



ASSOCIATION OF ESD PROFESSIONALS

# HOW TO BUILD AN ESD CLASS PLAN

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**1**

**Intro**

**2**

**Create Your Toolkit**

**4**

**What You Will Teach**

**6**

**How You Will Teach It**

**8**

**Create A Time Grid**

**14**

**Time Management**

**17**

**Finished Class Plan**

**18**

**Not A Planner?**

# HOW TO BUILD AN ESD CLASS PLAN

## Organize & Prioritize Your ESD Knowledge TO PLAN YOUR CLASSES



Do you ever get overwhelmed thinking about how to put together an ESD class plan? You are not alone. In fact, this is one of the most common concerns ESD instructors have, especially when they are just starting out.

There is so much you want to pass along to your participants, so many activities and games to try, and so many topics of interest. Where do you begin?

This How-To will take you through the planning process step-by-step, whether you are developing a short class for a specific group or a 16-hour program you will offer on a regular basis.

Not a planner? We've got you covered. You will find lots of good ideas in this How-To about running a class on the fly. And, we have a special section just for you.

Let's get started!

# create YOUR TOOLKIT



## RESOURCES FOR YOU

After completing the suggested exercises and lists outlined in this how-to guide, you will walk away with the following resources, made by you, for you:

- Core Concepts List
- Specialties List
- Confidence List
- Challenges List
- Activities List (Prioritized and Ranked)
- Participant Needs
- Chosen Confidence
- Chosen Challenges
- Chosen Concept & Activities List
- Time Grid
- "Always" List
- Trash Can
- Back Pocket
- Not-A-Planner Strategies

# Framework

You may find it helpful to have a framework in which to put all your tools, in other words your toolkit. Your toolkit can be a physical or electronic notebook or even a spreadsheet. Let's assume, for the purposes of this How-To, that it is a notebook.

Your notebook will have several sections:

- What You Will Teach
- Activities You Will Use to Teach
- Time Grid
- Notes Section
  - Organized by class, especially helpful for time management.
  - Include space for feedback from class participants.
- Trash Can
- Back Pocket
- Sample Class Plan



# WHAT YOU WILL TEACH



## 1 || CORE CONCEPTS & SUBJECT MATTER

To begin, make a list of the core concepts you currently teach or would like to teach.

### WHAT COUNTS AS A CONCEPT?

Neither too broad, nor too narrow, a concept is something around which you can build several different activities. For example, Boundary Setting; Getting Comfortable Saying No; "Think" "Yell" "Run" "Fight" & "Tell"; Consent; De-Escalation; Red Flags.

If this seems impossibly daunting, remember that you don't have to write it all out at once. Start with the basics, the concepts you teach regularly and that are most relevant to your participants, and the concepts and themes you are most passionate about.

Try to start by creating a list of your strengths. What do you love to teach? Where do you feel like your knowledge or experience is most solid? Consult other resources for ideas, such as formal or informal mentors, community pages, social media, and new research in the field. You could even start an informal peer group to trade ideas and encouragement.

We also recommend checking out the [Core Competencies](#) identified for the Association ESDP Credentialing Exam.

**PRO TIP:** You can always add to this list as your practice grows and you gain more experience.



## 2 || ADD YOUR SPECIAL TOUCH

Consider related and complementary knowledge and practices you can bring to your participants. Storytelling, meditation, yoga, dance, visual arts, physical fitness, and music are just some examples of powerful experiences for your participants which connect comfortably with ESD.

Make a list of any specialties you can bring to your ESD practice.

## 3 || CLARIFY YOUR CONFIDENCE (OPTIONAL)

If you would like, make a list of the concepts about which you feel especially confident. Think of it as your, “I got this!” list. This gives you a nice, comfortable starting place for any class. It is empowering for you to teach to your strengths, and that confidence will shine in your classes.

Make a list of the concepts you feel the most confident teaching.

**PRO TIP:** As you practice and learn, you will be able to add more items to this list. This can also serve as a record of how you've grown as an instructor over time.

## 4 || DEFINE YOUR CHALLENGES (OPTIONAL)

Making a list of the concepts that challenge you can also be helpful. Not a martial artist? Still working on your physical skills? Write it down. Have a concept that feels awkward to explain in the midst of a dynamic class? Add it to the list.

Use this list to grow your practice in a controlled manner. Limit the number of these more challenging concepts or activities when planning your classes. Choose one or two for each class as practice, until they feel more comfortable.

You now have a list of go-to subject matter areas that you can teach in any ESD class.

# HOW YOU WILL TEACH IT



## 1 || CREATE YOUR LIST OF ACTIVITIES

Go through your Subject Matter List, and note all the activities, games, exercises, and techniques that you can use to teach each concept. You might also take a moment to think about games or activities you want to invent to go with each of the topics.

Color-code or otherwise mark concepts for which you have no or few activities, and commit to seeking out or inventing activities for them.

We can't possibly reproduce a complete list here, but below are a few ideas to get you started. Once you have gone through the following exercises, you will have a living, growing toolkit of all your ESD concepts and activities.

Congratulations! You have developed a comprehensive curriculum library from which you can pick and choose to create class plans.

## 2 || UNDERSTAND YOUR PARTICIPANTS

Consider the special concerns for the particular group you teach and those you plan to teach, if different. What types of violence might they typically face? Is there anything you need to consider regarding language, culture, religion, age, or specific marginalization? Are there any restrictions or accommodations you will need to make?

What special knowledge or practice can you bring that is especially relevant to this particular group?



### 3 || HIGHLIGHT A CONFIDENCE (OPTIONAL)

Choose a few concepts that you are confident about teaching that will resonate with your current participants.

### 4 || CHOOSE A CHALLENGE (OPTIONAL)

Choose one challenging concept that you would like to practice in this class.



## SAMPLE ACTIVITIES LIST

### DATING SAFETY

AGES 14-18

2 HOURS

- Connection with Music
- Consent
- Soft Techniques
  - Wash the Face
  - Pinch to Inner Arm/Thigh
  - Straight Finger Trachea Poke/Push
- “No”
  - Verbal Escalation/De-escalation
  - Boundary Lines
  - Role-play
  - Communication Formula
- Call and Response
- Partner Pose Game

### 5 || CHOOSE YOUR ACTIVITIES

Make a list of all the activities that would be relevant to this particular group.

Keep an eye on the time frame. You will have a shorter list for a four-hour class than you would for an eight-hour class, for example.

### 6 || PRIORITIZE

Take your list of activities and rank them in order of importance. It doesn't have to be perfect, but have an idea of which activities would give the most value for this particular group

# create A TIME GRID



Next up, we will create a time grid, either on paper, in a spreadsheet, or using an app. This time grid will show the beginning and ending times for each class, across multiple days if relevant.

## STEP 1 || DETERMINE TIME INTERVALS

Break down each day into equally portioned blocks of time. (Note that this does not mean that each exercise has to take the same amount of time, it simply provides a framework.) Depending on the theme of the class, these blocks of time can be in any increment (ie. half-hour blocks for discussion-heavy themes, five- or ten-minute blocks for children and teenagers).

For our example, we will use fifteen-minute time blocks:

DATING SAFETY MARCH 8, 2023		
Time	Activity	Notes
12:00		
12:15		
12:30		
12:45		
13:00		
13:15		
13:30		
13:45		

## STEP 2 || BLOCK YOUR BREAKS

It is healthy for both participants' minds and bodies to have regular breaks for self-care. Water, snacks, a little stretching, a chance to write notes, and talking it out are all good examples of how you can use breaks to benefit your participants. Breaks also allow you to take a breath, organize your thoughts, consider the next block, reflect on participant needs or energy levels, and set up equipment. Classes longer in duration will need more breaks and might include one long break.

The example we are using does not show breaks, but you could add one or two if you like.

## STEP 3 || BLOCK YOUR ALWAYS

There are some activities that are always, or nearly always, included in our ESD classes, such as as opening and closing circles, ice-breakers, warm-ups and cool-downs, questions and answers, sharing circle, and meditation or release exercises. Block these out next.

Our sample class will have an opening and closing circle, time for questions, and an ice-breaker. Flip to the next page to see what it looks like:



<b>DATING SAFETY</b> <b>MARCH 8, 2023</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Notes</b>
12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening Circle</li> <li>• Ice-Breaker</li> </ul>	
12:15		
12:30		
12:45		
13:00		
13:15		
13:30		
13:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions</li> <li>• Closing Circle</li> </ul>	

## STEP 4 || BLOCK TOP 50% OF ACTIVITIES

Take your ranked list of class activities and block the most important activities—the top half of your list. Your grid should now be roughly half full.

If it is more than half full, you might have to go back and revise your list of priorities for this class. One way to do this is to focus your theme. Let's say we began planning our two-hour class as "Healthy Relationships." Your class list might include abusive relationships, red flags, healthy sexuality, and in-depth communication.

Too much for a two-hour class? Go ahead and block it out. Does it fit well for a six-hour class? Congratulations! As a bonus, you've just designed a six-hour class plan for teenagers with the topic "Healthy Relationships", now available in your class plans.

But we are designing a class on "Dating Safety," and our class plan is pretty close to that half-way mark.

**DATING SAFETY**  
**MARCH 8, 2023**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Notes</b>
12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening Circle</li> <li>• Speed Dating Game</li> </ul>	
12:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Song Lyric Consent Game</li> </ul>	
12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal Strategies:</li> <li>• “No” Is a Complete Sentence</li> <li>• ABC Voice Escalation/Deescalation</li> </ul>	
12:45		
13:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft Techniques:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pinch to Inner Arm, Inner Thigh</li> <li>• Wash the Face</li> <li>• Straight-Finger Trachea Poke/Push</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
13:15		
13:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role-Play, Complex</li> </ul>	
13:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions</li> <li>• Closing Circle</li> </ul>	

## STEP 5 || CHECK FOR PREREQUISITES

Next, check the placement of the activities in the top half of your activity list. Are there any activities that you want to put first? For our sample class, let’s decide we want the “No Is a Complete Sentence” activity to come before the “ABC” activity, and switch them.



## STEP 6 || SET PACING

Take a look at pacing—the amount and intensity of physicality and discussion across the class. There is no right or wrong way to pace a class. It will depend on your style and the participants' energy levels.

You could pace a class with all the physical activity near the beginning, perhaps for a class of participants transitioning out of martial arts into the emotional, social, and verbal strategies of ESD, or to work off excessive energy in a high-energy group. You could pace a class with all the physical activity near the end, perhaps as a way of introducing physical techniques to a group that is reluctant to use physical force.

In our sample class, let's start with some fun, easy games, which involve movement but are not overly physical, and increase the pace gradually to the physical activities and then slow down for quieter activities so as not to send this class of teenagers back into the world in a highly-adrenalized state.

This type of pacing also has the advantage of naturally providing a warm-up and cool-down.

**PRO TIP:** It may be helpful to color-code the activities in your class plan to get a visual sense of the pace of the class.



## STEP 7 || BLOCK BOTTOM 50% OF ACTIVITIES

Block in the remaining activities, being mindful of the decisions made in the last two steps. If you still have empty time blocks, go back to your Activity List and pick out either a few more activities based on the concept you've chosen for that part of the class, or adding a new concept and activity. (If you have extra activities, don't worry, we'll come to that in a bit.)

<b>DATING SAFETY</b> <b>MARCH 8, 2023</b>		
Time	Activity	Notes
12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening Circle</li> <li>• Speed Dating Game</li> </ul>	
12:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Song Lyric Consent Game</li> </ul>	
12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal Strategies:</li> <li>• "No" as a Complete Sentence</li> <li>• Call and Response</li> <li>• Escalation and ABC Volume Game</li> </ul>	
12:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boundary Lines</li> </ul>	
13:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft Techniques:</li> <li>• Pinch to Inner Arm, Inner Thigh</li> <li>• Wash the Face</li> <li>• Straight-Finger Trachea Poke/Push</li> </ul>	
13:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner Pose Game</li> <li>• Communication Formula</li> </ul>	
13:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role-Play: Watching Movie</li> </ul>	
13:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions</li> <li>• Closing Circle</li> </ul>	

# TIME MANAGEMENT



You should now have a completed class plan. (And maybe even a bonus class plan). Congratulations! You can use this class plan over and over, make adjustments, and use it to develop new plans. We recommend that you make notes during breaks or immediately after classes, recording such things as duration of activities, energy levels, what worked or was comfortable for you.

No matter how well you have planned, your participants will always surprise you. A talkative group will talk away all your time, while a highly energetic group will burn through the activities like wildfire. (There are ways to mitigate this, but that is for a different How-To.)

Some instructors are deliberately strict with the timing of their classes, others are happy to allow their classes to wander. There is no right or wrong way to manage time. One helpful trick is to have a “trash can” and a “back pocket” for every class.

## CHOOSE YOUR TRASH CAN (ACTIVITIES YOU CAN CUT)

Choose one or two activities that you could bear to skip in case time gets away from you, and mark these on your class plan. These activities should be those scheduled for the middle or end of your class. You may wish to track your time during class, identifying when or if you are falling behind. You already know you can safely cut one of your previously-identified “trash can” activities without interrupting the flow of the class.

**PRO TIP:**

If you are not sure how long each activity takes, you may also record duration, and you will then have a good idea of how much time to allot in the future. Here's an example of what these notes might look like:

<b>DATING SAFETY</b>		
<b>MARCH 8, 2023</b>		
<b>Scheduled Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Actual Duration</b>		
<b>12:00</b> <b>10 minutes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening Circle</li> <li>• Speed Dating Game</li> </ul>	
<b>12:15</b> <b>20 minutes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Song Lyric Consent Game</li> </ul>	Participants enjoyed this game, but it was difficult to move them into the next activity.
<b>12:30</b> <b>10 minutes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal Strategies:</li> <li>• "No" as a Complete Sentence</li> <li>• Call and Response</li> <li>• Escalation and ABC Volume Game</li> </ul>	
<b>12:45</b> <b>10 minutes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boundary Lines</li> </ul>	
<b>13:00</b> <b>15 minutes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft Techniques:</li> <li>• Pinch to Inner Arm, Inner Thigh</li> <li>• Wash the Face</li> <li>• Straight-Finger Trachea Poke/Push</li> </ul>	
<b>13:15</b> <b>15 minutes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner Pose Game</li> <li>• Communication Formula</li> </ul>	
<b>13:30</b> <b>30 minutes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role-Play: Watching Movie</li> </ul>	This activity took much longer than expected - 15 minutes longer.
<b>13:45</b> <b>5 minutes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions</li> <li>• Closing Circle</li> </ul>	<p>Participants didn't seem to have, or want to ask questions.</p> <p>Did a really fast closing circle, since we were over time.</p>

## CHOOSE YOUR BACK POCKET (ACTIVITIES TO ADD)

Choose one or two additional activities that you can use if you have extra time. You may have a few left over from your Class List. This is the place to put them. It is helpful to include one physical activity in case you need to increase the pace of the class, and one quieter activity in case you need to bring the energy down.

Your back-pocket activities should include activities that reinforce taught concepts and activities that introduce new concepts. An always-useful back-pocket activity is to revisit an activity from the beginning of the class and ask, “Now that you know all you know now, let’s revisit Activity X and think about how you might handle or approach it differently?”



# FINISHED CLASS PLAN



## DATING SAFETY MARCH 8, 2023

Time	Activity	Notes
12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening Circle</li> <li>• Speed Dating Game</li> </ul>	
12:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Song Lyric Consent Game</li> </ul>	
12:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal Strategies:</li> <li>• "No" as a Complete Sentence</li> <li>• Call and Response</li> <li>• Escalation and ABC Volume Game</li> </ul>	
12:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boundary Lines</li> </ul>	
13:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft Techniques:</li> <li>• Pinch to Inner Arm, Inner Thigh</li> <li>• Wash the Face</li> <li>• Straight-Finger Trachea Poke/Push</li> </ul>	
13:15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner Pose Game</li> <li>• Communication Formula</li> </ul>	
13:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role-Play: Watching Movie</li> </ul>	
13:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questions</li> <li>• Closing Circle</li> </ul>	



# NOT A Planner?



Some of us are not wired to create detailed class plans. We prefer a more flexible, open, and intuitive style. With experience, these are the instructors who can pull an entire class plan out of their back pocket with five minutes' notice.

It's a little harder to do this before you have built up a certain level of experience, however. Therefore, we recommend going through the exercise of creating a class plan for practice, if nothing else. We also offer the following suggestions:

## 1 || START WITH a CONCEPT & ACTIVITY LIST

Having a list of the concepts and activities you are comfortable teaching, or that you would like to learn how to teach, will help prevent your mind from drawing a blank in the middle of an unplanned class. You can opt out of the step-by-step, but having a Concept and Activity List gives you the option of quickly reviewing available activities and choosing one that fits your participants at that moment.



## 2 || BRING BACK POCKETS

Bring several back pockets, and pick whichever feel right in the moment.

## 3 || ORGANIZE YOUR ACTIVITY LIST IN A NON-LINEAR WAY

Instead of creating a traditional list, you might consider using index cards, or an app with a comparable layout. Keep the cards in a portable box with dividers, labeling whatever is important to you. When you get to class, and have a chance to intuit the participants, you can pull the cards that you want to use for the next few blocks of time. You can also color-code the cards by concept, type of activity, level of physicality, or anything else that works for you. Similarly, you can use a task management app and use a card-style layout.

## 4 || DETERMINE A GENERAL INTENTION FOR YOUR CLASS

There are several different ways to organize your class. You might want to organize your class by pacing, as we discussed above, starting with games, moving on to physical, then discussion. Or you could organize your class by concept: boundaries, then verbal strategies, then physical techniques. Or by theme: All the Ways We Can Say “No.”



## 5 || VISUALIZE A BEGINNING & AN END

Have someplace to start and someplace to end the class. Consider these as anchor points. You might also want to have a couple additional anchor points during your class, especially if it is a full-day. For instance, you could add a pre-lunch anchor point, a sunset anchor point, or a stimulation anchor point for when participants get tired. Do whatever makes sense for you.

## 6 || LET YOUR PARTICIPANTS LEAD

Allow the participants to pose questions, concerns, and scenarios and then use that feedback to drive the class. Let them guide you.

**PRO TIP:** Play. Try different methods. Ask others who teach without creating class plans what works for them. Enjoy the exploration!

# READY TO GO?

You've got this! Class planning can be daunting, but with a little bit of preparation, you can have a whole array of ESD classes ready in your back pocket. Before you know it, class planning will feel like a breeze!

You have all the tools and knowledge you need to plan (and teach!) some amazing ESD classes. We will be right here cheering you on.

Stay tuned for more how-to guides on marketing, business development, the legal side of ESD, and so much more!

# DISCLAIMER

The information provided in this article and on the Association website does not and is not intended to constitute legal advice, and the information and links are for general informational purposes only. It is possible that some of the information provided in this article and on the Association website is not the most up-to-date information or specific to your geographic location (for instance, please note that state laws vary). In addition, this article and the Association website contain links to third-party websites—these links are for the convenience of the reader and they do not indicate endorsement of the linked companies, their websites, or the information contained on their websites. Readers of this website should contact an attorney to obtain advice with respect to any particular legal matter, including choosing how to organize and structure their business, and should contact an attorney or accountant for information regarding federal and state taxes (note that state taxes vary from state to state). In addition, all the information provided in this article is intended to apply to companies formed in the United States.

## CONTACT US

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