Module 3: How to give inclusive instructions

🏁 Start here!

You have six sections to complete in Module 3:

● Introduction
● Principle 1: Prepare for instruction delivery
● Principle 2: Provide scaffolding
● Principle 3: Use narratives and advance organisers
● Apply the strategies
● Put it into practice

Then we recommend you set up a group discussion to:

● Reflect on the module

✏ Before you begin, we recommend that you get yourself a notebook for taking notes as you work through the toolkit.
Introduction

What’s Module 3 about?

Case study
Before we start, read the quote. Do you have any students in your class like Mateo?

👤 Mateo

Sometimes when I’m in a class, I get lost. I mix up the instructions, or do things in the wrong order as I usually only remember the first or last part of what I’m supposed to do.

I feel confused when the rest of the class understands what to do. I don’t know what I’m doing wrong!

💭 Why do we need to give more inclusive instructions?

The principles for giving clear instructions are the same in the online classroom as the traditional one, but learners may face different barriers in an online environment (e.g. teachers might struggle to read learner expressions through on a screen, or learners might not have the same opportunity to ask clarifying questions). Through a screen it can be more difficult to gauge whether something has been misunderstood, or if learners are on task.

Taking the time to prepare instruction delivery in advance, scaffolding tasks and using class outlines can help all learners to understand the upcoming tasks.

In this module, you’ll read three principles behind making your instructions more accessible and inclusive for all learners, and strategies to use in your upcoming classes. The strategies in this module are especially helpful for learners with attention or organisation challenges, who may struggle like Mateo to hold the instructions in their working memory.

📝 Are you ready to start?

Take out your notebook. As you go through this module, take notes on:

- What inclusive strategies you already use
- Why we recommend these strategies
- What other small improvements you can make to create a more inclusive practice in your classroom
Principles and strategies

Read three principles behind making your instructions more accessible and inclusive for all learners.

Principle 1: Prepare for instruction delivery

Before you begin this section make a note on the following questions:
- Do you find time to prepare your instructions in advance?
- If so, what kind of preparation do you do?

What is this principle?

When we haven't planned what to say regarding instructions and how to say it, we can compromise the success of the lesson! Taking a proactive approach to instruction delivery is a simple way to ensure your instructions are more inclusive.

While communication challenges can arise from the online learning environment, it can also offer opportunity for instruction delivery that may work in favour of some learners.

Prepare for instruction delivery by thinking in advance about the specific challenges your learners face and considering how to take advantage of online resources. Make notes about the possible barriers in your context (e.g. noisy environment, attention span, amount of information) and how you'll overcome them. Your strategy will differ if your learners are all present in the same remote location, vs if your learners are on individual devices.

How does this benefit our learners?

All learners will benefit from well considered instructions. Anticipating barriers like working memory difficulties, lack of focus or poor internet connection means we can plan strategies in advance.

How can you apply this in your online classroom?

- **Strategy 1**: Make use of any available technology
  - If demonstrating tasks on a browser, zoom in to highlight the relevant tasks
  - Customise your mouse pointer to be big and brightly coloured so that learners can see where you are pointing on the screen during instructions
  - Turn on live captions
  - Use speech-to-text software
  - Try filming your instructions and share with learners in advance

- **Strategy 2**: Make your delivery multisensory
  - Have a space where instructions are always visible. For example, ‘pin’ instructions to the top of the screen or put them in the chat
- Use electronic timers to show timings
- Use images and colours to make the message clear. When using colours, be consistent with their meaning and be aware of the impact on learners with vision impairments. For example, an image of a clock with different minute sections coloured differently
- Learners with attention difficulties can try to hold something in their hands to fiddle with while listening to instructions. This will improve their listening skills

- **Strategy 3:** Make time for learner feedback and to check understanding
  - Giving instructions remotely may take longer. Save enough time for concept checking and questions
  - Ask learners to repeat instructions to each other, or answer questions about the upcoming task to confirm that the message is clear
  - Create an environment where learners are easily able to say if they don’t understand. Provide space for learners to ask questions privately if required
  - Put learners into break-out rooms so they can talk to, and support each other with tasks

**Prepare to discuss:**

- Can you remember a time you weren't clear on what was expected of you?
- How did you feel?
Principle 2: Provide scaffolding

Before you begin this section make a note on the following question:

● Have you ever wanted to interrupt someone with “Just show me!” while they were in the middle of explaining how to do something? If so, can you think of why?

What is this principle?

Scaffolding is the support provided by a teacher while learners learn new ideas and skills.

At the beginning of the instructional scaffolding process, teachers provide a lot of support, often demonstrating how to solve a problem or task, then gradually letting learners solve the problem themselves. This is sometimes referred to as ‘I, We, You’ modelling.

When modelling, it’s important for the example to show not only the exemplary work, to show learners what the end product should look like, but also to describe the steps that are required to get there.

How does this benefit our learners?

Scaffolding helps learners to become more independent in their learning, as they are gradually encouraged to work through tasks autonomously which helps to build confidence and enables learners to create their own learning strategies.

Understanding verbal instructions can be demanding on working memory. Instructional scaffolding and modelling can also provide additional support to learners with executive functioning difficulties (including SEN students).

How can you apply this in your online classroom?

Always show learners the outcome or product before they do it, and provide reasoning about why this example is successful.

● **Strategy 1:** Use a screenshot of the online task while modelling. Highlight on the screenshot the relevant sections for learners and make notes, or reveal instructions on the screen while giving instructions to model how to complete the task and why each stage is important.

● **Strategy 2:** Record yourself (with your phone, or screen capturing software like Loom) setting the task or modelling a process (like in strategy 1). This could be done before a class or, if short of time, record yourself live during the lesson. Share this recording during, or after the class to be studied as a worked example (see Module 4 to read more about worked examples).

Prepare to discuss:
What signs could you look for in your learners to see that they're becoming more independent learners?

Principle 3: Use narratives and advance organisers

_before you begin this section make a note on the following question:_

- Think about a learner in a recent class who wasn’t able to stay focused during the lesson… What are some reasons why they may have appeared that way?

What is this principle?

A major problem that learners have is staying focused during a lesson. To stay on task, many of our learners need to understand the ‘big picture’ of what they are learning and why it is relevant.

One way to show learners the big picture is by framing your instructions with an ‘advance organiser’. This is a framework to help learners to understand what they’re about to do and how it fits together.

An advance organiser can take different forms, and you’re probably already using advance organisers. For example, simply using an agenda that shows the activities in class can help to keep focus.

To help show why a lesson is relevant, begin with ‘the point’ or reason for the class. When preparing instructions, have a set of ‘why’s’ ready to provide the point of each stage to help learners see the big picture more clearly.

How does this benefit our learners?

Showing the big picture and point of the lesson at the instruction stage can be helpful to all learners, as it builds motivation. It is especially helpful to learners who struggle with organisation and attention, and therefore may lose track of why they are completing a specific task.

How can you apply this in your online classroom?

- **Strategy 1:** Use an online ‘board’ that you can share with students to show the agenda and reasons for the lesson. This could be as simple as sharing a slide or written document.

- **Strategy 2:** Create an online board or use a digital project management platform where you can move things from ‘to do’ to ‘done’.

Prepare to discuss:

- How might you help learners organise and document their thinking in your context?
Check your understanding

Draw a line between the principle, strategy and benefits to make groups. Include one strategy, one principle and one benefit for each group.

Then make a note for each group with an idea of which learners in your class would benefit from this, or a challenge you see with using this strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Prepare for instruction delivery</td>
<td>a. Use a screenshot of the online task while modelling. Highlight relevant sections and make notes to model how to complete the task and why each stage is important</td>
<td>a. Using an advance organiser, or agenda in the lesson can be especially helpful to learners who struggle with organisation and attention to understand why they are completing a specific task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Use a digital board where learners can see you moving things from ‘to do’ to ‘done’</td>
<td>b. Anticipating barriers like working memory difficulties, lack of focus or poor internet connection means we can plan ahead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provide scaffolding</td>
<td>c. Find out what available technology you can use to help learners understand instructions better in your context</td>
<td>c. This helps to build confidence and enables learners to create their own learning strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Use narratives and advance organisers</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answers: 1,c,b. 2,a,c. 3,b,a.
Apply to your classroom

📝 Think about an activity that you are planning to do with your class in the next week. Make notes about:

What changes can you make to the instructions to:

- prepare for instruction delivery
- provide scaffolding
- use narratives and advance organisers.

Make some notes to share with in your group discussion on:

- the changes you will make
- the benefits for your learners
- any challenges you see with using this strategy.

👏 Nice work. You’re done for today! Your next task is to meet your group to discuss your ideas from the module.
Reflect on the module as a group

Welcome to your group discussion for Module 3 on inclusive instructions. This is a self-facilitated peer-learning session. Please follow the guide to go through the activities. Nominate a person for each letter A, B, and C.

When it is your turn, lead the activity by reading the instructions aloud to the group and ask any questions. See below for details of each activity.

Note: The group discussion is a powerful way to share ideas and build a sense of community and accountability around inclusivity at your school. However if you’re not able to join a group discussion in your context, the activities can also be completed alone as reflection and review tasks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity leader</th>
<th>Activity name</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>Check in and introductions</td>
<td>Five minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>Group review</td>
<td>Ten minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher C</td>
<td>Group reflection</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check in and introduction - led by Teacher ‘A’

Before you begin, prepare for the session with a short ‘check in’. A check in is a short pause at the beginning of a meeting to reflect on how you feel at this moment.

It might be that you have just had a very stressful class, or maybe you were running late today and feel in a rush. Sharing with the group helps to build empathy. When we have shared we are ready to begin the discussion.

Take a moment to look at the colour wheel. Choose a colour that represents how you are feeling today. Then introduce yourself: tell the group your name and share which colour you have chosen and why. Spend about five minutes on this section.
Review - led by Teacher ‘B’
Choose a strategy and take turns to tell each other one or two things about this strategy. Spend about ten minutes on this section.

1. Prepare for instruction delivery
2. Provide scaffolding
3. Use narratives and advance organisers

For example:

*Since reading the module, have you used any of the strategies?*

*Do you have any more examples of how this principle can be applied in the online classroom?*

*Have you used any of these in your online classroom? Was it successful?*

Reflection - led by Teacher ‘C’
Discuss the following reflection questions from the module as a group. Spend about 15 minutes on this section.

1. Can you remember a time you weren't clear on what was expected of you? How did you feel?
2. What signs could you look for in your learners to see that they're becoming more independent learners?
3. How might you help learners organise and document their thinking?

If you're interested in this topic check out the links for further reading: