

NEWCOMER
Teacher Lessons

FREE

FIRST DAY LESSON PLAN: NEWCOMER EL STUDENT ORIENTATION

A first-day plan for classroom teachers and EL/ELD resource teachers. Includes examples of materials and resources.

Dr. Libby has 40 years of experience as an educator.

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Day One: Newcomer EL Student Orientation Plan

Goals:

- Create a welcoming, safe environment
- Establish basic communication methods
- Orient the student to essential school locations
- Teach survival phrases for immediate needs
- Build initial connection and trust

Morning Session (2-2.5 hours)

Welcome & Getting to Know You (30 minutes)

1. Greet warmly with a smile, welcoming gestures
2. Use a translation app to have a basic conversation (if home language is available)
 - a. Student's preferred name and pronunciation
 - b. Age and grade in the home country
 - c. Hobbies or interests
 - d. Any immediate concerns or needs
3. Create a name card together with the student's input on design.
4. Take student photo for classroom display/materials/locker.

Essential School Tour (45 minutes)

Walk to and practice these critical locations:

- Bathroom - teach phrase "Bathroom, please" with gesture
- Cafeteria/lunch area - explain lunch routine with visuals
- Main office - introduce key staff if available
- Nurse's office - teach "I feel sick" with a gesture
- Your classroom - show their desk/space

Activity: Take photos at each location and create a simple visual map together.



Survival Communication (45 minutes)

Teach these essential phrases with gestures and visuals:

- "Help, please" (hand raised)
- "Bathroom, please" (point)
- "I don't understand" (shrug, confused face)
- "Water, please" (drinking gesture)
- "Thank you" (hand on heart)
- "Yes" and "No" (head nods)

Activities:

1. Model each phrase with Total Physical Response
2. Practice with role-play scenarios
3. Create a personal communication card they can point to
4. Laminate or put in a plastic sleeve to keep at the desk.

Lunch (30-45 minutes)

- Sit with the student or assign a caring buddy
- Model lunch procedures ([Example presentation: getting tray, sitting, cleaning up](#)).
- Practice using lunch vocabulary and pointing to the communication card
- Keep it low-pressure and social





Afternoon Session (1.5-2 hours)

Classroom Basics (45 minutes)

1. Label 8-10 essential items with picture cards: pencil, paper, book, desk, chair, backpack, computer/tablet, door ([example here you can edit to match your environment](#))
2. Matching game - match picture cards to real objects
3. Simple "Simon Says" with classroom objects to practice vocabulary
4. Show where supplies are kept and how to ask for materials

Meet Your Buddy & Feelings Check-In (30 minutes)

1. Assign a buddy (compassionate peer, ideally bilingual if possible). Buddy shows:
 - How to organize a desk/locker/cubby.
 - Where materials are stored.
 - Their favorite classroom spot or assigned seat.
 - Introduce feelings chart with visuals:
 - happy, sad, confused, tired, hungry, sick
 - Practice pointing to show how they feel.
 - Give student their own feelings reference card. ([link to an example here](#))

Basic Routines & Greetings (30 minutes)

- Practice simple greetings:
 - "Hello" / "Good morning"
 - "Goodbye" / "See you tomorrow"
- Show a visual daily schedule with pictures ([example of a basic visual schedule](#))
- Explain dismissal routine (packing backpack, lining up)
- Practice the routine together ([example of visuals](#))
- Introduce basic responses: "Okay," "Done," "Finished"

Closing Circle/Homeroom (15 minutes)

- Review the day using photos/visuals from the school tour
- Celebrate successes with a high five, thumbs up, or applause
- Send home:
 - Visual schedule for tomorrow
 - Communication phrase card (copy for home)
 - Welcome letter for family (translated if possible)
 - School contact information
 - Photo from today (if possible)
- Use a translation app to communicate briefly with a family member at pickup

Essential Materials Checklist

1. Translation app or device (such as Google Translate, if your home language is available)
2. A camera or a phone for taking photos
3. Picture cards (objects, feelings, actions linked throughout the book)
4. Index cards for personal communication
5. Laminating pouches or plastic sleeves
6. Labels and markers
7. Visual daily schedule template (linked previously)
8. Simple welcome letter template for families
9. Classroom objects for labeling

Key Reminders:

- ✓ Speak slowly and clearly (but not loudly)
- ✓ Use gestures and visuals constantly
- ✓ Smile and be encouraging - nonverbal warmth is universal
- ✓ Keep activities short - attention and processing are taxing
- ✓ Repeat, repeat, repeat - but in engaging ways
- ✓ Celebrate every attempt - effort over perfection
- ✓ Check in frequently with feelings chart
- ✓ Stay calm and patient - the student may be overwhelmed



Quick Informal Assessment Notes

During the day, observe and note:

1. Does the student seem literate in their native language?
2. How does the student handle new situations (confident, anxious, curious)?
3. What gestures or communication strategies does the student already use?
4. Does the student recognize numbers or letters of the alphabet?
5. What are students' interests that could connect to future lessons?

These observations will help you plan ongoing support and instruction.

Bottom Line: Prioritize safety, connection, and basic communication.

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*A successful first day means
the student feels welcomed,
knows where the bathroom is,
and has a way to ask for help!*

Dr. Libby

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