

Circular syllabus

Mapping language against an external syllabus

Think about it

A perfect syllabus would adapt to your needs, reflecting the order in which the class uncover language and revealing what remains to be explored. You can create something like this by cutting up a linear syllabus, rearranging the items at random and using it as a shared reference point.

Get it ready

Take a coursebook (the one you are using in class, or one designed for a class like yours) and identify the syllabus (this may simply be labelled 'Contents').

Copy the 'main language' or 'grammar' items from each unit onto individual pieces of paper.

Set it up

Distribute the pieces round the class. Depending on your class size, there may be one per person, or one per pair/small group, etc.

Draw a large circle on the board.

Let it run

- People talk about the item they have been given in pairs or groups, answering the following questions:
Are they familiar with it?
Do they use it often?
Can they use it with confidence?
- People in turn tell the class about their item they and how they feel about it.
- In no particular order, they stick their items to the board, so that the deconstructed syllabus elements gradually form a circle as in the illustration below.

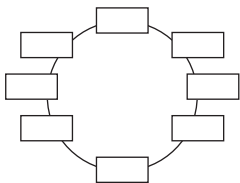
Round it off

Identify any areas that people feel need more attention, and discuss their relevance to their needs as learners (and, where relevant, as examination candidates).

Note down your circular syllabus. Make a larger copy of this in your own time, and bring it to other lessons and use it as a shared reference point.

Follow-up

Display your copy in class, and refer what emerges in each lesson to the items on the circle, by highlighting what is uncovered naturally from lesson to lesson. What is not naturally uncovered in this way will also be revealed.



Charting your course

Keeping a record of a sequence of lessons

Think about it

By recording outputs from a number of lessons on one sheet, you can chart your course as it unfolds. This can be a valuable reference point, not just for your class but also for colleagues or those responsible for the school syllabuses.

Get it ready

Devise a single-page chart that organises language output from the week's lessons into different categories. You can choose these categories yourself, or (as in *All aboard!* on page 62) with the help of the class. You might group output by language area – grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and so on – or using headings, such as *new language*, *language we revised*, etc.

By hand, or in a PC document, record key outputs from each lesson on a single chart. Make a final 'clean draft', for copying and distributing at the end of the week.

Set it up

Give everyone a copy of the chart.

Let it run

- Working alone first, people look at the chart and mark *one* of each of the following:
A favourite – some language I like
A challenge – some language that is hard for me
A question – something I would like to find out more about
- They share their annotations with a partner.
- You draw a large pie-chart, with three slices like the one below, on the board. Stand at the back of the class as people write up their favourites, challenges and questions on the chart. Discuss the *favourites* and *challenges* in whole class, finding out why people like a word or phrase, or find it difficult.

Round it off

Help with as many of the *questions* as you can, and make notes of any you want to research further for the next lesson – make sure you *do* come back to the class on it.

Follow-up

For homework, ask people to write some sentences, making use three of the words and phrases they like, and three of the words and phrases that are hard for them for discussion.

