

Guidelines for Transition Year beginners' course

1. Aims
2. Planning your course
3. Teaching and learning
4. Students' progress

1. Aims

The TY beginners' course has been designed for schools and teachers who would like to introduce Chinese language at beginner level in Transition Year. Transition Year modules can provide an opportunity to expose students to new languages and cultures. The modules in this course have been formulated with this goal in mind and also aim to act as a structured support to teachers.

The course takes into account that the Transition Year programme in schools has to be flexible and this is reflected in the way it is adaptable both in terms of time and content. The course has been designed in collaboration with practising language teachers.

By the end of the course, the students will have developed their linguistic, digital, personal and intercultural awareness skills.

2. Planning your course

The course consists of six modules designed under the following headings:

- 1) Introduction to the country/ies
- 2) Myself and others
- 3) Hobbies
- 4) Food and shopping
- 5) Holidays and festivals
- 6) Intercultural awareness

Each module consists of three or four tasks. Each task description includes a topic overview, a description of the task, main learning outcomes, necessary resources and links, expected length of time, key language, suggested scaffolding activities, self-assessment and key skills. Teachers can decide which or how many tasks they would like to carry out in a given module. The modules have been designed to support teachers by cutting down on preparation time. They can be used as they are or can be easily adapted to suit the needs and interests of students.

3. Teaching and learning

During the teaching of this course, we encourage teachers and students to use the Target Language as much as possible. Using language mats (<https://ppli.ie/language-mats-to-encourage-target-language-in-the-classroom/>) and having visuals displayed in the classroom will help students to keep on target. From a culturally inclusive point of view, it is important to try to refer to as many different countries where the target language is spoken as possible during activities. Intercultural awareness can be developed by helping students to reflect on their own culture when appropriate and by completing the tasks suggested at the end of the module. We advise you include at least one task from the introductory module and a concluding task to help students reflect on their learning.

If you are already teaching the language to beginners, you will be able to use resources which you currently use with other year groups or within the MFL department such as placemats, visual supports, digital technology tools and other resources to support and encourage the learning. Each module includes a task which entails the use of digital tools.

Students will easily engage with this course as it is task-based and they will be given the language necessary to progress through the tasks in class. Accomplishing the different tasks will give students a great sense of achievement.

Remember that a Transition Year course for beginners aims at giving students an opportunity to explore and enjoy a new language. Students are not working towards a Leaving Certificate qualification but are instead encouraged to acquire useful and simple language which will enable them to carry out the suggested tasks and which they can use on a holiday or in basic exchanges with speakers of the language. The course will also introduce them to some elements of the culture of the country/ies where the language is spoken.

4. Students' progress

Can-do descriptors are included with each task and can be used for student self-assessment. Teachers could encourage students to track their progress in terms of their level of confidence in the language, for example: 'I can complete this task a) on my own, b) with some help, or c) with a lot of help'. These can be reviewed as students make progress in the language. They could also record their learning in a portfolio, set further learning goals for themselves and include reflections on their learning. Students will also be able to record and share their progress by exhibiting their work in the classroom (on TY graduation night for example). The learning accomplished during the course can be presented in many formats such as posters, recordings, videos, etc.

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