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# Dusting Off the Tool Box: Tips for Trainers

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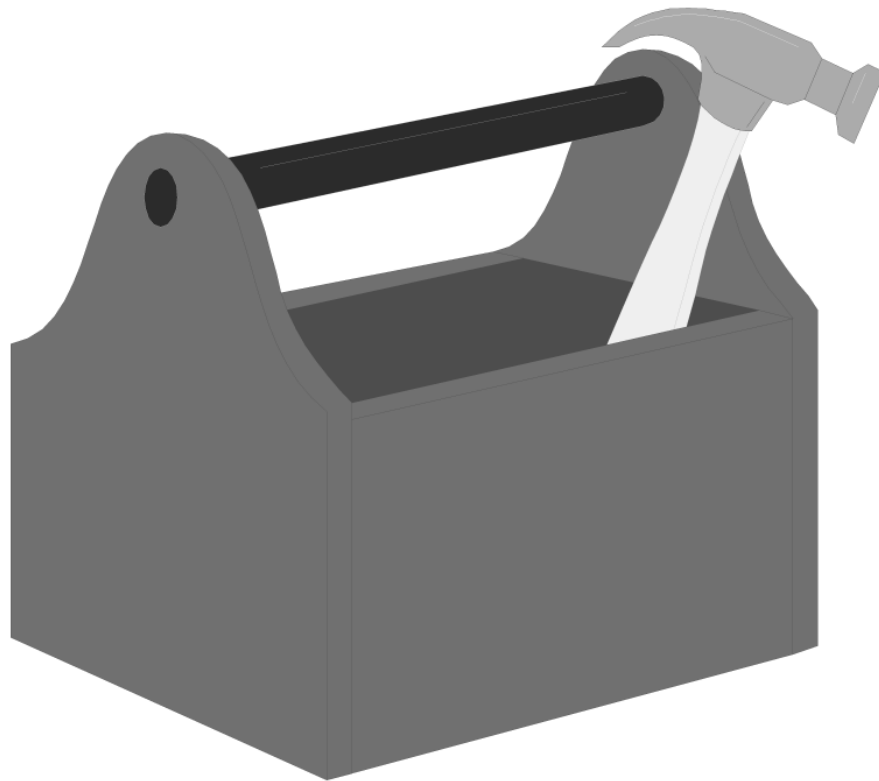
# Dusting off the Tool Box: Tips for Trainers

by Linda Labas & Michael Sandberg

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# About Dusting Off the Toolbox: Tips for Trainers

This resource provides information to help instructors prepare, conduct, and review their presentations. It is divided into 3 sections. Within each section are subcategories with basic information and some simple resources or activities to assist instructors as they reflect upon their teaching practices and plan for a training event.  The material is organized in the following way:

- Section 1: Things to Know
  - About you as a instructor
  - About your audience
  - About preparing for the class or presentation

- Section 2: Things to Do
  - To organize before beginning the presentation
  - To teach: Aids to teaching and delivery

- Section 3: Resources
  - Information for the instructor

Each subsection ends with: *What can you add?* Providing a place for instructors to add their personal approaches, thoughts, or comments to individualize the material and enhance its relevance. Handouts referred to in the document are at the end of this section.
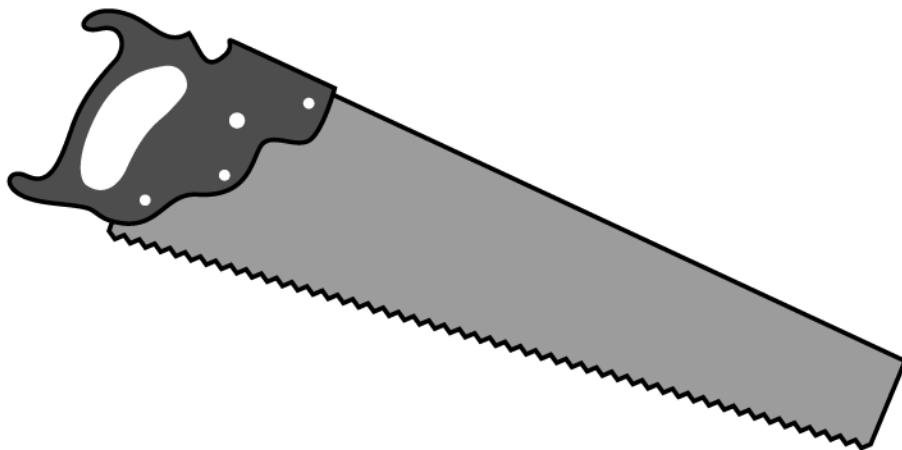
# About you as a instructor

*"A good teacher takes you somewhere else. An excellent teacher changes you where you are."* Kazuzki Tanahashi

**Why is this important?**

When preparing to deliver a training it is important to evaluate who you are as a instructor. Whenever you present information, you are engaged in a relationship with your audience. You are carrying a message, establishing a climate, setting expectations, and eliciting participation and involvement. You'll want to think about what goals and values are the most important ones to transmit to your audience. We train best when the presentation is built around and from our passions. You'll also want to evaluate your style and skill as an instructor and your intended training outcomes or expectations. Training is built not only on the content you present, but also on who you are as a instructor. Knowing yourself will help make your presentations more effective while indicating directions for growth. Remember, as is true with teaching children, teaching adults is a developmental process. As you become more experienced, your style and strategies will also evolve.

**Some things to consider:**

- Complete a self-assessment inventory to review your teaching style (see *Section 1: Handout 1*).
- Evaluate your stage of development and your current learning needs (see *Section 1: Handout 2*).
- Participate in a self-assessment activity with others using the sample in this guide (see *Section 1: Handout 3*) or others from the references listed in the bibliography (see *Section 3: Handout 1*).
- Talk with experienced trainers about their experiences.
- Observe experienced trainers.
- Co-teach with an experienced trainer.
- Take a class or training in adult learning or training strategies.
- Review the bibliography (see *Section 3: Handout 1*).
- At the end of each session, evaluate what worked and what didn't. Reflect on the causes for both the successes and failures. Consider the degree of participation; your understanding and passion for the material; your level of skill and comfort in using different instructional strategies; and the appropriateness of the curriculum to your audience.
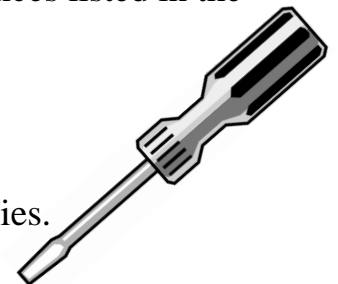
**What can you add?**

# About your audience

**Why is this important?**

> Knowing who you are teaching will help you tailor the material and
> structure your presentations to fit the audience. Knowing the specifics of
> your audience will allow you to determine the logistics of the session such
> as: the amount and type of space needed for each activity, the quantity of
> materials needed, and how to structure small and large group activities.
> Learning about your audience also provides information about their level of
> knowledge and type of experience and skill. This, in turn, informs your
> choice of teaching structures, learning activities, level of presentation,
> expectations, and the types of examples to use. It will also help you decide if
> and when to recruit others to train with you.

**Some things to consider:**
- Gather general audience information prior to teaching by visiting the staff,
  sending a simple needs assessment survey, talking with staff on the
  telephone, or building in a beginning activity during your first class or
  presentation to get more information.
- The questions you might ask about your target audience may include:
  - Who specifically are you teaching?
  - Are they working? If so, in what field and what role?
  - Are they students?
  - What level of knowledge and experience do they have relative to the
    topic?
  - What larger community influences might need to be considered? (e.g.
    community climate, or culture)
  - Is your group diverse or is it a more homogeneous target audience?
  - What makes this group unique and individual?
- Review information about general characteristics of specific audiences. For
  a brief overview of some groups of learners, see *Section 1: Handout 4,
  Section 1: Handout 5,* and *Section 1: Handout 6.*

**What can you add?**
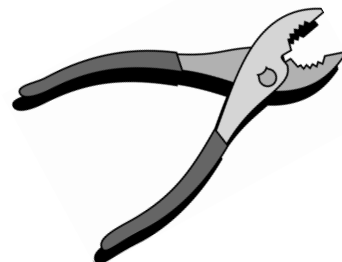
# About preparing for the presentation:

*"A mind is a wonderful thing. It starts working the day you're born and never stops until you get up to speak in public."* Unknown

## Why is this important?

As every instructor knows, adequate preparation is important. Being thoroughly conversant with the content being presented, the methodologies to be used, and the sequence of activities that have been planned allows the presenter to focus on the process. As previously mentioned, the success of any presentation is based on a number of factors, including what the content is and how the information is shared. It is critical to your success as an instructor that you prepare for a presentation using a backward planning approach, reviewing what your desired outcome is and preparing with this clearly thought out objective in mind.

## Some things to consider:
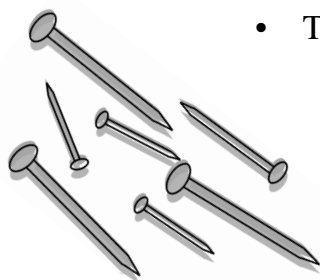
- Think about your objectives and consider these questions:
  - Can I clearly state my desired outcomes for this session? Does it fit with the objectives of the curriculum designers?
  - What do I want the participants to know by the end of this session?
  - What does the material address?
  - What do I want them to do with this information? How can they use it tomorrow?
  - How will I engage the audience and present the materials so that I will be successful at reaching my outcomes and so that the participants will become involved with the material and the ideas being presented?
  - How will I know if my objectives have been met?
- Arrange all the necessary logistics. Consider the importance of a comfortable and inviting environment, as this affects what and how we learn.
- Double-check your space arrangement. Has a space been reserved and confirmed? Is it adequate and conducive to the needs of the group and to your instructional approaches? Are the space and the materials universally accessible? (see *Section 1: Handout 7*)
- Get all the necessary materials and equipment you will need to teach. If you will need audiovisual equipment or videotapes, have they been secured well in advance?
- Complete *Section 1: Handout 8* to be sure you are ready.
- Review what you know about your audience and their specific learning styles and needs.
- Study any content areas with which you may not be thoroughly familiar (refer to the resources listed in the curriculum, including the Bibliography).
- Review *Section 1: Handout 9* to learn about tips for presenting.

## What can you add?

# To organize before beginning the presentation

*"If teachers are to set up classrooms where inquiry is encouraged, then they must be educated in ways that encourage inquiry. The willingness and the competence of the teacher to seek and find meaning through direct experience and reflection influences how she or he will structure and mediate that learning environment." Jacqueline Grennon Brooks, Teachers and Students: Constructivists Forging New Connections, 1997*

**Some things to consider:**
- Review the session as it has been planned by the curriculum writers. Evaluate what methods you feel comfortable with and what you might want to change. Review the time allocated to teach this material and think about how to adjust activities or information to flexibly meet the needs of the participants.
- Review any additional elements you might want to be sure to integrate or stress: for example, relevant topic specific terminology and procedures, accreditation standards, or performance standards.
- Consider the balance of teaching methodologies so that lecture doesn't predominate over processing, reflecting, and experiencing
- Consider the match between your considered training approaches and your desired outcomes (see *Section 2: Handout 2*).
- Consider how people learn about teaching (see *Section 2: Handout 3*).
- Organize your presentation in a way that fits with your personal style. For example, do you prefer an agenda for the session, outlines, or note cards? How should the handouts and overheads be organized? Should they be organized in a participant packet and distributed to each participant's seat or handed out as information is discussed?
- Gather any props you might want to use to jump start the training, to spark creative, symbolic thinking, or to create a climate of fun and engagement.
- Pack a "survival bag" with additional materials, resources, books, and office supplies that you think you might want to have on hand during the training. The names, addresses, and phone numbers of agencies and resource people can also be very handy.
- Consider what structure and rules you might like to establish with the group (see *Section 2: Handout 4*).
- Review and revise your plan immediately prior to the session.
- Use *Section 2: Handout 5* to make sure you are prepared.

**What can you add?**

# To teach: Aids to teaching and delivery

*"I hear, and I forget; I see, and I remember; I do, and I understand." Chinese Proverb*

**Some things to consider:**

- Review your agenda and how you plan to begin your session. Pay attention to the beginning of your session. Openings are like first impressions . . . people remember them! The presentation beginning should be well planned and answer the questions that audiences have: Who are you? What is this about? How relevant is this topic to me?
- Ask participants if a formal transition signal would be helpful when changing from small to large group activities. If so, discuss and decide on a group signal.
- Balance the amount of content with the amount of time for processing information. Research shows that the working memory contains about 7 items of information. When the information is more technical and unfamiliar, less content and more processing time should be the rule. Consider presenting no more than 5 important facts before having participants' process the information. Plan processing time at regular intervals. For example; discuss or lecture no more than 20 minutes and then follow with a processing opportunity (Garmston & Wellman, 1992).
- Vary the pace of your presentation, the rate of your speech, and volume of your voice.
- Incorporate multiple ways for people to become engaged in the learning. Review *Section 2: Handout 6* for some ideas.
- Review *Section 2: Handout 7* to learn how to promote discussion among your students.
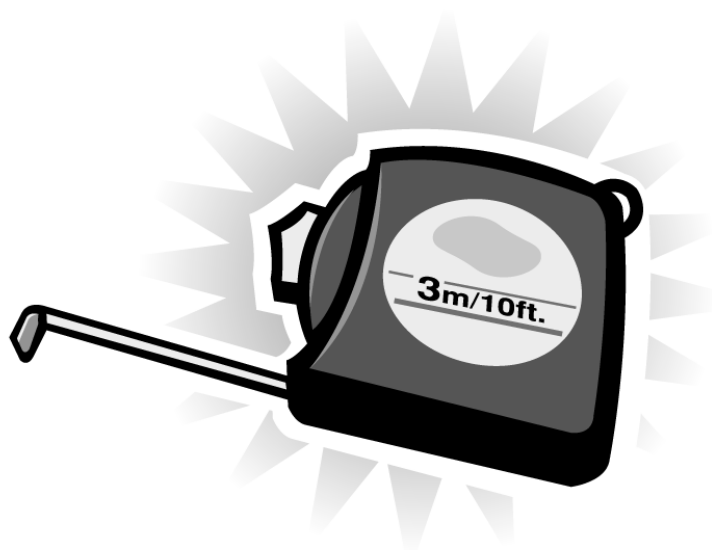
# To teach: Aids to teaching and delivery (continued)

- Close the presentation in a planned way. The way you close strongly influences the participants' memory of your session. Preparing a closing that communicates that something was accomplished, that the experience was relevant and worth their time, and that leaves participants with thoughts related to using the information back home will make a favorable impression.
- Plan to be available for a period of time after the session to continue to share resources, answer questions, and personally connect with participants.
- Allow for opportunities to reflect about and evaluate the presentation. If you are co-teaching, schedule time to talk with your co-presenter about the session and share insights about how it went and what you might change. If you are the sole instructor, consider completing *Section 2: Handout 8* or keep a journal to record your thoughts.
- During the session respond effectively and quickly to potential problems (Review *Section 2: Handout 9*).

**What can you add?**
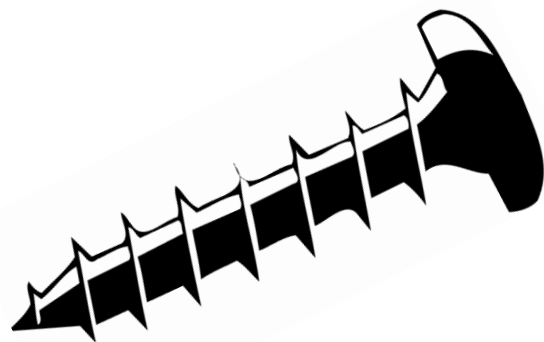
# Information for the instructor

"In a time of rapid change, it is not what students learn in classrooms that will make for excellence in their future work; it is how well they are preparW  rto continue to learn that will make the difference." Unknown

## Some things to consider:

- Think about the variety of ways to use the curriculum with your participants and staff and as a resource.  Consider using it for workshops or classes or review the content and discuss ways to incorporate the information into existing courses or staff development activities.

- Refer to the bibliography *(Section 3: Handout 1)* for information as you plan, deliver, and evaluate your instruction or to learn more about instructional strategies, and adult learning.  The bibliography was designed to provide instructors with an overview of additional resources for their own development as instructors.

**What can you add?**

# A Self Assessment Inventory
# Where do you fit on the presenter continuum?
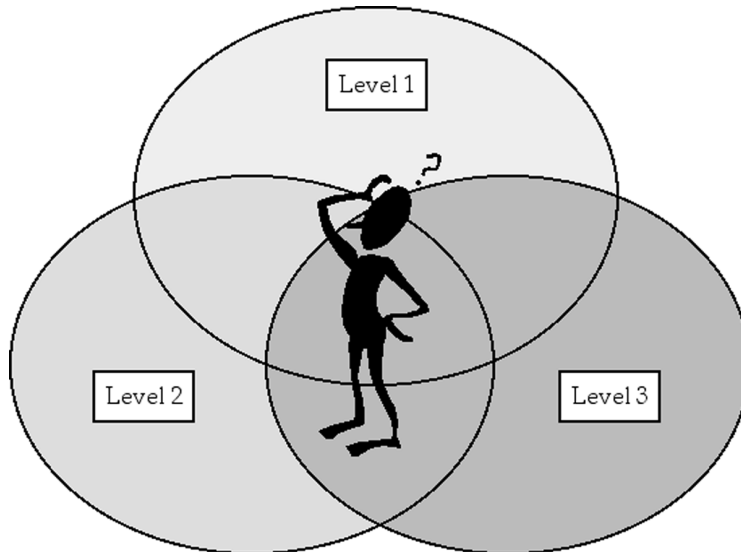


## Level 1
I am new and need my script.
- has limited experience and limited learning strategies
- focuses on imparting information and content
- has difficulty adapting to group

## Level 2
I feel comfortable in this leadership role and can be flexible with the content and style of presenting.
- shifts from teacher-directed presenting to more learner-focused
- does less talking and more participatory involvement

## Level 3
I feel that presenting is a fit for me, I am very audience sensitive.
- are facilitators with a wide range of strategies
- changes focus as needs arise
- can focus on content but keep a pulse on the audience

Adapted from: Bloom, P. J. (2000). Workshop Essentials: Planning and Presenting Dynamic Workshops. Lake Forest, IL: New Horizons.

# Stages in the Development of Trainers

| Developmental Stage | Needs for Continued Growth |
|---|---|
| Stage 1: Survival | Someone to decompress with afterward.<br><br>Someone to point out any successes and to help me learn how to evaluate what works and what doesn't.<br><br>Someone to assure me that I can learn to do this. |
| Stage 2: Consolidation | A chance to observe how others deal with specific types of problems.<br><br>Feedback from a mentor about specific strategies to try in order to work better on perceived problems.<br><br>Resources containing specific training strategies. |
| Stage 3: Renewal | Chances to observe quality trainers at work.<br><br>Exposure to new subject matter that is personally and professionally exciting.<br><br>Opportunities to try new things. |
| Stage 4: Maturity | Networking with other trainers.<br><br>Opportunities to mentor others.<br><br>Gatherings where the philosophical issues associated with training and professional development in the field are discussed. |

*Adapted by C. Michael Sandberg from ideas presented in Katz, L. (1995). <u>The developmental stages of teachers in Talks with Teachers of Young Children</u> (pp. 203-210). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.*

# What Does It Take?
## A self-assessment activity

**Purpose:** To provide instructors with an opportunity to:

- Identify the skills, traits, characteristics, knowledge, and attitudes needed to become an effective instructor.
- Develop a road map for their own professional development related to specific skills and expertise each would like to enhance or develop.

**Directions:**

- Using the rules for large group brainstorming ask participants to respond to the following questions:

    - *What do you believe is required for excellent performance as an instructor?*

    - *What are the traits, skills, characteristics, knowledge, and attitudes needed?*

- Chart responses.
- Ask participants to review the list and record on a sheet of paper their top 10 important traits as a trainer. (Alternately, the participants can vote for traits if the desire is to have a group list.)
- Ask participants to use the handout provided to record and rate.
- Convene the large group.
- Ask participants how they can use this information.
- Point out that self assessment provides a road map to help develop skills and expertise.
- Point out that this information can also be used as a self reflection tool to rate yourself after teaching, or as a tool for observation by a coworker in a peer coaching model..
- If continuing work with a particular group, you may want to have them design a plan for developing a particular area they would like to focus on and report their experience at the next session.

*Activity adapted from: Building powerful in-service programs by Barbara Wolfe, Ph.D.*

# What Does It Take
# Activity Template

Review the list of traits. Pick your top 10 and rate.

| Traits | Never | Rarely | Occasionally | Frequently | Always |
|--------|-------|--------|--------------|------------|--------|
| 1. | | | | | |
| 2. | | | | | |
| 3. | | | | | |
| 4. | | | | | |
| 5. | | | | | |
| 6. | | | | | |
| 7. | | | | | |
| 8. | | | | | |
| 9. | | | | | |
| 10. | | | | | |

Comments:

How can you use this information?

# What We Know About Adult Learners
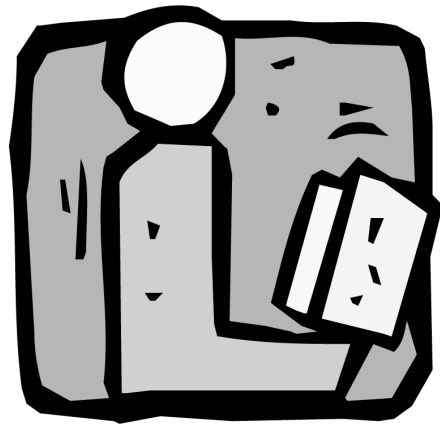
| A Few Characteristics | A Few Ideas For Teaching |
|---|---|
| • Self directed | • Provide a safe, personalized learning environment |
| • Life and work experienced | • Guide and create opportunities for self reflection |
| • Resourceful | • Try new practices |
| • Task centered | • Individualize learning |
| • Motivated through interest and a reason for participating | • Vary approaches to learning |
| • Learn by doing; learn by application | • Provide some choice and control |

# What we know about traditional "freshman" students

| A few characteristics | A few ideas for teaching |
|---|---|
| • Broad range of academic abilities<br><br>• May have fears about college based on past negative school experiences<br><br>• Broad range of study skills | • Provide a safe, personalized learning environment<br><br>• Individualize learning<br><br>• Use varied approaches to learning<br><br>• Include coaching and mentoring to guide<br><br>• Provide concrete background information to help develop study skills<br><br>• Link to common experiences or practice<br><br>• Provide for varied writing or computer skills |

# What We Know About Direct Support Professionals

### Providing support across the age span

While it is difficult to categorize direct support professionals as a group, there are some traits that seem to characterize most. Each of these traits has implications for instructors. These characteristics should be seen as an addition to those true for most other adult learners.

- **People who provide direct support are person centered**

  They are not interested in theory for theory's sake. What ever we teach must be related, in their eyes, to improving the lives of the induviduals they support.

- **People who provide direct support are often under high levels of stress.**

  They often work long hours, have families and children to care for when they get home, and sadly, don't make much money. Therefore it is important to provide the bulk of the materials they will need so they don't have to spend a lot of time going to the library. Flexibility in terms of deadlines and expectations is also necessary. Including, while at the same time limiting, opportunities for venting is critical.

- **People who provide direct support vary enormously in terms of their educational background.**

  You may have people in your group who hated school and never went beyond high school (perhaps even some who never finished). You may have people who have positive experiences and advanced degrees. What this means for you as an instructor is that you have to include both

basic and sophisticated readings, concepts, and activities in your teaching. Try to be sure to have something that will be relevant to each person in the group every session.

- **People who provide direct support are often very emotionally invested in their work.**

  To be a good direct support professional you have to be appropriately emotionally vulnerable to the individuals you serve. You have to really care about what you are doing. This means that an instructor must create an atmosphere of safety, where participants will feel comfortable discussing their experiences and practices without feeling that they could be attacked. Instructors should be particularly attentive and responsive to signs of emotional distress in the people in the group.

- **The material being discussed is often closely related, both positively and negatively, to the participants' own emotional lives.**

  Whenever you discuss issues about supported individuals, people's own lifetime experiences are brought to mind. This, once again, increases the emotional vulnerability of the group. One motivator for many people entering the field is wanting to keep individuals from replicating their own life experiences.  Many intense feelings may surface at unexpected times. Because of this and the above point, instructors must also include opportunities to explore the participant's own experiences and how those experiences may have impacted on their current attitudes and practices.

- **Many direct support professionals have limited opportunities to talk to other adults during their working days.**

  The participants will have a strong need to share stories and talk among themselves. This element must be included if they are to feel enriched by the experience of the training. As those working with the issues of the field on a day to day basis, they also can be depended on to teach each other and you, the instructor.

*Created by: C. Michael Sandberg, Consultant in Early Care and Education*

# Universal Design
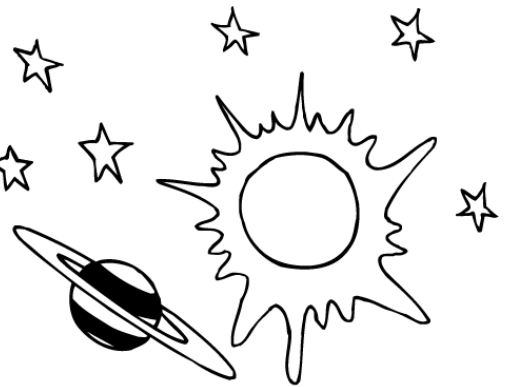
## What Is It?

- The design of products and environments to be used by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design.

## Why Do It?

- Varying ability is not a special condition of the few but a common characteristic of being human as we change physically and intellectually throughout our lives.

- If a design works well for people with disabilities, it works better for everyone.

- To reach all learners regardless of learning style or ability, materials, equipment, and space must accommodate all learners.

## Why Pay Attention To It?

- Under Title III of the ADA, places of public accommodations are required to ensure that people whose disabilities affect hearing, vision, speech, or cognition are provided with effective communication through auxiliary aids and services that enable them to fully benefit from facilities, services, goods, and programs. (Conferences and classes that are open to the public fall within this category).

## Resources:

- ADA Information Center: www.ada-infonet.org

- Adaptive Environments Center, Inc.
  374 Congress Street
  Suite 301
  Boston, MA 02210.
  617/695-0085 (V/TTY)
  617/482-8099 (Fax)
  adaptive@adaptenv.org
  www.adaptenv.org

# Training Planning Form

Section Title: _____     Date: _____

Location: _____     Number of Participants: _____

## Space Checklist:
- ❑ Wheelchair accessible
- ❑ Appropriate size
- ❑ Space is flexible in seating and movement
- ❑ Lighting is adequate
- ❑ Good acoustics
- ❑ Food ordered (special diets?)

## Equipment Checklist:
- ❑ Overhead projector
- ❑ VCR/Monitor (or computer/LCD projector and screen)
- ❑ Flip Chart/Black board
- ❑ Easel
- ❑ Markers
- ❑ Extension cord
- ❑ Extra batteries or bulbs

## Materials Checklist:
- ❑ Curriculum Guide
- ❑ Pre/Post Knowledge Surveys
- ❑ Agenda
- ❑ Handouts
- ❑ Transparencies
- ❑ Name Tags
- ❑ Pens/Pencils
- ❑ Suggested activity materials
- ❑ Resource books/ articles
- ❑ Evaluation forms
- ❑ CEU forms, as appropriate
- ❑ Mileage forms, as appropriate
- ❑ Certificates of Completion

## Notes & Comments:

# Tips for Successful Presentations: A Few Reminders . . .
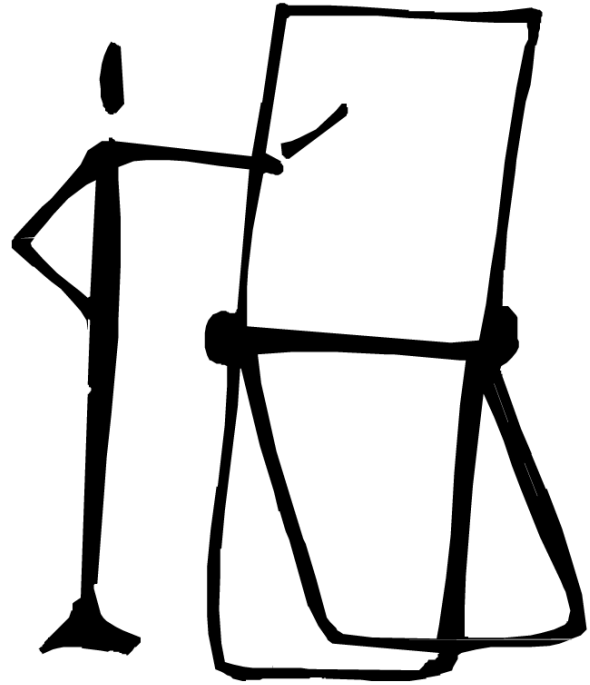
- Learn about your audience.

- Clarify the topic and the time for presenting.

- Decide on the specific content.
    - What you want them to know by the end of the event?
    - What do you want them to do with the information?

- Determine the session structure.
    - How will the session flow?
    - What learning strategies will you use?
    - How will you engage the audience?

- Decide how you will evaluate the session.
    - Will you formally ask for feedback?
    - Will you brainstorm responses?
    - Will you do a self-assessment?
    - Will participants be graded for their work?

# What we remember, What we retain

The type of instructional strategies used makes a difference in how much information people remember. Research shows that active learning involving multiple senses provides the basis for a higher percentage of information retention.

For example:

**When instructors use ............... Students remember**
Lecture ........................................................................... 5%
Reading ..........................................................................10%
Audio - Visuals ............................................................ 20%
Demonstration .............................................................. 30%
Discussion in groups ....................................................50%
Reflection and active involvement: Practice by doing...........75%
Immediate application: Teaching others to do.......................90%

*From: Sousa, D. (1995). How the brain learns. Reston, VA: NASSP.*

# Matching Training Approaches to Training Outcomes

Think about what area you hope to affect. What is your desired outcome? What instructional strategies should be used to achieve the outcomes?

**For example:**

| If your desired impact or outcome is: | Think about using these instructional strategies: |
|---|---|
| Awareness | Reading<br>Lecture |
| Knowledge acquisition | Reading<br>Lecture<br>Demonstration<br>Observation<br>Interviewing<br>Problem solving<br>Brainstorming<br>Discussion |
| Skill acquisition | Role playing<br>Field application<br>Guided reflection<br>Self-reflection<br>Follow-up work<br>Coaching |
| Changes in attitudes and values | Role playing<br>Field application<br>Case studies<br>Guided reflection<br>Self-reflection<br>On-site application<br>Clinical/consultation/supervision |

*From: Winston, McCollum & Catlett (1997). <u>Reforming personnel preparation in early intervention</u>. Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.*

# Guidelines for Empowering Others Via Training and Supervision
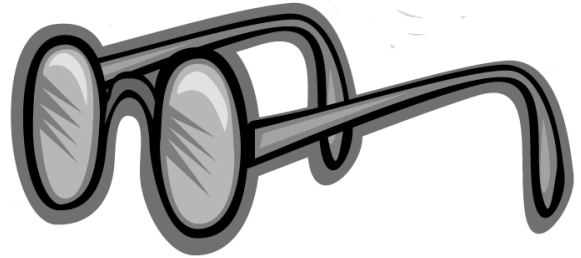
1. **Focus on exploring the participant's perceptions and understandings of the situation.**
   Significant learning occurs when an individual is able to deepen their understanding. For information to cause change or growth, it must be integrated into current understanding. It must have a context. Knowing how a participant sees things enables the instructor to introduce questions, concerns, and information that will have relevance and make sense within the participant's view of the world. This approach also validates the participants as capable, thinking people.

2. **Focus on supporting enduring attitudes and dispositions.**
   To succeed in any people-oriented, helping profession, we need patience, humor, inventiveness, an understanding of our limits, and a problem solving attitude. Nurturing these attitudes through guidance and modeling will greatly benefit any learner.

3. **Focus on successes.**
   Confidence in your ability to succeed is learned from successful experiences. Analyzing experiences that worked gives the instructor an opportunity to describe goals and guiding principles clearly without emotional issues getting in the way. This process will help the participant understand what they did to achieve success, and how they might be able to succeed in other circumstances.

4. **Focus on growth as a long term process.**
   It took all of us a long time to get where we are. Our participants, like us, have to go through a process of learning. If we remember this and watch patiently, noting growth as it occurs, we can focus on our learning needs.

5. **Focus on providing moderate amounts of insight and inspiration.**
   Too much information at once causes all learners to shut down. The participants' goals for themselves and their learning have to be seen by them as achievable.

6. **Focus on suggesting possibilities.**
   If you consistently give answers or advice, participants will cease to see themselves as able to find answers without you. The desire to be right is very strong. Suggesting possibilities and then evaluating teaches problem solving skills and gives participants the resources and techniques to find solutions themselves.

7. **Focus on helping the participant define realistic goals.**
   Having realistic goals, given your resources and situation, enables people to succeed and celebrate their successes. Instructors can help participants identify broad goals and benchmarks to measure achievement toward goals. This important skill can be used by participants when working in their own environments. How to break tasks down into realizable steps is an important skill to learn.

*Prepared by Michael Sandberg utilizing many of the ideas presented in Lilian Katz's book, Helping Others Learn to Teach, (ERIC Clearing House, 1979)*

# Ideas For Beginning The Class

## Develop And Review Ground Rules

These are rules to conduct the meeting or class. They establish the behaviors the participants expect from each other. The instructor can initiate the development of the ground rules by giving some examples such as:

1. We will keep to the agenda and time schedule.
2. We will end the seminar with a plan for our next steps.

The group should have an opportunity to offer suggestions. The ground rules should be agreed upon at the beginning of the class.
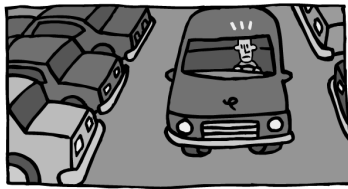
## The Parking Lot

The Parking Lot is a place in the middle of the table, hanging on the wall, or on a flip chart. It is a place to "park" ideas, questions, and comments that may not directly relate to the discussion, but ones that participants do want addressed. The purpose of the Parking Lot is to keep the group on task and to diffuse side bar conversations. The Parking Lot is visible to all and reviewed by the instructor at the end of the class. If using a flip chart, the instructor can use it to write unrelated questions or ideas that come up during the class. Another way to use a Parking Lot is to give everyone post-it notes to write ideas and questions on that are important considerations but do not relate to what is being discussed by the group at the time. Participants can "park" their notes freely during the class. If utilizing a Parking Lot, remember to leave time at the end of the seminar to review the questions and comments.

## New Words/New Terms Chart
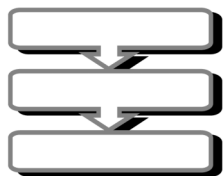
Using a flip chart or posting chart paper to record and define words, terms, and initials ensures that all participants are familiar with the vocabulary. Having a New Word/New Terms Chart available serves as a reminder to instructors that presenting information in everyday language that is jargon free provides for a more open, participatory, and collaborative training.

# ☑ Check the Specifics
## The Final Steps ☑

- Write down the agenda and the time for each section and activity.

- Prepare handouts and materials based on the numbers of people who will be attending.

- Check that visuals are easy to read and all equipment needed is available and working.

- Finalize plans for the site location, get keys, and find out about equipment.

- Visit the location, check the room arrangement, and confirm that the setting is accessible.

- Practice doing your presentation alone, for a partner, for a friend, or for a coworker.

- Arrive early to set up and greet the audience.

# Instructional approaches and learning strategies

To assist instructor to achieve a balance in presenting information, several learning structures are described below.

## Ice Breaker

Ice breakers are simple activities that often begin a class or training. They are used to help people learn each others names, connect names and faces, introduce or focus on a topic, and encourage people to share and relate their own experiences. A carefully selected ice breaker sets the climate and tone for the training and can serve to create a relaxed, comfortable, and positive learning environment.

## Brainstorming

Brainstorming is an individual or group processing strategy used to generate a lot of information in a short period of time. This strategy is used when participants have some knowledge about a particular topic. The brainstorming task's function is to get participant input and generate ideas for strategies or solutions. To structure this process, the instructor provides the directions and rules for brainstorming (no criticism, hitchhiking off others ideas is okay, freewheeling is welcome, quantity is the goal), leads the discussion, and charts responses. As an alternative to support participants who may be more reflective and less inclined to actively participate, instructors may want to provide a brief time for silent brainstorming, asking participants to jot down their ideas on a post-it note. Once these ideas are generated, participants can post their notes, and the instructor can review and proceed with the large group brainstorming.

## Affinity Diagram

This is a structured form of brainstorming. It's a creative rather than logical process that produces consensus by sorting cards rather than by discussion. It gives each individual an opportunity to contribute in a nonthreatening way. The affinity diagram is useful when gathering input about a particular subject, theme, topic or issue and when there are a large number of ideas and opinions. This structure is used to actively involve participants in looking at particular topics that are known to them but which need to be grouped and organized around a specific concept. The added benefit of using this structure is the creation of a concrete product or plan that can be used to take

information home to further work on and apply to their practice. The affinity diagram involves 5 steps. Before beginning the activity the instructor articulates an "essential question" or possesses a specific issue from which participants can begin sharing information and thoughts.

Step 1: Brainstorm
• Follow the guidelines for brainstorming
• Record one idea per note
• Be creative, think big, look at all areas
• Write legibly

Step 2: Post on Chart Paper
• No talking
• Post anywhere
• Read and review what's posted

Step 3: Sort
• Sort into related groups
• No talking
• Gut reaction - rapid process
• All participants jump in (individual sorting is done simultaneously)
• If disagreement, don't discuss, simply move. If disagreement continues, create duplicate note and place one in each

Step 4: Develop Headers
• Be concise
• Complete thought (5-7 words is best!)
• Should make sense standing alone
• Captures essential link in all under it
• Should have consensus of group
• Place at top of each grouping

Step 5: Draw the Finished Diagram
• Connect the Boxes
• Review the work

# Story Telling

Story telling is a strategy that provides participants with concrete experiences related to the topic and helps to generate a personal connection to the material. Instructors can provide a sample story to illustrate a particular issue or idea or can ask participants to share a story that gives an example of something they've experienced or are having concerns about. Stories also provide a way to discuss observations and impressions about what is working or not working in a particular situation. Stories used as a small group activity provide an opportunity for participants to reflect about their own experiences, reactions, and approaches to emotional or sensitive topics and offers problem solving opportunities within a classroom community.

# Group Exercises and Discussions

This approach is suited for a small group. Participants cooperatively complete a specific task or discuss a particular issue or topic. Used prior to the beginning of a content lecture, this strategy provides an opportunity for participants to discuss what they already know about a particular topic. When used as a follow-up to lecture material, participants are provided time to process and reflect about the subject discussed and check with others about their comprehension of the specific information shared. Reconvening small groups in the larger group to report, compare results, and share thoughts provides an added opportunity for broader input. This strategy is used throughout the curriculum.

# Role-playing

Role-playing is an experiential strategy used to assist participants to learn by doing. Role-playing exercises give participants an opportunity to develop concrete strategies or skills, provided the situation highlights something relevant and realistic. In addition to providing participants with practice in applying new knowledge and skills, role-playing creates opportunities for participants to think about and discuss attitudes, values, and beliefs. This type of activity usually works best when done in small groups until the class feels more comfortable and secure in their learning environment. Later, role-playing exercises can be done with the entire class observing, discussing, and analyzing the presented situation.

## Guided Video Viewing

This is an information processing approach to assist participants in gathering particular content. When working with a new group of participants or a class new to formal education, this structure assists participants to develop observation and recording skills. As an added feature, the instructor can provide a format or template for documenting information, allowing time for the larger group to share and compare responses.

## Visualization

This teaching strategy is a powerful tool for tuning into one's past experiences. It is to be used carefully as it can access feelings that people don't always know they have. It bypasses the conscious, linear part of the brain and goes right to the intuitive. This teaching strategy can be done with eyes closed or focusing softly on a spot, letting the mind drift from the here and now, back to a time when . . . (fill in the topic of discussion). These memories and feelings can often be shared, if the participant wants to, and comparisons can be applied to current child care issues.

## Turn to Your Partner

One way to provide a structure that quickly incorporates opportunities for participants to think about and discuss what they just learned is to use Turn to Your Partner. This approach can be used to balance a lecture or discussion. Participants are asked to turn to the person sitting next to them and to discuss 3 key points made during the last 10 minutes, share a situation in their program that highlights this subject, and discuss concerns they might have regarding what was just discussed.

## Think, Record, Pair, and Share

Think, record, pair, and share is an expansion of the above strategy to assist participants in reflecting and integrating the information presented. This strategy can be used to break up lecture information and provide participants with an opportunity to respond to questions, analyze how the information presented could be used or tried out in their setting, and move from self-reflection to articulating a viewpoint. Instructors provide participants with a question or issue, ask participants to think about the question and the material covered, and record their thoughts. They are then asked to discuss their information with a partner and share responses with the entire class.

## Find Your Spot

Find your spot can be used to build class community and to identify and share information, beliefs, and opinions about a particular subject. This strategy can be used to quickly connect participants and allow participants time to learn about each others' values, beliefs, likes, and talents. Instructors can pair this activity with content specific information or just provide time for sharing around global areas of interest (e.g. favorite seasons or favorite colors). Typically, this strategy is effective at the beginning of a class, when introducing a new subject, or when beginning with a new group. Instructors prepare for this activity by posting corner signs or numbers in designated places in the room. Instructors then announce the areas, provide time for participants to think about and choose their spot, and ask participants to move to their selected spot. Once in their location, instructors provide guidance on topics to discuss and share.

## Jigsaw

A jigsaw is a cooperative learning strategy used as an alternative to lecturing or as a way to read articles and materials and to share knowledge with others. It gives participants an opportunity to learn a particular subject or strategy, become "expert learners", and teach others this information. The advantage of using this strategy is to provide participants with the opportunity to direct their own learning and to reinforce their learning by teaching others new information. This approach divides the class into cooperative learning teams and then into expert teams within those learning teams. The expert teams are provided specific reading materials or information. After reviewing and discussing the materials, the

"experts" return to their learning groups and teach this new information to the other members. This approach can be helpful to participants by providing a template for gathering and sharing information while reviewing the readings and working in teams.

## Walk Around

The walk around is a different form of brainstorming and gathering information. It provides participants with an opportunity to get individual, group, and collective input, information, and ideas about a particular topic. This strategy also provides for bodily-kinesthetic learners and participants who need an energy boost during a class. Chart paper is posted with a topic or question written on top, and groups of participants work together at each of these stations. Groups are given different colored markers and are asked to choose a recorder and facilitator. Participants are asked to quickly brainstorm responses and write down their thoughts on the paper. After a designated period of time (2-3 minutes) groups are signaled to rotate to the next station, review the information, and add to the list. Groups continue to rotate until they returned to their original station. As a final review, all groups are asked to circulate and review their collective work. Finally, the instructor or volunteer participant summarizes the findings.

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# Tips for Getting a Discussion Going
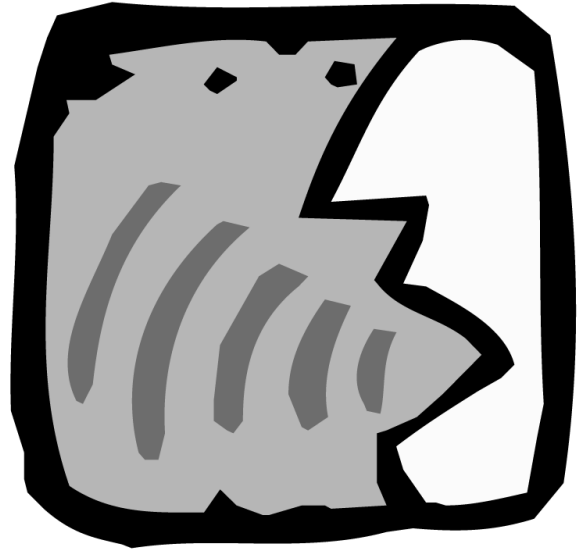
In October 1999, the Center for Teaching Excellence at The University of Maine organized a workshop on Leading a Discussion, led by Kristin Langellier and James Berg. Much of the material for the workshop came from the teaching experiences of Langellier, winner of the 1991 Presidential Outstanding Teaching Award at The University of Maine, and Berg, director of the Center. Below is some of the material from the workshop.

### Ideas for getting discussions started include:

- Use a brief writing exercise to let participants gather their thoughts.
- Use think-pair-share, i.e. have participants think individually for a minute or two, turn to the person next to them to discuss their ideas for three minutes, and then have a full-group discussion.
- Ask open-ended questions with more than one right answer.
- Ask questions that call for not only for recall or comprehension, but application, synthesis, and analysis.

*The following tips were adapted by Kristin Langellier from Stephen D. Brookfield and Stephen Preskill's, Discussion as a Way of Learning (Jossey-Bass, 1999).*

### Strategies for Distributing Participation in Discussion

1. Set up and monitor ground rules for talking in class. Reaffirm them when you need to throughout the semester. Monitor and act against any speech that is hostile to individuals.

2. Model expectations for distributing participation in discussion groups early in course (e.g. inviting others to talk, controlling how long any one participant speaks, giving way to other speakers, welcoming questions and criticism, and arguing against your own ideas).

3. Facilitate participants talking with each other. Don't overestimate the value of your own contributions, and don't underestimate what your participants can do. Ask yourself: Do I respond to every participant who speaks? Do participants pause before responding to each other because they expect me to make a comment each time?

4. We often do not give participants enough time for thought in discussion. Consider calling for time-outs: periods of reflective silence when participants think about important points that have been made, contradictions that have surfaced, omissions that occur to them, and where the discussion should go next. Participants make a few notes on these matters, and teachers begin the next phase of discussion by asking participants who haven't spoken much to read out what they've written.

5. Introduce regular exercises and rules for discourse that guard against one person's dominating the conversation (e.g., being able only to talk about other people's ideas and waiting three turns before speaking again).

6. Vary kinds of participation: whole class in class, small groups in class, electronic discussions, etc. When you work with small groups, assign specific roles or tasks for participants. This gives purpose, a sense of security, and distribution. Migrate among the groups to monitor and encourage participation.

7. Keep track of and analyze classroom participation, including your own. (Do a record yourself; ask one or two participants to do it for you; invite a trusted colleague to observe and record, audiotape, or videotape.) Consider distribution of talk among participants and how your own behaviors facilitate, interrupt, or stall discussions.

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# Instructor Reflection
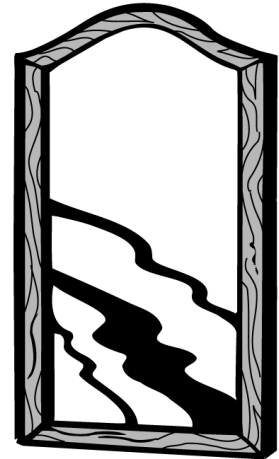
Course #: _____

Class #: _____

Date of Class: _____

Instructor: _____

| Upon reflection . . . How did this class go? | Next time I might . . . |
|---|---|
| 1. Were my class outcomes met? | |
| 2. Did I complete the content within the allotted time? | |
| 3. Did I have the necessary materials, supplies and resources? | |
| 4. Did I begin the class with a clear introduction and plan for the class? | |
| 5. Did I create a safe and respectful climate/environment? | |
| 6. Did I use a variety of instructional formats to meet the needs of all learners? (i.e. those who learn by seeing, doing, observing or hearing) | |

| | |
|---|---|
| 7. Did I adapt the class according to the needs, interests, and experiences of the students and their responses to the class content? | |
| 8. Did I actively engage and involve all the students? | |
| 9. Did I provide opportunities for students to apply what they learned through problem solving activities, homework or on-site practice or group projects? | |
| 10. Was I attuned to the comfort and attentiveness of the group? Was there off-task activity, and, if so, how did I reconnect students? | |
| 11. Did I have a clear closing using recaps, highlights, announcements, and good-byes? | |
| 12. What were the strengths of this class? | |
| 13. What would I change? | |
| 14. What did the student's responses tell me about this class? | |
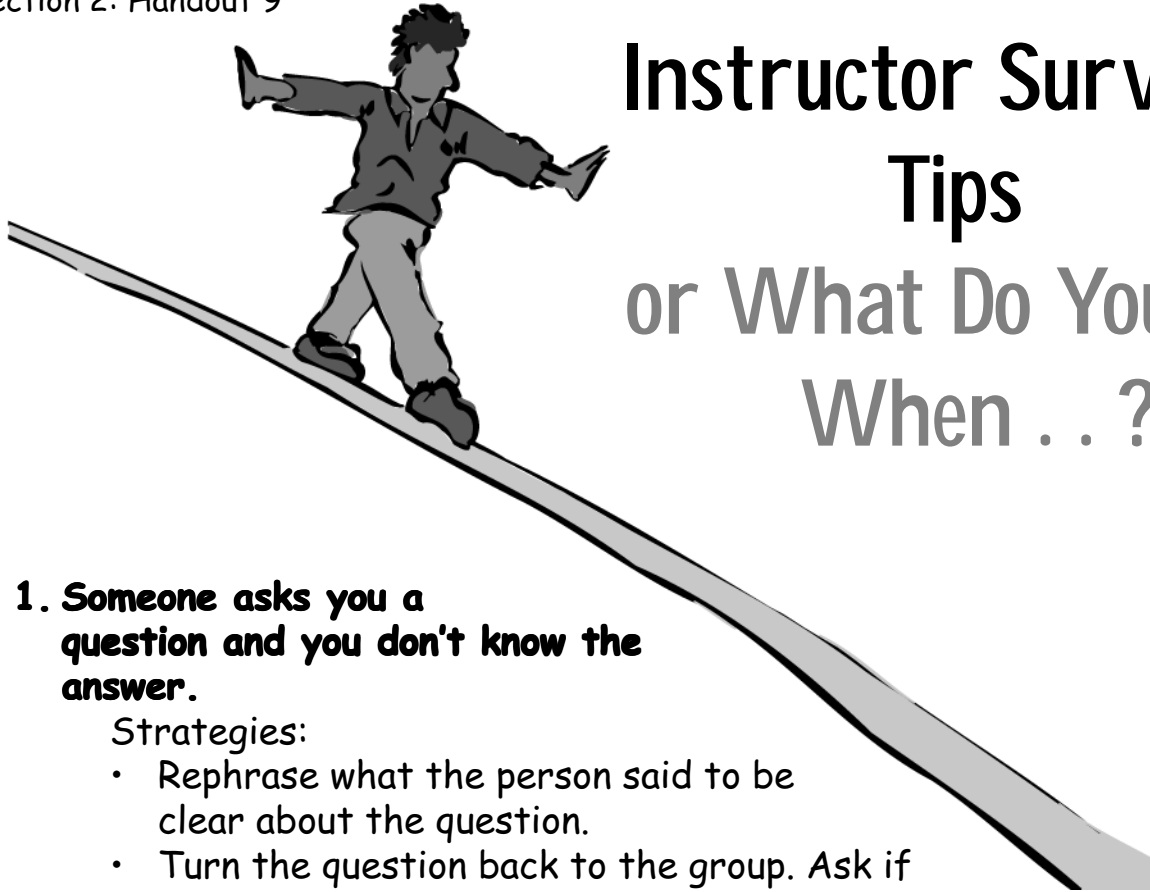
# Instructor Survival Tips
## or What Do You Do When . . ?

1. **Someone asks you a question and you don't know the answer.**
   Strategies:
   - Rephrase what the person said to be clear about the question.
   - Turn the question back to the group. Ask if anyone can offer a suggestion or share a response. This strategy provides a forum for others to share their experiences and learning and provides you an opportunity for you to think more fully about the question and have time to add to the response .
   - Offer to research the question further when you go back home and follow-up with some resources or answers to assist the person with the question.

2. **You ask a question and no one responds.**
   Strategies:
   - Rephrase the question to clarify or expand on the query.
   - Keep your questions short, clear, and challenging.
   - Plan your questions ahead of time. Have an answer in mind.
   - Mentally count to 20 to allow for others to think about the question and respond. Look at the group.
   - Encourage people to feel comfortable in responding by occasionally asking a question that requires a show of hands; for example, "How many of you . . ?"
   - Actively listen to the answers. Rephrase the reply to make sure that you have it right. Smile, nod, and use people's name to encourage and acknowledge their participation.

- Ask open-ended questions that do not have yes or no for an answer and that have relevance or application; for example, "How does this apply to your situation?"

## 3. There is one individual in your class who continues to dominate the conversation and will not stop sharing her stories and problems.

Strategies:
- Thank the person, but clearly state the timeframe for the class and the expectations regarding what should be covered.
- Review the ground rules.
- Use the parking lot and refer this person's topic to the lot.
- Establish a guidelines for group discussions such as; everyone has an opportunity to participate, anyone can opt to "pass", and all participants have the chance to share before others get a second turn. Post these and refer back to them.
- Speak to the person privately before or after class.
- Reassess time allocated for conversation.

## 4. There isn't enough time to build a community of learners and teach the content.

Strategies:
- Begin the session with an ice breaker that connects the content of what you will be covering with the activity.
- Begin the session with an opportunity for participants to share something that happened to them today, or during the week. Guide the discussion to relate it to working with families and children (even their own!) or something that would be fun, safe, and interesting to share about themselves.
- Incorporate learning strategies that encourage members of the group to learn about and from each other.
- Use think-pair-share structures for people to discuss what they learned and share their ideas with others.
- Have refreshments and water available.
- Review the learning environment. How does it feel? Does the environment help build community? Consider how our senses affect how we feel and how we interact. Incorporate music and art into activities. Smell is another important sense. Consider that scents containing peppermint, basil, lemon, cinnamon and rosemary enhance mental alertness and lavender, chamomile, orange and rose relax. Think about how the room is structured and how the seating arrangement adds to or detracts from

building a community of learners.

**5. You look around and see that participants are not attending, losing interest or experiencing "lecture overload."**

Strategies:

- Take a break.
- Change activities or use a different approach to sharing information. Consider that the adult brain takes 18 seconds to decide whether to drop input or keep the information. This means that people initially attend for about as long as it takes to hear one sentence from beginning to end before staying with the speaker or drifting off (Wolf, 1994). To keep participants engaged and involved in learning, think about varying the rate of your presentation. Mix up the type of activities you offer. Action and movement oriented activities actually stimulate the brain and help to retain input longer. Use songs, action poems, large muscle movement activities to keep participants engaged.
- Check the room temperature, lighting and seating arrangement.

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The Center for Teaching Excellence at the University of Maine: www.umaine.edu/teaching

Project CRAFT (Culturally, Responsive, Family focused, Training): www.sonoma.edu/cihs/craft.html