a later date. The plan should be sufficiently self-explanatory. Flipchart paper is useful for this part of the session as the participants will present their plans in the next section. This part of the session lasts 45 minutes.

7. Lesson Plans. The groups have finished writing up their lesson plans and present them to the rest of the group. If there is enough time, it is good to encourage each group to teach a segment of their lesson to the group. Each group should be given at least 5 minutes to present.

8. Hand out evaluation forms

## **Tips and advice**

The vital sections are 3-7. The length for each section can be varied. For example the Brain Jam section might be cut to 20 mins. Leave plenty of time for the Jam to Plan section, though.

The discussion section (2) on lesson planning alone could be dropped, although it is a good way of getting participants talking to each other.

You might plan in an extra 20 minutes at the beginning for tea and biscuits and a chat/ ice breakers. This also accommodates any latecomers.

## **Follow up**

If lesson plans are not finished and ready to be photographed/ scanned ask willing participants to complete at home.

Upload lesson plans to a blog, wiki or other online location so that all participants can access all the plans from across the session.

## **Images**

'Apple'. Lesson Jam 13th September. Copyright Paul Walsh

