

UNIT THIRTEEN – TRAINING TECHNIQUES FOR THE ADULT LEARNER

Tell me, I forget. Show me, I remember. Involve me, I understand. Eureka! (An Ancient Chinese Proverb)

When deciding the best way to conduct training on a specific subject, consider these statistics from the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine.

Average Retention Rates

- 5% Lecture
- 10% Reading
- 20% Audio-Visual
- 30% Demonstration
- 50% Discussion
- 75% Practice by doing (Hands-on)
- 90% Teach Others/Immediate Use

Definition of Training: Training is a learning process that involves the acquisition of knowledge, sharpening of skills, concepts, and rules.

This unit will provide techniques that will help your department achieve effective communication. Modifying an individual's habits is best accomplished with effective two-way communication. Good training is interactive.

Most school bus drivers are entering the classroom for the first time in many years. Adult learners bring with them unique experiences and often, fears of the classroom environment. Many adults have an anxiety about testing situations, past failures in an academic setting, and the belief that the ability to learn declines with age. They may even view driver training as an implication that the driving skills they have acquired are flawed. This feeling fosters resistance to training.

- The adult learner may express concern about memory loss. Adults perceive some of what is presented as meaningless information that they are not motivated to retain.
- The material that is inconsistent with what was previously learned or what they believe can also affect memory.
- Adults will be expected to learn material that includes extensive memorization.

- Motivation, desire to learn the materials, relevance of the material, reduction of anxiety associated with the classroom setting, and physical environmental factors are all anxieties that can affect memory.
- Adults cannot be forced to learn. You, the trainer, are a “facilitator of learning.” The trainer must present the program in a manner that provides each trainee the tools to be a successful learner.
- Each trainee’s ability should be evaluated and their strengths identified.

CLASSROOM

It is essential to recognize the importance of the learning environment as it affects learner outcome. Adults typically benefit more from “hands-on” learning and working with peer groups. Some of your training will be structured as a lecture or in a classroom setting, so it is important to arrange the room in a way that enhances the learning environment.

When arranging the classroom, keep in mind that the adult learner may have diminished vision or hearing. Be sure that the lighting is adequate for participants. Eliminate or reduce outside noises that may distract or interfere with hearing. Smaller rooms are better than larger rooms because of the sound reflection.

To design a classroom, consider the following:

- Size of the room
- Equipment availability
- Number of participants
- Structure of the presentation
- Desired interaction with the group

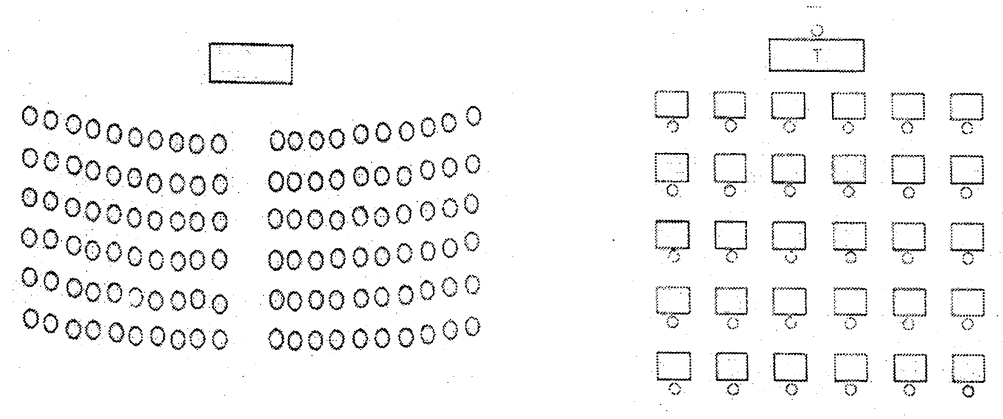
Classroom Designs

The use of tables will provide a convenient writing surface as well as a place to set a coffee cup or other beverage container. In addition, sitting at a table provides a certain feeling of “safety.” It conceals more than half of the participant’s body which may allow the person to be less self-conscious and thus able to focus more easily on what is being taught.

Chairs can also be used effectively to create a desired atmosphere. To design the classroom appropriately, consider:

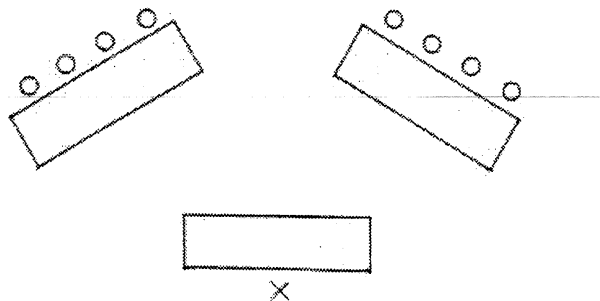
FORMAL

For a formal presentation or a lecture, design the room in a structured manner that does not encourage discussion, questions or interaction of the participants during the class. This can be accomplished by arranging the tables, desks or chairs in a series of rows.



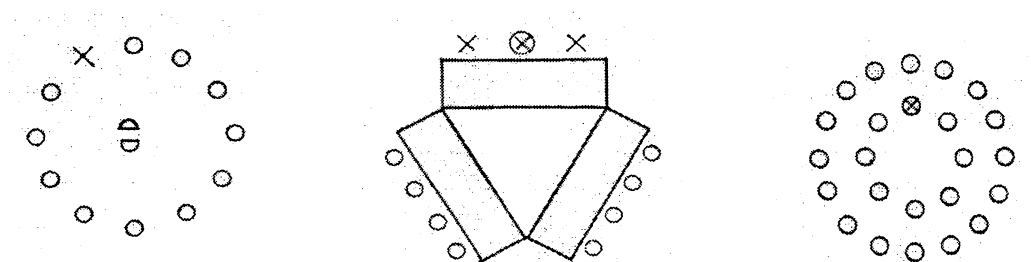
CASUAL

Place desks, tables or chairs at an angle to create a more relaxed atmosphere. This arrangement can still be conducive to a lecture, but encourages more participation from the trainees.



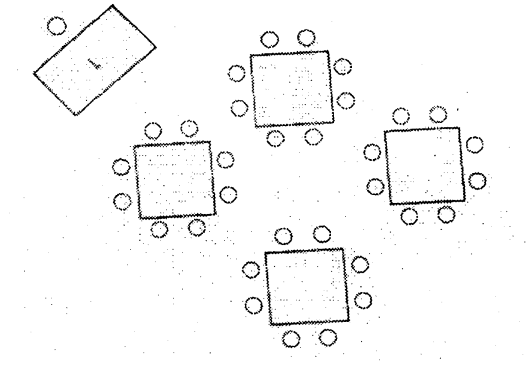
INTERACTIVE

Place the seating arrangement in a circle to create the feeling of interaction among the participants. This is a very relaxed mode of teaching but can make the use of teaching aids difficult.



TEAM BUILDING

Arranging the seating and or tables in small groups creates interaction among the groups and encourages team playing. This style is great for projects and teaching problem-solving. Each group can be working on the same topic or on different topics.



Maintaining an effective classroom environment:

- Arrange the tables and chairs for the appropriate teaching style
- Provide coffee and soft drinks or allow them to be brought into the classroom
- Eliminate distractions as much as possible
- Provide a well-lighted classroom
- Use multi-sensory teaching aides
- Dress appropriately
- Smile
- Set expectations
 - Be on time
 - Turn off cell phones
 - Courteous to those who are speaking
- Do introductions
- Start on time and end on time
- Allow students to move around the room during class
- Provide frequent breaks
- Keep moving; do not stand behind a podium
- Make eye contact with everyone
- Learn names the first session, and then call them by their name or nickname
- The opening session sets the tone for the course
- Be energetic
- Have fun!!!

TRAINING AIDS

The objective of training aids is to **support or assist** your presentation, not to be your presentation. Aids can greatly enhance the driver's understanding of the subject, but it can also detract or even ruin your training. The key is being flexible. If one type of aid doesn't work, try others, or go without any aids.

The different types of training aids can be divided into two main types:

Projected and Real Life - Projected aids use an image on the screen or monitor of the subject such as slides, overheads, or video. Real-life aids use a three dimensional representation to support the subject. This may include a cut-a-way sample of a transmission or brake chamber, or the bus itself.

Projected Aids –

- **Overhead projectors** can help create a central focus on the subject as well as graphically-display pictures, maps, and other materials to enhance the learning process. When using an overhead projector during a presentation, point to the display on the projector, not the screen. Do not turn your back to the audience. Also, remember to turn the projector off when changing displays or when it is not needed. The bright light can distract the participants. Transparencies can be easily made on most copiers and laser printers. Check your owner's manual. Adding color enhances this type of aid.
- **Flip charts** are a great tool for emphasizing bullet thoughts as well as writing down ideas in problem-solving sessions. A flip chart is good for encouraging class participation during the presentation of material.
- **Smart Boards** can provide a combination of mediums to enhance your training program.
- **Power Point** is a highly-effective computer training aid. You can customize your own presentation to fit your individual program.
- **Video** is one of the most popular uses of projected aids. Videos can be an effective tool for your training program. When using a pre-made video program, be familiar with the video and know where you can stop the action for discussion, or emphasize a certain point and relate how it applies to your drivers. A lot of valuable information can be obtained from the use of videos.

You can develop your own training video with just a camcorder. One method is to record the title drawing on paper then record the different scenes in sequence. Another less formal method is to record the scenes you want, without titles or audio and just discuss what is viewed.

DVD's and interactive mediums may also be used.

Real Life Training Aids - This type of training aid is limited only by your own imagination and budget. Examples include: cut-away models, brake system display boards, magnetic cars on a metal board, or lifting the bus on a hoist to see the underside. Hands-on training is highly effective.

Role-playing is a fun change of pace in the use of training aids is. Create a scenario and have two or three class members play the parts while the others critique. Use experienced drivers or staff members to interact with new drivers in the role-play. You can have the same situation or a different situation played out by the class members, giving everyone a chance to role-play and critique. It is important to establish positive norms for the group that is Use what is available to you. Be creative. Create your own aids.

critiquing. This can be effective in developing student management skills.

Remember: a smile is also an excellent visual aid.

Other Resources: Vehicle maintenance personnel, web sites, police, Colorado State Patrol, firemen, hospitals, railroad authorities, highway department, school resource officer, school principal, insurance agents, vendors, and Administrator's Reference Manual.

THE MOTIVATING TRAINER

Training is a learned skill. With practice and feedback from peers and participants, every trainer can improve in the ability to demonstrate each of the four characteristics of a motivating trainer:

- Expertise
- Empathy
- Enthusiasm
- Clarity

Characteristics of a Motivating Trainer:

- **Expertise** - The trainer with expertise in the subject matter is confident, knowledgeable of the subject matter, and easily develops credibility with trainees. A thorough knowledge of a topic gives a trainer confidence and enables flexibility and creativity in working with trainees. Knowledge of content allows the trainer to focus on the trainees needs with spontaneity. A trainer tied to notes or a manual cannot "read" the learners and respond to their nonverbal cues. Never attempt to teach something you do not know.
- **Empathy** - An empathetic trainer is aware of the trainees' needs and expectations. The trainer adapts the instruction to the trainees' level of experience and skill. Trainees know when their trainer is in touch with them, and are motivated by demonstrations of empathy.

- **Enthusiasm** - Trainers who are enthusiastic care about and value their subject matter and show their feelings for what they teach. Enthusiastic trainers are believable because of their commitment to, and involvement with, their subject matter.
- **Clarity** - Clarity of instruction is teaching something in a way that is easy for trainees to understand. It is organized in an orderly and logical fashion. Since trainees have different learning styles, teaching with clarity implies that various instructional methods are used so that all can follow the training.

MAKING HUMOR WORK

“You don’t have to teach people to be funny. You only have to give them permission.” Dr. Harvey Mindes.

Every trainer can make humor work in training by developing a unique style of humor and using it to enhance the training experience.

Some suggestions for making humor work:

- Take your job as a trainer seriously and yourself lightly. Be willing to laugh at yourself.
- Humor is working when you laugh with your participants, not at them.
- Avoid sarcastic humor. Rather than bringing people together, it tears them apart and is never appropriate.
- Avoid ethnic humor or humor that “puts down” any individual or group. It is never appropriate.
- Relate any humorous story or joke to the training topic. Ask “Does it work?” rather than just, “Is it funny?” Humor consultants suggest using a humor sandwich. Tell the point you want to make, then give it back as a humorous story that illustrates the point. Finally, provide the other side of the sandwich by restating the content point.
- Use the KISS approach to humor. Keep it Short and Simple! The average length of a story or joke is about 15 seconds.
- The “facts” of the story should be logical and believable. Control the set-up and punch line.
- When telling a funny story, master the pause. Give your participants time to visualize the story and grasp the situation so the punch line will be even funnier.

TIPS FOR RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS

In any training session the trainer is not the only one who gets to ask a question, and that's good. Questions from drivers show their interest and keep them actively involved.

- Be prepared for the types of questions that may be asked. Make notes in your outline of questions that could be asked about the content you are presenting.
- Repeat the question to the group when it is asked. This helps to make sure everyone heard the question, and it lets you be sure you heard it correctly.
- Answer the question, don't avoid or evade it. If the answer will come later in the training, say so.
- If you don't know the answer, admit it. Offer to respond to the person with the answer later . . . **and then do it.**
- Make sure the drivers know that the only "bad" question is the one that they had, but did not ask.
- Don't laugh at or make fun of anyone's question.
- You may want to let another driver in the session answer the question, particularly if it is an opinion question or a question with many correct answers. This keeps all drivers involved.
- Use the 25-75% Rule. When answering the question, direct 25% of your eye contact to the person who asked it, and 75% to the rest of the drivers. This again, keeps everyone involved in the question and answer process.

TIPS FOR ASKING QUESTIONS

- Use the Ask-Pause-Call technique. Ask the question, pause a few seconds, then call on someone by name to answer it.
- If the driver has trouble answering the question, "coach" for the correct answer. Coaching means helping the driver answer correctly. Give clues and hints, or break the question down into smaller questions.
- Make sure all participants have an opportunity to answer questions.
- "Dignify" any incorrect answers the drivers may give. In other words, help them avoid embarrassment when they tried but did not answer correctly. Remember, it is your responsibility as the trainer to make sure that the correct answer is provided so all can hear.

Examples of responses to coach for the correct answer:

- "That was a good try."
- "Yes, you're getting close."

Ask open questions to encourage the participants to think and to find out what they know. An open question requires the person to explain what has been learned. Such a question cannot be answered "yes" or "no," or with one word.

Examples of open questions:

- What are some student management techniques for misbehaving students?
- What are some rules for driving in mountainous terrain?

Motivate with positive language

- Be specific. Saying "I appreciate the great work you did preparing that report," is better than merely saying "good job."
- Use the team member's name. Everyone appreciates hearing his or her name linked to something positive. Saying, "Pat, thanks for coming in early to prepare for the meeting," packs a big punch.
- Capitalize on compliments. Trying to balance a compliment by offering one of your own diminishes the value of the compliment you received. Instead, say "Thanks for noticing. You've made my day."

The creativity connection

- The four most important words you can use to spur creativity are "What do you think?" Inviting team members to share their opinions can pay off big.
- Encourage trainees to build on one another's ideas.
- Avoid negatives by substituting the word "opportunity" for "problem" every time you communicate.
- Total honesty - Make sure trainees feel free to say what they think – no politics or no game playing. Encourage everyone to express his/her views and to contribute his/her beliefs.
- Total amnesty - Avoid any repercussions for things said. It is the only way you can be sure trainees really feel free to speak their minds.