

# **TRAINING PREPARATION / PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES**

## ***Hanging Laundry Is a Sequence-Learning Activity***

In any session that involves learning a sequence (the order to perform tasks, the order of importance of various items, etc.) use this “laundry exercise.”

First, suspend a strand of yarn or kite string between two points of equal height. Then using clothespins, hang cards, each labeled with a step in the sequence, on the line in a random order. Then ask the group to rearrange the cards in the proper sequence.

This exercise can also be done in small groups using multiple lines, or completed by individual volunteers. The finished “clotheslines” can be left to serve as learning aids for the rest of the session.

## ***Balloons Provide a Festive Setting***

Whenever set-up requires 3-4 people per table, place a balloon at each table. Written on each balloon should be one of the subjects to be covered during the session. In addition to giving attendees a preview of what is to come, the colored balloons add a bright, congenial atmosphere to the room.

After lunch, pass out paper and ask each group to list at least five points covered on the subject on the balloon at their table. This exercise is a quick energy booster and a bonding technique because it promotes teamwork.

## ***Assess Participants’ Skill Levels***

A day or two before a course, break down the various topics, then send a quick survey to registered attendees, asking them to rate their current knowledge/skill level in each according to this five-point scale:

- 1 = No knowledge of the subject
- 2 = Have heard of the subject, but do not understand it
- 3 = Have a basic understanding of the subject
- 4 = Understand the subject and can apply it
- 5 = Fully understand the subject and its application, and could teach or mentor the skill. Based on responses from the incoming class, you will know which areas need more or less emphasis, and which trainees could be tapped as subject-matter experts during the training.

## ***Guiding Footsteps***

A series of “guiding footsteps” lay the ground work for the day’s agenda. Footsteps posted on the floor, walls, or ceiling - each detailing a step of the process or a key idea relating to the topic - lead the trainees throughout the room.

Cut the footsteps from construction paper and laminate them to make them more durable. Use the footsteps as an energizer and review technique as well.

## **Time Control**

Use this exercise to help trainers - and new trainers - better monitor time in the classroom and answer participant questions with greater brevity:

Ask participants to close their eyes and raise their hands when they think 30 seconds has elapsed, opening their eyes as their hand goes up. Using a stop watch, the trainer raises her own hand to mark the 30-second interval, and records times as participant hands go up.

Trainers who tend to ramble a lot and whose training programs consistently go over the allotted time are the same people who raise their hands far after the 30 seconds is past. Trainers who tend to barely finish their sessions in time usually raise their hands a little before the 30 seconds.

The exercise helps trainers understand their own views of time, and whether they have a tendency to think time goes slowly, and therefore think they have a lot of it, or that it passes quickly, and they need to rush.

## **3-D: A Festive Learning Aide**

Instead of the usual course modules listed on a handout, create a 3-D "mobile" that has memorable eye-catching appeal. It will help form learners' attitudes as soon as they walk in the door.

Cut a large circle from card stock, to be hung from the ceiling with gift wrap ribbon.

Then cut nine small holes in that circle - or one hole for each course module - and hang 6-inch circles from the larger circle with the same ribbon. Module names are written on the circles. If there is a prerequisite to a module, attach another circle to the same ribbon as the module.

Color code the circles to correspond

with the color of materials used in the class module. Students can replicate the model on paper so they have a map of their own. An accelerated learning idea: give flags or other colored items to students who finish a colored module and earn a designation as "expert" open for questions.

## **Name Tents Act as Follow-up Cards**

Have participants use their name tents as follow-up cards on which they indicate that they would like additional information on a specific topic. For example, a poem or article may be mentioned in class that participants are interested in obtaining. Participants simply write down key words from the title on their tents. Then collect the name tents at the end of the session and follow-up by sending the requested material.

This helps cut down on unnecessary handouts and conserves paper by ensuring only individuals who are truly interested in a topic receive the information.

## **Round and Round**

Participants can waste valuable training time at the start of a program chatting and settling in. So use this exercise as an attention-getter.

Using a greaseboard or chalkboard, begin drawing a very small circle, gradually expanding it circle by circle until it comes close to filling up the board - much like the concentric circles of a tree trunk that determine age. Draw the circles slowly and quietly until you hear the class settle down and focus on what you are doing. "Does anyone know what I just drew?"

The answer .... “Your attention.”

### **Mind Mapping**

This ice breaker/learning-goals assessment activity creates cohesiveness in a group while establishing priorities and objectives.

In the first part, have attendees pair up and spend 6-10 minutes interviewing each other. They should ask their partners: (1) What is your name? (2) Where are you from? (3) What do you want to get out of the program? (4) What’s the benefit of obtaining what you want out of the program?

In the second part, have everyone introduce their partners to the group. During introductions, the facilitator writes responses to questions #3 and #4 to create a giant “mind map.” Write answers to #3 with a different color marker than #4 on five pieces of flipchart paper taped together or on a large whiteboard.

Keep the mind map up throughout the class and use it as a guide in planning objectives. At the end of class, refer back to the map as a group to make sure you have covered all of the attendees’ needs. Sometimes attendees can put dots next to outcomes as they are covered in class.

### **Professionalism on All Levels**

Announcements of upcoming training programs make the all-important “first impression” to prospective attendees. The presentation on paper should be planned every bit as carefully as the training presentation in the classroom.

1. Do you have a strong title?
2. Are the materials attractive and readable?
3. Does the material answer the key

question, “What’s In It For Me?”

4. Is there a clear, strong program outline?
5. Are you using testimonials?
6. Does the publicity indicate special features like extensive handouts and certificates?
7. Does it feature short instructor biographies?

### **Enliven a Tired Opening Statement**

In an effort to spice up a tired opening, use a set of 4x6 index cards, each with one sentence of your standard introductory remarks printed on it. The cards should be numbered in sequence and placed in attendee information packets. At the start of the session, ask participants to take the cards out and invite the person holding card #1 to stand and read the card aloud. The person with card #2 follows and the round robin continues until all the cards have been read. The last card says, “Now back to the presenter,” the presenter’s cue to go on to the next segment of the presentation.

This strategy has been proven quite successful in getting attendees actively involved in the program and has saved introductions from sounding like they’re being delivered by rote.

### **Hanging Issues**

To address any hanging issues at the end of the day, post a flip chart featuring a large hangman’s noose drawn at the front of the class. Ask participants to jot any pertinent issues not addressed or questions

left unanswered on Post-it-Notes and put them on the chart. The “hanging issues” are addressed through group discussion at the beginning of the next day’s session, or as a closing activity at the end of each day.

### **Make New Trainers More Aware of Varied Learning Styles**

Use this exercise in your train-the-trainer sessions to raise the consciousness of new trainers about the different ways trainees learn. This will introduce them to the topic of learning styles, and help them discover what their own style is.

Ask participants to determine whether their style is visual, auditory, interactive, print, or hands-on. Then post graphics on flip charts representing each of the five styles. For visual learners, use a large picture of a television; for auditory learners a large ear; for interactive learners the graphic is a group of people talking; for print learners an open book; and for hands-on learners a picture of two hands.

Participants should then be given small colored dots and asked to place the dots on the flip chart of their own learning style. This creates a good visual for new trainers to see what kind of learners the majority of trainees will be.

To add more emphasis to the session, use another exercise featuring small Lego kits. It requires assembling about a dozen Lego parts into a small space vehicle. The kits are set up at five “stations” around the room. Participants then choose to assemble a kit based on instructions tailored to their learning style, or to a foreign style. For example, visual learners assemble their Lego kit using instructions that only have pictures, auditory learners assemble their kit by

listening to instructions recorded on cassette players, and so on.

After the exercise, discuss how easy or difficult it was to assemble the kits based on learning styles used. It drives home to future trainers how difficult it can be for learners when they’re trained in a style that differs from their own. This session usually goes over so well that most participants want to keep their assembled Legos.

**VISUAL**

**AUDITORY**

**INTERACTIVE**

**PRINT**

**HANDS-ON**

## **Welcome Back; I Said, Welcome Back!**

Breaks are an important part of the learning process. However, one challenge a trainer faces is how to get participants back from breaks *on time*. The following suggestions may help:

- **Explain the ground rules up front and honor them.** As part of your housekeeping chores, tell attendees when breaks will begin and end. Then explain that you value their time and need their help in covering the material in the allotted time frame by returning from breaks promptly. Stick to your rules. Start the class even if only a few participants come back on time.
  - **Preview coming attractions.** Give participants a reason to come back. For example, right before the break, identify two or three critical job skills they will learn in the course's next segment.
  - **Close the door.** Give a nonverbal, visual clue that the break is over and class is about to resume. This technique allows you to establish some measure of control, and the late-comers will realize class will begin again - whether they're there or not.
  - **Make late-comers pay.** Working on the principle that time is money, one company made this agreement with its trainees: Late-comers would pay \$1 for every minute they are late. If that seems extreme, try a flat charge of \$1 per late attendee. The cash collected can be used for small prizes during the course.
  - **Reward time-conscious attendees.** Since everyone loves a "freebie," consider rewarding those attendees
- who return from break on time with candy or other small items.
- **Write down the expected return time.** Though it sounds like a trivial idea, many trainers simply assume everyone knows when to be back. So don't just announce a 15-minute break and let the group scatter. Write the start-up time on a blackboard or flipchart. It's also helpful to schedule oddly time breaks (18 minutes instead of 15, for example) and then write the odd starting time on the board. Attendees will be more time-conscious if they know they need to be back at precisely 2:48 p.m.
  - **Put a clock in the break area.** This idea helps keep everyone on schedule. Just make sure it is synchronized with your watch or the clock in the training room. Along those same lines, putting a timer of some sort in the break area gives everyone a clear signal that the break is over.
  - **Feed them.** If possible, have refreshments nearby. This strategy makes it easier for everyone to stay close to the room. Be sure to post signs if food and drink are not allowed in the training room.
  - **Take one longer break to allow for phone calls.** Plan for a phone call break and announce it in advance. If you typically take 15-minute breaks in the morning and afternoon, change them to one 10-minute break and one 20-minute break.
  - **Do a quick and simple magic trick.** Everyone loves magic, and if you schedule a quick trick immediately after every break, it'll catch attendees' attention and give them an incentive to be back on time. Be sure to practice the trick so it is flawless and can be done in less than two minutes. A

variation on this theme is to do the trick before the break, and tell participants that you'll show them how to do it immediately following the break.

### **What Are the Benefits?**

As an incentive to complete pre-course training work, send a "prepack" of overview materials (including a quiz) to participants before the session begins. The title page on the prepack should read: *Break this seal .... read the information .... answer the quiz .... and win.*

Participants who arrive at the session with the completed quiz receive a small prize. The prepack has a number of benefits:

- It helps reduce the amount of training time by 45 minutes to 1 hour (the entire session is 4 hours) because trainees have digested overview material usually covered in class.
- It places trainees on a common level of understanding of the material coming into the session.
- Reading and doing the brief quiz exposes trainees to the basic material *twice* before arriving at training.
- It helps dispel learner anxiety by giving trainees some background information so they feel more comfortable at the beginning of class.

Typically an 80-90% response rate to the exercise is achieved by using the prize of your choice.

### **Parking Lot Keeps Traffic Flowing**

It's important to be flexible, handling questions from a training audience, but sometimes questions sidetrack the class, especially when one or two people seem particularly eager to be heard. This exercise prevents inappropriate questions from jamming up the course agenda by creating a "parking lot" for topics to be addressed individually during breaks, or at a later point in the session.

Use a sheet of flip-chart paper labeled "Parking Lot." However, it's not difficult to create a laminated sheet designed to look like a lot, complete with marked spaces and direction arrows that help keep track of the order subjects come up and/or in which they will be discussed.

Comments can either be written directly on the sheet or on Post-it Notes. This method keeps the group on task, and marks all ideas and contributions as important.