BRITISH SUB-AQUA CLUB

Instructor Training Scheme

PIE - Lesson Planning

Open Water Chief Examiner
Having already identified that the Practical Instructor Exam is a key assessment to becoming a BSAC Open Water Instructor I believe that proper planning and preparation for a lesson is equally key to a success lesson.

I hope that the guidance and examples below and the links from it will serve to advise all our members of what is involved in effective Planning and Preparation for any lesson and to ensure that they are successful when taking the exam.

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Planning and Preparation
The topic for the lesson you will teach for your assessment will be given you on the day of the event shortly before you are due to present it. It is therefore essential that you plan and prepare for the possible lessons you could be asked to teach. These lesson topics are drawn from the Diver Training Programme (DTP) up to and including Dive Leader, though you will not be expected to teach an entire lesson from the online Instructor Materials. bsac.com/irc

On the IFC and OWIC you will have planned a number of practical lessons with your tutor using the Lesson Planning Sheets provided and extracts from the BSAC Instructor Materials. On the OWIC you will also have seen these put into practice and received feedback on the successful elements of these lessons and guidance on how they can be further improved. This should have provided you with a starting point of 4 lesson plans (which will require some modification based on the feedback. The OWIC Student Notes also provide guidance on a range of possible topics and you should apply the same planning process to these lessons.

Example lesson plan

The planning sheet

The planning sheet is split up into ten different boxes with fairly obvious objectives for each box and this should help you work logically through the lesson plan.

Using the lesson 'Distance Line' as an example I completed a sample lesson plan as you might have done on the OWIC.
Taking each step in turn and explaining in a bit more detail:

1. Skill Elements
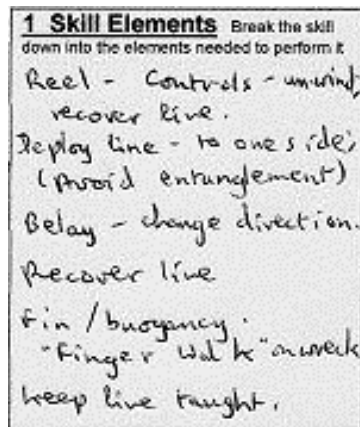
This box is for you to record the skill elements that make up the skill and you don't need to worry too much about structuring them at this stage as this comes with the next element.

There are a number of different methods of building this list but one of the simplest is 'Visualisation'. For this technique you visualise the skill in your mind and think about the actions you take and record them in box 1 to represent the skills required. A variation of this technique is 'Pantomime' where you physically act out the actions e.g. gripping and releasing an AAS. Having gathered together the key skill elements in this way then you can start to plan and organise:

2. Demonstrations

Depending on the lesson itself and how you identified the Skill Elements this may be a simple mapping across exercise or may require a bit of further thought. Either way this section allows you to structure the teaching steps of the lesson and get you to think about 'How' you do those demonstrations (e.g. you may need to ensure the students are on a particular side to see your demonstrations clearly?).
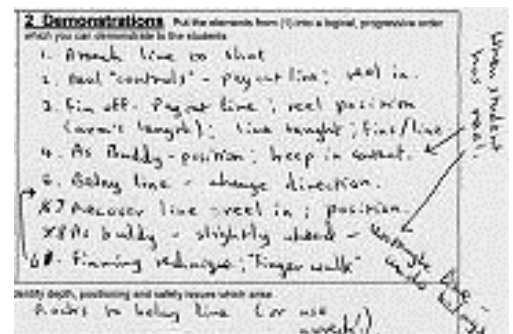

Remember that this is a working document and so don't worry if you later feel you need to reorganise the sequence or numbering of skills as I did with steps 6-8.

3. Lesson Site

Having worked out the planned steps you will have a much better idea of the type of location you need for a safe and successful lesson.

For this particular lesson I decided that I needed a reasonable depth and that because my students were of at least Ocean Diver standard then a depth of 4-10 m would be acceptable and would provide me with more options depending on the site available.

In light of my planned step one then it was implicit that I have a shot line to attach the distance line to and to navigate back to for lesson. Given the planned depth this was also an appropriate safety consideration to ensure students had a reference point to assist during the descent and ascent phases of the dive. I found it helpful to sketch the shot set up and reel/distance line on the plan both to remind me later and also to perhaps include a drawing on my slate to show to my students during the brief. I also gave some thought during this phase to the fact that I would require a site with some suitable objects to which I would be able to demonstrate belaying the line.

4 Entry Exit

Site considerations lead on naturally from the last point. Knowing the type of bottom and underwater features I need may lead me to choose a specific entry point to access what I need. Again given the level of the students a deep water entry would be appropriate and I should only need to give consideration to the safety aspects of such an entry (and subsequent exit) rather than different considerations given to a shore entry for a student's very early Open Water dives and training.

5 Kit up and Buddy Check

Again allowing for the relative experience of the student group I decided it was appropriate to monitor kitting up and to lead a group buddy check.

I have however added an important reminder to myself to conduct a 'Dry Run' of the reel mechanism and the use of the shot.
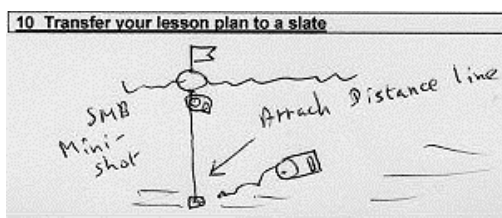
6 Descent and Ascent

My plan was to deploy the mini shot from the surface and my sketch roughly follows that in the shotline configurations information contained in the OWIC Student Notes. I also made a mental note to control the descent with a hand below the students and the ascent with a hand above. What I didn't consider or make a note of was the recovery of the mini shot at the end of the dive. Because of the difficulty in reeling in against the weight then hindsight has told me that I will require one student to pull up the weight whilst another winds in the loose line and then the whole group can recover back to shore.

7 Brief

The next step is to put together the Brief with the benefit of all the information previously considered. The Planning Sheet sets out the information using the Acronym SEEDS as an aid to ensuring that all relevant points are covered and I have used this to bullet out the key points

8 Debrief

Similar to the Brief the Planning Sheet sets out the information for the Debrief using the Acronym REAP as an aid to ensuring that all relevant points are covered and I have used this to bullet out the key points. The tendency is to assume that you cannot do this step until after the lesson; however I believe you can properly plan the majority of this in advance in the following way:

(R)eview List the steps you have covered during the lesson

(E)ncourage Emphasise the successful bits from the above steps

(A)ssess record in advance the typical faults you would expect from a lesson

(P)review Have the next logical lesson listed but if the lesson doesn't progress as far as you anticipated then list the remaining steps for the lesson as the starting point for the next lesson.

In particular advance consideration of the likely faults in a lesson will help you not only prepare for and perhaps avoid those faults arising in the first instance but also help you to anticipate and spot them easier should they occur and have a plan to correct them. The list does not have to be exhaustive but if you encounter one or two faults you had not anticipated it is a simple matter to add them to the list for the lesson and then permanently to your slate for future lessons.

9 Essential Criteria

An effective lesson, and consequently success on the PIE, is based on ensuring that your lesson contains

evidence of applying the relevant Essential criteria to the lesson. For a practical lesson we use **STEP** to remind us of these criteria. Use the checklist in box 9 and the more detailed Lesson Checklists used on the IFC & OWIC to ensure that the Essential Criteria are present. If they are and the lesson is effective then the minimum grade that can be achieved will be a Pass.

In particular make sure that your lesson has an adequate number of steps (2 Demonstrations) to show that your lesson has a series of steps that clearly illustrate Progression in the lesson.

10 Transfer your lesson plan to a slate

This is a step that frequently gets missed out and can lead to difficulites and confusion in a lesson. Using a slate is not cheating, nor is using one proof that you are not a good instructor; it is one of the essential tools of a good instructor.

I have transferred my notes from the planning sheet to a typed document for clarity of reading and could just print and laminate this for the lesson in question. However, I personally prefer to use a Waterproof notepad (more details below).

The slate contains the Brief but I have re-ordered SEEDS to Exercise, Equipment, Safety, Discipline and Signals as I find this a more logical sequence and more appropriate to my students. Each point to be made is a brief bullet just to remind me of the main points rather than written out in full because it is quite easy to get into a flow and then find it difficult to find the place again or get things out of sequence.

The SEEDS Brief also includes my notes for the Dry Run and I would aim to do this at this point of the Brief rather than completing the brief and then doing it.

Next the slate contains a list of the steps for the lesson itself. I find it invaluable to list these as it means that by having them with me I can refer to them as necessary should I forget what the next step is (again not cheating just being careful to be accurate). I can then also use the list after the lesson to refer the students to the steps we have covered and as a prompt for the next lessons.

Finally the Debrief is listed with space to add additional faults should any occur.

Slates / Waterproof Notebooks

There are a range of ways displaying information for your Brief Lesson steps and Debrief. These include laminated printed sheets, normal diver's slates of various shapes, sizes and styles and waterproof notebooks. My personal preference is to use a Waterproof Notebook as it provides up to 50 sheets of waterproof paper in a ring bound booklet. This allows me to keep a whole series of lesson notes permanently within the book but still have pages left for further lessons, to make notes in an examination or to simply draw sketches to illustrate a point.

The choice at the end of the day is up to you and what you are comfortable working with. However, one final point to bear in mind.

The BSAC produces a series of Prompt Slates for the Practical lessons for Ocean and Sport Diver that are valuable tools in teaching these qualifications. Candidates for the PIE might be tempted to try and use these notes for their PIE lesson but I would STRONGLY Advise against it. The Prompt Slates are designed for a different purpose, a complete lesson where a range of skills are taught and therefore the Brief and other notes are more general in their advice and structure and are not suitable for a lesson focusing on a specific skill.