

Teaching Observation Reflection Guide

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Teaching observations offer a valuable opportunity to gain an outside perspective on your teaching. They can help you identify areas for growth and highlight how much you've developed as an instructor over time. Of course, it's natural to feel a bit anxious or nervous about being observed. If you think of observations as high-stakes evaluations, they can feel daunting and stressful. But if you can reframe them as check-ins on your progress, observation becomes a tool for refining your teaching practice and tracking your growth toward your goals.

In some cases, you might even guide your observer toward what you're trying to accomplish in the classroom and the specific areas where you'd like feedback. Whether or not you have this opportunity, remember that every observer brings their own biases, interests, and perspectives—and sometimes even their own agendas. You might receive feedback that simply reflects an observer's personal teaching style or priorities. That's okay. Not all advice will align with your approach, and part of the process is figuring out which suggestions resonate with you.

To get the most out of an observation, a bit of preparation goes a long way. When you prepare beforehand, you'll feel more confident and can approach the feedback with an open mind. Listen to the observer's comments and recommendations thoughtfully, and then decide which critiques are genuinely useful for you. Some critiques may be insightful and worth trying out, while others might just reflect different pedagogical values - and you are not required to incorporate every suggestion. It's up to you to discern what will be helpful for your teaching. With the right mindset and preparation, teaching observations can shift from scary evaluations to supportive learning experiences. The reflections, strategies, and tips below will help you make the most of your class observation and process the feedback you receive.

Know your own goals.

It can be helpful to reflect on your teaching goals before an observation. Having someone sit in and watch you teach—especially when you're still shaping your approach—can bring up self-doubt or performance pressure. One way to stay grounded is to clarify what *you* want to get out of the observation. Before the class, take time to reflect on the kind of teacher you want to be and what you're working on in this particular course. Feedback is most meaningful when it supports your development on your own terms.

Reflections:

- What kind of teacher am I striving to be?

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- What aspects of my teaching would I like feedback on?
(e.g., student engagement, clarity of instructions, pacing, integrating discussion, language use, error correction)

- How does this lesson fit into the broader course? What should students take away from it?

- Is there anything I'd like the observer to know about my students, the course context, or my teaching approach?

Tip:

If you're comfortable, consider sharing your focus areas with your observer in advance and requesting feedback on specific elements. This can help ensure the feedback you receive is both relevant and aligned with your goals. You may also let them know what you will cover on observation day, and how it fits in your broader course plan.

Plan for your observation.

Feeling some extra pressure on the day of an observation is normal. It makes sense to prepare more carefully than usual. Knowing that you're super prepared can bolster your confidence. Ideally, you want to plan a class that highlights your teaching style at its best. Play to your strengths and aim to employ approaches and strategies you already use and feel comfortable with. That way, the feedback will be relevant to your everyday teaching, and the observation will speak to how you typically run your classroom.

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Reflections:



- What's the structure of the class I've planned?
List the main components of your lesson (e.g., lecture, discussion, group activity, writing exercise).

- Have I planned this class in a way that reflects my usual teaching?

- Are there clear connections between activities or moments of transition that help students make sense of the lesson arc?

- Is there a mix of modalities that invite student engagement?

Tips:

- Tell your students you'll be observed. If possible, give them a heads-up ahead of time, and take a minute at the start of class to introduce the observer and explain what's happening. When students understand what the observation is—and that it's about you, not them—they're more likely to stay engaged and to participate.
- Be thoughtful about testing out a new approach during an observation. It might shine, but new strategies can be unpredictable the first time around.
- Bring a copy of any handouts or relevant course materials for your observer.
- Decide where in the room you'd like the observer to sit—and don't hesitate to ask them to sit there. You're allowed to set up your space in the way that feels most comfortable and effective.

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Take some time to reflect after your observation.

Before diving into your observer's feedback, take a few moments to reflect on how you felt the class went. Getting clear on your own impressions first can help you process feedback in a grounded way.

Reflections:

- What worked well in this lesson?

- Were there any standout moments or turning points?

- What didn't go as planned? Why?

- If I were teaching this lesson again tomorrow, what (if anything) would I change?

Tip:

Writing a short reflection immediately after class—before the feedback arrives—can help you see how your self-perception aligns (or doesn't) with the observer's comments, and help you track your growth over time.

Receiving your observers' feedback

Observer feedback offers a chance to see your teaching through someone else's eyes. Not every suggestion will resonate—and that's okay. Observers, like students, bring their own

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experiences, biases, and teaching philosophies. Your task is to sort through the comments, figure out what aligns with your goals, and let the rest go.

Reflections:

- How does this feedback align (or not) with my own impressions?

- Which comments feel especially relevant or helpful?

- If something critical is mentioned, does it feel fair? If so, are there clear steps I can take to address it?

Tip: Talk through the feedback with a trusted mentor or colleague. A second perspective can be grounding and clarifying.

Putting feedback to work.

It's one thing to receive feedback—it's another to figure out what to do with it. Teaching is an ongoing process, and growth takes time. You don't need to overhaul everything at once. Start small, stay true to your teaching values, and build from there.

Reflections:

- What's one small change I want to try in upcoming lessons?

- What part of my teaching do I want to keep experimenting with or refining?

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- How will I track progress in that area?
(e.g., *quick notes after class, peer check-ins, TLC workshops, setting a goal for my next observation*)

Tip:

Keep a low-stakes “teaching journal” to jot down small wins, recurring challenges, or new things you’ve tried. This can help you track your progress and build confidence between observations.