

Conducting an SSS Lesson

ROADMAP FOR INSTRUCTORS, PARISH SCHOOLS, SMALL GROUPS & FAMILIES

St. Sergius School lessons are designed to support the teaching of the Orthodox Christian Faith in a variety of settings. A lesson may be taught in a parish classroom, a small church-school group, or at home within a family.

This roadmap provides a simple, consistent pattern for conducting an SSS lesson. Individual lessons supply the particular teaching content, presentation, coursework, activities, teacher references, and other resources needed for that subject.

THE SSS LESSON IS A TEACHING FRAMEWORK, NOT A SCRIPT

An SSS lesson provides a prepared path through the subject while allowing reasonable flexibility in delivery. Class size, student ages, available time, teaching space, and individual needs will naturally affect how a lesson proceeds. You do not need to use every optional activity or resource. Preserve the lesson's essential teaching while adapting its delivery responsibly to the students and setting before you.

I. BEFORE THE LESSON - PREPARE

- Review the lesson body, presentation, Teacher Reference, speaker or teacher notes, activities, and coursework before students gather.
- Prepare the learning space and the materials required for the lesson: Prayers Before and After Class, lesson sheets, writing or drawing supplies, activity materials, Holy Scripture, icons, or other lesson-specific resources.
- If a presentation is used, prepare the television, projector, computer, or tablet beforehand and open the presentation so it is ready when teaching begins.
- Choose optional activities or resources according to your setting. A parish classroom, small group, and family may use the same lesson differently without changing its essential teaching.

BEFORE STUDENTS ARRIVE, KNOW FOUR THINGS

What the main lesson is teaching • what materials will be used • what activities are planned • approximately how the available time will be divided.

2. GATHER - SETTLE THE CLASS

- Welcome students and allow a brief period to settle into the learning space.
- Distribute materials needed at the beginning. Keep later materials aside if they may become a distraction.
- Where attendance is ordinarily recorded, take attendance once students have gathered. In a two-teacher classroom, one instructor may do this while the other begins settling the class.
- For a small group or family, simply gather, prepare the materials, quiet unnecessary distractions, and turn attention toward the lesson.

3. BEGIN - PRAYER AND ORIENTATION

- Gather attention toward the Holy Icon or icons and begin with the designated Prayers Before Class.
- Invite student participation in the prayers according to ability and comfort while maintaining a prayerful, orderly atmosphere.
- Where the lesson provides a Troparion, Kontakion, Scripture passage, hymn, or other liturgical text, use it at the beginning or at the point indicated in the lesson materials.
- Briefly introduce what the students are about to learn. The lesson title, opening slide, icon, question, Scripture passage, or a simple introductory statement may serve this purpose.

4. TEACH - FOLLOW THE LESSON FLOW

Proceed through the lesson using the prepared lesson material and presentation. A typical SSS lesson moves through a combination of the following:

TYPICAL LESSON FLOW

Teaching and explanation → guided discussion → lesson activity → coursework or review → concluding recap

- Use the presentation as a teaching aid rather than a script to be read aloud. Explain the lesson clearly, draw attention to important ideas, invite appropriate questions, and help students connect the lesson's different parts.
- The teacher notes and lesson body may contain more information than younger students require directly. Use that fuller material to strengthen your own understanding while presenting the subject at an appropriate level.
- The lesson elements do not need to occur as completely separate blocks. Good teaching may move naturally between explanation, questions, visual material, discussion, and student work.

ACTIVITIES & COURSEWORK

- Use coursework and activities according to the needs of your students. Some activities are best completed after the main teaching; others may be incorporated during the lesson.
- Some students, particularly younger students, benefit from colouring, drawing, note-taking, or completing selected lesson work while listening. Use this where it supports attention rather than replaces it.
- Do not feel obligated to complete every question or optional activity simply because it has been provided.

WHEN TIME IS LIMITED

Give priority to the lesson's main teaching, meaningful student participation, the principal activity or coursework most useful to your group, and the final recap.

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

- Welcome student questions. Questions often reveal whether students have understood the central teaching.
- If a question would take the class too far from the lesson, acknowledge it and return to it later rather than allowing the entire lesson to be redirected.
- In mixed-age groups, teach the same essential lesson while adjusting the depth of explanation, questioning, writing, drawing, or discussion naturally for different students. Use lesson-specific guidance where it is provided rather than applying a fixed age rule to every lesson.

A SIMPLE PRINCIPLE FOR ADAPTATION

Fidelity to the lesson content; flexibility in delivery. The setting may change, but the essential Orthodox teaching of the lesson should remain clear.

5. CONCLUDE - REVIEW AND PRAYER

- Allow enough time to bring the lesson to a deliberate conclusion. Avoid ending simply because the clock has run out or worksheets are finished.
- Return attention to the lesson's main takeaway. Use the recap supplied with the lesson, or ask one or two focused questions about what students remember learning.
- Allow a short opportunity for final questions. Review or collect completed coursework where appropriate; student work may also be completed later if that better suits the setting.
- Gather attention again toward the Holy Icon or icons and conclude with the designated Prayers After Class.
- If the lesson includes an appropriate closing Kontakion, Troparion, hymn, or other liturgical text, read or sing it according to the lesson instructions and the practice of the group.

6. AFTER THE LESSON - RESET AND REFLECT

- Dismiss students in a manner appropriate to the teaching environment. In a parish setting, take particular care where students leave through the Nave or another part of the church.
- Remind students to collect personal belongings, completed work, books, and other materials.
- Return the teaching space to good order. Put away supplies and activity materials, close or disconnect presentation equipment as required, and prepare the room for its next use.
- Take a brief moment to reflect while the lesson is still fresh: what worked well, where students had difficulty, questions to revisit, timing issues, or small adjustments for next time.
- If you teach with another instructor, a short conversation after class can be enough. Reflection should improve future teaching without becoming another administrative burden.

KEEP REFLECTION SIMPLE

A sentence or two is often sufficient. The purpose is simply to allow each lesson to make the next one better.

ADAPTING THE ROADMAP TO YOUR SETTING

PARISH CLASSROOM	Use the full lesson structure as appropriate, including attendance, presentation equipment, group discussion, activities, and orderly dismissal.
SMALL GROUP	Allow greater conversational flexibility. Students may share materials, work around one table, and spend additional time discussing the lesson.
FAMILY / HOME	Keep the same essential rhythm of preparation, prayer, teaching, activity or coursework, recap, and closing prayer. A formal classroom setup is not required.

The setting may change. The purpose remains the same:

to help students encounter, understand, remember, and live the teaching of the Orthodox Christian Faith.

God strengthen you, dear teacher!