

## According to Hutchinson and Waters (1978)

“ A syllabus is an expression of opinion on the nature of language and learning. It acts as a guide for both teacher and learner by providing some goals to be attained”.

## Stern (1984) states that:

“ Syllabus as connected with content, structure and organization”.



## What is Syllabus Design?

Syllabus design means **making a plan for what to teach in a course**. It's like writing a list of what topics to teach, how to teach them, and when to teach them. It helps the teacher know what to do, and it helps the students understand what they will learn.

You can think of it like making a recipe. Just like a recipe tells you what ingredients to use and how to cook, a syllabus tells the teacher what topics to teach and in what order.

For example, if it's an English course, the syllabus will say things like: first teach greetings, then teach grammar, then reading, and so on.



## Principles of Syllabus Design

(These are the important rules or ideas to follow while making a syllabus.)

### 1. Needs Analysis

Before making the syllabus, we must know **why the students are learning**. Are they learning English for a job, for a school exam, or to travel? We must understand their **goals** and **current level**.

If students are learning English to work in a hotel, then we should teach them hotel-related English — like how to welcome guests, take orders, or answer questions. This is called knowing the “needs” of students.

We can ask them questions, give them a small test, or observe them to find out their needs.

### 2. Goals and Objectives

After knowing the students' needs, we decide the **goal of the course**. A goal is the big aim — for example, "Students will speak English with confidence."

Then we break that big goal into **small steps** — like "Students will learn to introduce themselves," "Students will describe their hobbies," and "Students will ask and answer questions."

These small steps are called objectives. They help the teacher teach step-by-step and help the students learn clearly.

### 3. Gradation (Order of Topics)

We must teach **easy things first and hard things later**. This is called arranging the topics in order — from simple to difficult.

For example, we first teach how to say "Hello" or "My name is...", and later we teach how to write essays or give a speech.

This way, students do not get confused or scared.

### 4. Learnability

We should teach topics that match the students' level. If we teach very hard lessons to beginners, they will not understand and will feel bored or stressed.

So we should start with easy topics and slowly go to harder ones, depending on what students can learn.

### 5. Balance and Variety

A good syllabus should have **all types of skills** — like reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

If we only teach grammar and ignore speaking, students will not be able to talk in English. So we must **balance** everything.

Also, we should not make the course boring. We should add **fun activities** like games, group work, songs, videos, and discussions.

### 6. Flexibility

Sometimes, things do not go as planned. Students may learn slowly or quickly. The teacher may need more time for some lessons. So the syllabus should not be too strict.

The teacher should be allowed to **change some parts** of the syllabus if needed — like skipping a topic, repeating a lesson, or adding a new activity.

### 7. Time and Resources

We should think about how much time we have to teach — for example, 1 month or 6 months. If there is less time, we should teach fewer topics.

Also, we should check what tools we have — like textbooks, computers, the internet, projectors, etc. The syllabus should match the time and tools available.

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## Steps in Making a Syllabus (Syllabus Design Process)

Let's now talk about how to make a syllabus, step by step.

### Step 1: Find Out Students' Needs

This is the first and most important step. We must understand why the students are learning this subject and what they want to learn. We can ask them questions, give them a small test, or just talk to them.

For example, if students are learning English to study in another country, the syllabus should include academic writing and listening to lectures.

### Step 2: Decide the Goals and Small Objectives

After knowing what the students need, we must decide what they should be able to do after the course.

The big aim is called the goal. For example, "Students will improve their English speaking."

The small parts that help reach the goal are called objectives. For example, "Students will introduce themselves," "Students will talk about their families," and "Students will give their opinion."

### Step 3: Choose What to Teach (Content)

Now we choose the topics we will teach — grammar, vocabulary, conversation, writing, etc. The topics should be **useful** and **interesting** for the students.

For example, if students are learning English for business, we teach business words, how to write emails, and how to talk in meetings.

### Step 4: Arrange the Topics in Order

After choosing the topics, we must arrange them in the **right order**. Start with the easiest topic and go towards the harder ones.

This makes learning **smooth and clear**. For example, teach sentence making first, and then teach paragraph writing.

### Step 5: Decide the Type of Syllabus

There are many ways to make a syllabus. Here are some common types:

- **Grammar-based syllabus:** Focuses on grammar rules (like tenses, articles).
- **Vocabulary-based syllabus:** Focuses on learning words and meanings.
- **Function-based syllabus:** Focuses on how to use language in real life (like asking for help, giving advice).
- **Situation-based syllabus:** Focuses on English used in places (like a restaurant, hospital, or airport).
- **Task-based syllabus:** Focuses on doing real-life tasks (like writing a letter, booking a hotel).

The teacher can use one type or mix different types based on the students' needs.

### Step 6: Choose Materials and Teaching Methods

Now we decide which books, videos, and tools we will use. We also decide **how to teach** — by lecture, games, group work, role plays, etc.

Younger students may need more pictures and fun games. Older students may like reading, discussions, and writing tasks.

### Step 7: Decide How to Check Students' Learning (Assessment)

We must also plan how we will check if students are learning or not. We can use:

- Tests
- Quizzes
- Speaking activities
- Assignments
- Presentations

We should check students during the course (this is called **formative assessment**) and also at the end of the course (called **summative assessment**).

### Step 8: Review and Improve the Syllabus

After using the syllabus in class, the teacher should think about what worked well and what did not.

Were the students happy? Did they learn what was planned? Was there enough time? What problems came up?

After getting feedback from students or other teachers, the syllabus can be changed or improved for next time.

## ✨ Types of Syllabus (Explained in Simple Words)

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### 1. Structural Syllabus

This syllabus is based on **grammar rules**. It teaches students how sentences are made and how grammar works. The focus is on things like tenses (present, past), sentence patterns, and word order.

For example, students first learn simple sentences like “She is a student,” then move to questions like “Is she a student?” and later to more complex grammar like conditionals or passive voice.

It is good for building a strong base in grammar.

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### 2. Lexical Syllabus

This type of syllabus focuses on **vocabulary**. It helps students learn important words and phrases (also called “lexical chunks”) that they will use in daily life.

For example, students may learn food words, travel words, or phrases like “at the end of the day” or “by the way.”

It is useful when students need to improve their word bank quickly and naturally.

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### 3. Functional-Notional Syllabus

This syllabus is based on **what we do with language (functions)** and **the ideas we talk about (notions)**.

Functions include asking questions, giving advice, greeting someone, apologizing, and so on. Notions are ideas like time, size, location, feelings, etc.

For example, students may learn how to make polite requests using “Could you...” or how to express frequency with words like “always,” “sometimes,” or “never.”

This syllabus helps students **communicate properly in real life**.

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## 4. Task-Based Syllabus

In this type, the main focus is on **doing real-life tasks** using the language. Students learn language by using it to complete a task.

For example, they might plan a trip, fill out a form, role-play a job interview, or make a presentation.

This helps students learn by doing and makes learning more fun and practical.

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## 5. Content-Based Syllabus

Here, students learn the language **through other subjects** like science, history, or geography — but in the target language (like English).

For example, in a content-based English class, students might learn about volcanoes or the solar system, and at the same time improve their vocabulary and reading skills in English.

This type is good for academic learners or students studying in English-medium schools.

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## 6. Mixed or Integrated Syllabus

This type **combines** parts of the other syllabus types. It might include grammar, vocabulary, speaking tasks, and reading topics — all in one syllabus.

For example, a lesson may start with a grammar point, add vocabulary related to it, then end with a speaking activity or task.

This is the most **flexible and balanced** type, and it can be changed based on what students need.

## Challenges in Syllabus Design (In Easy Wording)

### 1. Different Needs of Students

Not all students are the same. Some learn fast, some need more time. Some want to improve speaking, others want to focus on writing or grammar. So, making **one syllabus** that works for **everyone** is very difficult. A topic that helps one student may be too easy or too hard for another.

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## 2. Less Time to Teach Everything

In many classes, there are only a few weeks or months to teach. The teacher has to finish the course in that short time. This means they **can't teach all the topics** in detail. Sometimes, they have to skip useful lessons because there's just **not enough time**.

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## 3. Rules and Limits from the School or Institution

Sometimes, the school or college has **strict rules**. They tell the teacher what to include in the syllabus, or how many weeks to spend on each topic. This means the teacher **can't add new things** or make changes even if the students need something different. It **reduces flexibility**.

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## 4. Lack of Teacher Training

Not all teachers are trained in how to **design a good syllabus**. Some may not know how to choose the right topics or how to arrange lessons in the best way. This can lead to a syllabus that is **unorganized, too difficult, or not useful** for the students.