

Training Basics

Getting It Right, Making It Work





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The Art of Learning



Learning new information and skills is a key element of the Toastmasters experience. Members, club officers, district leaders, and region advisors all require fresh ideas and supportive learning environments in order to be successful in their roles. This is why quality training is such an important asset to the organization.

As a Toastmasters trainer, you have the unique opportunity to help members grow both personally and professionally. You also have the opportunity to witness how the small victories of individuals can become huge triumphs for the organization. In any given training session, you may cover topics such as motivation, delegation, coaching, and team-building. Learning about these topics can help members thrive within the organization and better manage situations at work and at home. The information members learn in a Toastmasters training session can ultimately help them become more productive, more influential, and more confident in their roles and their interactions with others.

Of course, helping others understand and use new skills isn't unique to Toastmasters—there are numerous situations that call for thorough and effective trainers. Whether it's training new-hires at a marketing agency or the latest volunteers at a local food bank, training provides a valuable educational experience for the individuals it serves, plus a rewarding experience for you, the trainer.

This manual covers the following training topics:

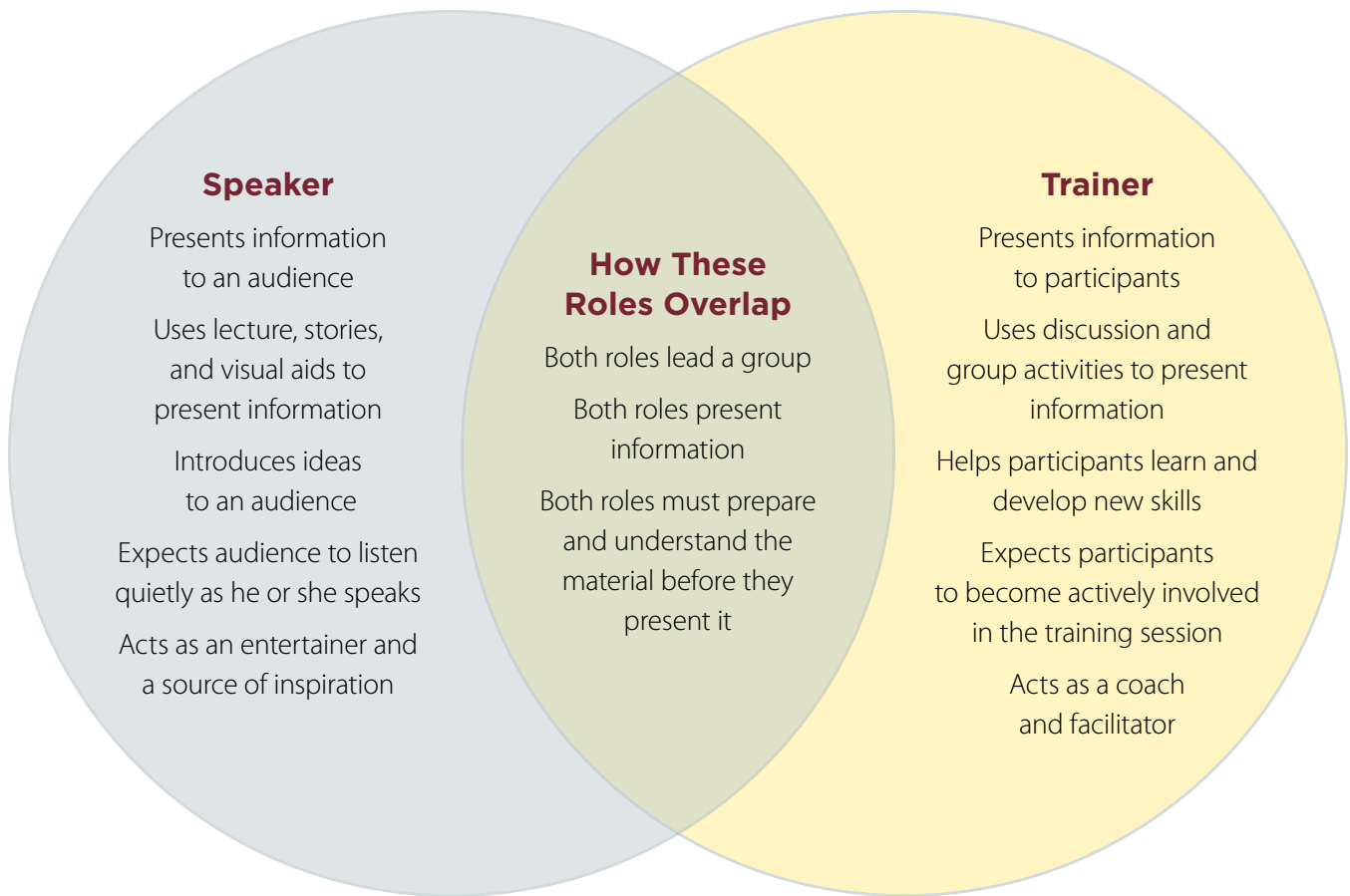
- ▶ The differences and similarities between a speaker and a trainer
- ▶ How adults learn
- ▶ How to prepare for a training session
- ▶ How to make training content effective and memorable
- ▶ The dos and don'ts of training
- ▶ Strategies for managing difficult participants

When people learn new information in a supportive and well-structured environment, their level of skill and knowledge increases, leading to better performance of the individuals and the group. Use this manual as a resource as you prepare to conduct any type of training—inside or outside of Toastmasters.

Section 1

Speaker Versus Trainer

Although speakers and trainers share some similarities, the way in which these two roles communicate knowledge to others differs significantly. The diagram below illustrates the key differences between a speaker and a trainer; it also shows how these roles overlap.



Section 2

How Adults Learn

Adults prefer to be proactive in their learning experience. The chart below describes the different ways adults like to learn and how you can appeal to these preferred learning styles in the training you provide.

When Learning Something New, Adults Like to...	How to Accommodate this Learning Style
Understand the purpose. Adults try to identify why they need to know a new piece of information before they commit to learning it.	Explain the purpose and value of learning a specific skill. Then explain how participants can use this skill in their roles.
Make their own decisions. Adults like to feel competent and self-directed. It's important for adults to decide what they learn about and how they learn it.	Create a learning environment in which participants have different options for understanding the material. For instance, when calling for a small group discussion, offer each group several different discussion topics and ask them to select one. This allows participants to feel empowered; it also enables them to select a discussion topic they feel is most relevant.
Share their experiences. In learning environments, adults bring a wealth of life experiences to the table. By sharing insightful information, adults are able to learn from each other and with each other.	Facilitate learning exercises that allow participants to share and draw on past experiences. For instance, you may ask them to participate in a problem-solving activity in which they each share a negative example of teamwork. After participants share their real-life experiences, ask them to determine ways these situations could have been avoided.
Apply new information to real-life situations. Adults often try to draw a connection between what they're learning and specific problems in their day-to-day lives. It's important for them to understand how new information will help them in the real world.	Provide real-life examples of how previous participants have benefited from a particular aspect of training. Be sure the examples you discuss relate to the participants' needs, roles, and future goals.
Feel motivated. Although adults do respond to external motives for learning, such as a better job or higher salaries, they are ultimately motivated by internal factors. These factors include the desire to grow as individuals, build their self-esteem, and improve their quality of life. Put simply, adults like to feel good about themselves as they learn new information.	Praise participants when they contribute ideas or answer questions. Recognizing and appreciating participants' contributions builds their self-esteem and keeps them motivated. It's also important to encourage interaction among the participants so they feel like they're part of a team and growing as individuals.

As you help adults learn new information, do your best to maximize participation and interaction. The more involved adults feel in their learning process, the more likely they are to remember and use the new skills they've learned.

Section 3

Preparing for a Training Session

Know the Participants

Whether you're training Toastmasters club officers, Toastmasters district leaders, or new-hires at your company, it's crucial to know who the participants will be before you conduct a training session. Although you may know the training material inside and out, it will only be effective if it's relevant to the participants and meets their specific needs. Before you deliver a training session, be sure to ask the following questions about the participants:

- ▶ What skills do they need to learn from the training?
- ▶ What is their skill level?
- ▶ How well do they know the training material (if at all)?
- ▶ What are the participants' roles within their organization?

By doing a little research beforehand, you can tailor the training session to the unique needs of the participants and focus on building certain skills. This increases the likelihood that the training material will resonate with participants and lead to lasting changes within their organization.

Know the Material

As a trainer, you should know the material and deliver it to participants in a way that is logical, meaningful, and engaging. Always consider what information you will be presenting, how you will be presenting it, and why you will be presenting it. As you review training content, focus on the following:

- ▶ **Identify the key points.** Identifying key points can help you stay on track and remind you of the training session's purpose. It can be helpful to assess each section of the training material and identify the most important information. This enables you to relate valuable messages that participants can take away from the training session.
- ▶ **Know the flow.** Be sure you understand the order of the training topics and related learning activities. This



can help you identify patterns in the training content, introduce training topics without referencing your materials, and answer questions participants may have about the training agenda.

- ▶ **Use visual cues to your advantage.** Take a close look at how the training materials have been laid out. Does the content contain visual cues to help you stay on track (e.g., icons, highlighted language, special formatting)? If so, use these cues to guide you through the training session. If your material does not contain visual cues, it can be helpful to develop your own. For instance, you can draw symbols to prompt you to ask a question or introduce a training exercise. When used correctly, visual cues make it easier to transition from one idea to the next.
- ▶ **Familiarize yourself with the participant materials.** In many training sessions, participants are provided with their own set of materials. These materials are targeted to the participant rather than the trainer. Take the time to carefully read through the participant materials. By taking this step, you will be prepared to answer any questions participants have about the content and layout of their materials.

Make it a goal to become a source of authority on the training content you present—participants will appreciate your efforts.

Know the Visual Aids

As a trainer, you can use visual aids to enhance the learning experience. In most cases, using visuals to express ideas is far more valuable than presenting content alone. Not only can they save time, add interest, and help participants learn, visual aids can also make your job as a trainer easier. The following are a few types of visual aids and tips for how to use them:

Flip chart

You can use a flip chart to focus participants' attention, provide visual expression to ideas, or record information from group activities such as brainstorming. When using a flip chart, be sure to make your letters large and use dark colored markers so that all participants can see what you are presenting.

Onscreen Presentation

Software programs, such as PowerPoint and Prezi, allow you to share onscreen presentations with participants using your laptop. Onscreen presentations can be used to add visual elements to a discussion topic, draw connections between ideas, and engage participants with the training material. Use a wireless presentation remote with this type of visual aid so you are free to walk around the room as you progress from one visual element to the next. When using onscreen presentations, avoid reading directly from the screen—this visual aid should supplement training content, not replace it.

Video

Videos can capture participants' attention by adding impact and variety to the training session. Videos allow you not just to tell, but to show. Use videos to demonstrate a successful outcome, gain third-party credibility, or recharge the participants. When presenting videos, be sure your equipment is compatible with the training room.

Know the Timing

Starting and ending the training session on time makes a positive impact on participants. It shows that

you are well-prepared, able to stick to your agenda, and considerate of others. To better manage your time on the day of the training, practice presenting the training material in its entirety. Here are some more tips to help you stay on track:

- ▶ Set up training materials before participants arrive.
- ▶ Determine how much time you will devote to questions and activities (if not already specified in the training material).
- ▶ Create a one-page document that specifies the start time and end time for each section of the training; refer to it regularly during the training session to ensure you're on target.
- ▶ Wear a watch or bring a large clock to the training room.
- ▶ Avoid engaging in a discussion that veers off topic.
- ▶ Plan for interruptions and develop strategies to address them.

When delivering a training session, timing is an important factor to consider. Staying on schedule will help you maintain a smooth pace and cover each topic in the material.

Know the Environment

Before you deliver a training session, familiarize yourself with the training room. Not only will this help you feel comfortable in your surroundings, it will also help you avoid unexpected problems during the training session. As you get to know the training environment, ensure that all your equipment works properly.

Arrive early the day of the training session. This gives you time to set up the room and gather materials. Here are some items you'll want to have ready before participants arrive:

- ▶ Participant materials (e.g., workbook and pens or pencils)
- ▶ A lectern or a small table for you to stand behind
- ▶ Visual aids (e.g., flip chart with an easel and markers)
- ▶ A projector and laptop

As you set up the training room, make every effort to ensure participants will feel as comfortable as possible. Remember, when participants feel comfortable, they will be able to focus on learning.

Section 4

Making the Content Count

People learn best when information is well-structured and repeated. To make information stick, be sure to present training content in a logical and consistent way, and review the information after it's presented. Use this key concept to guide the training session:

Introduce training topics to the participants.

Share training topics with the participants.

Review the training topics you shared.

When it comes to learning, structure is a huge factor in making information clear and effective. Just like your favorite novel or film, the training session you present should have a beginning, middle, and end. Read the paragraphs below for tips on how to organize the training session.

Introduce Training Topics to the Participants

As you open a training session, help participants feel comfortable and prepare them for the topics you will cover. Start by introducing yourself and making a positive first impression. Gaining the participants' approval right away sets the stage for a successful training session. Consider engaging the participants with an analogy, anecdote, or news story. Relating the training content to a real-life event is one way to make it relevant and interesting.

Once you have the participants' interest, follow these tips to make the opening of the training session as effective as possible:

- ▶ **Communicate the purpose of the training session.** Whether it's improving team-building, leadership, or communication skills, participants will want to know the purpose of the training session before they commit to it—so tell them why they've come.
- ▶ **Demonstrate your understanding of the participants.** It's important for participants to feel that you understand and appreciate their roles. You may want to go over a few situations that participants are likely to face in their current roles—this shows you are aware of their responsibilities and can help them succeed through the training session.
- ▶ **Present the training agenda.** In this step, you introduce training topics to participants and explain the order in which they will be presented. Providing an overview of the training agenda is essential. It helps participants understand what they can expect from the training session and encourages them to follow along as different topics are presented.

Tips for the Trainer: Ensure Your Delivery is Effective

Delivering information is only one part of your role. The manner in which you deliver it can be just as important as the information itself. Use the tips below to promote learning and keep participants interested.

- ▶ **Be clear in your communication.** Present content using simple and organized thoughts.
- ▶ **Deliver content with confidence.** By delivering a training session with confidence and poise, participants are more likely to trust you and treat you with respect.
- ▶ **Stay enthusiastic.** Energize participants using positive motivation and an engaging tone.
- ▶ **Provide personal examples.** By personalizing the material, you make content memorable and deepen its impact.
- ▶ **Be empathetic.** Recognize the differences between participants; belittle no one and avoid cynicism.
- ▶ **Facilitate with control.** Keep participants on task and address disruptive behavior appropriately.

- ▶ **Promote the benefits.** It's important for participants to see the value in what they're learning. Be sure to explain how the training session will positively impact participants in the future. Will it make their jobs easier? Will it improve the way they communicate with others? Will it help streamline a process? If outcomes like these are possible, make it a point to say so. Also provide examples of what participants should be able to do by the end of the session. This practice encourages participants to be actively involved in their learning; it also helps them understand how they will be able to apply new skills to their current roles.

It's helpful to think about the opening of the training session like the first chapter of a novel—this part of the training lays the foundation for what's to come.

Share Training Topics with the Participants

The primary goal of training is for participants to learn the content you present and apply it to their roles. Do your best to present content in a fun, engaging, and motivating way. Keep in mind that the more you capture participants' interest, the more likely they are to appreciate the training session and use the new skills they've learned. Here are a few ways to keep participants engaged as you share training topics:

- ▶ **Create a hands-on learning experience.** A training session is most effective when participants interact with you and each other. Encourage participants to take an active role in their learning through discussion, questions, and group activities.
- ▶ **Mix it up.** Use a wide variety of learning activities and visual aids during the training session, such as a role-play activity, a small group discussion, or a short video clip. Participants become more engaged when there are numerous ways to learn information. By guiding participants from one activity to the next, you can keep the learning process dynamic and help prevent boredom.
- ▶ **Keep it moving.** Knowing where a training session is and where it needs to go is an important skill of a trainer. Strive to maintain a steady pace and incorporate smooth transitions between training topics to make your delivery consistent and natural. If you decide that a discussion or line of questioning does not align with the goals of the training session, gently redirect participants to the key points of the section by telling a story or asking a question.
- ▶ **Check participants' learning.** Be sure to check with participants after you cover each training topic. It's important to ensure that participants have a firm grasp of one topic before you move on to the next. You can check participants' learning by asking specific questions about the material or asking participants to share the key points of each training topic.

Tips for the Trainer: Ensure Your Delivery is Effective

- ▶ **Move the session forward.** Prepare a handful of transitional statements before the training session; this allows you to make smooth transitions between different topics.
- ▶ **Affirm with sincerity.** Offer recognition or validation when ideas are presented; remain neutral and help each participant feel comfortable and respected when they contribute.
- ▶ **Question with purpose.** Target your questions to gather information, find solutions, and help participants learn key points.
- ▶ **Support the content.** Show genuine interest in the content you are delivering—make it fun and relevant for the participants.

- ▶ **Use questions to increase involvement.** Great learning happens through questions — in the asking, not the telling. Use questions to move learners from passive to active participants. Questions like “How can you use what you’ve learned here to...?” and “What is your biggest challenge in helping members to ...” encourage critical thinking and increase participation.

Think about the body of the training session as the middle chapters of a novel—it’s action-packed and infused with essential details.

Review the Training Topics You Shared

As you wrap up a training session, remind participants what they just learned and how they can apply it to their roles. Remember, it’s okay to repeat information that you stated in the beginning of the session—repetition can help participants remember information and understand its value. Use these five steps to reinforce learning as you review training topics with participants:

1. **Provide a summary of key points.** Go through the training agenda once more and address the key points of each topic. This allows participants to reflect on what they have learned and gained through the training session.
2. **Ask participants to share.** Allow participants to share what they’ve learned with the group. This enables participants to learn which aspects of the training session were most valuable to others and share which aspects were most valuable to them. Use questions like these to facilitate sharing:
 - ▶ What is the most important thing you’ve learned today?
 - ▶ How will you apply what you’ve learned to your role?
 - ▶ What is one thing you will start or stop doing as a result of what you’ve learned?
3. **Confirm participants’ learning.** In addition to checking participants’ learning throughout the training session, gauge how much information participants retained at the end of the session. You can measure how much participants learned by quizzing them or using a training method known as teach-back, in which you ask participants to explain (or “teach back”) the skills they just learned to you or fellow participants.
4. **Restate the purpose of the training session.** It’s important for participants to feel like the training session was worth their time and effort. Be sure to connect the dots between what participants have learned and how they can use it in their roles.
5. **Tie the training session together.** If you incorporated a main idea or provided an analogy, anecdote, or news story in the opening of the training session, now is the time to refer back to it. Restating what you said in the beginning of the session intensifies the message and adds structure and purpose to your closing words.

Imagine that the conclusion of the training session is the last scene in a novel—in this section, the meaning and value of the message is fully understood.

By introducing training topics to the participants, sharing these topics with participants, and reviewing the topics you shared, you can provide a memorable and organized learning experience.

Section 5

Training Dos and Don'ts

Part of being a successful trainer is understanding what works and what doesn't. While certain behaviors engage participants, others disengage them. Your challenge is to find out which behaviors fall into each category. Use the tips below to guide you in the right direction.

Do...	Don't...
<p>Introduce yourself. Introducing yourself enables you to establish a relationship with participants. The more they know about you and your background, the more likely they are to respect you and pay attention during the training session. It can also be useful to ask participants to deliver a short introduction. This is a good way to break the ice and allow everyone the opportunity to speak before the training session begins.</p>	<p>Turn your back to the participants. Once you turn your back to the participants, you isolate them. You also lose a powerful communication tool—body language. When participants are unable to make eye contact with you or see your facial expressions and gestures, the effectiveness of the training session is greatly diminished. As you present flip charts or other visual aids, turn your neck when referencing materials—not your whole body.</p>
<p>Use humor. Humor is something most everyone can relate to—it lightens the mood and helps people feel comfortable. Don't hesitate to make a joke or poke fun at yourself if something goes awry. Participants appreciate the opportunity to laugh and be entertained. Humor can also help you establish a bond with the participants, win over a difficult crowd, illustrate a key point, or refocus the group's attention.</p>	<p>Take yourself too seriously. When you take yourself too seriously, you put up a wall between you and the participants. If participants sense that you are anxious and guarded, they may feel disconnected from you and your message. Remember, most people seldom think about anyone but themselves, so don't worry about what the participants think about you. Be sure to keep your role and the training session itself in perspective.</p>
<p>Ask the participants questions. Asking the right question at the right time is a vital skill for any trainer. Questions can help engage participants with the content, encourage participation, move a discussion forward, and increase understanding. Asking questions is also a great way to determine if participants understood the content you presented.</p>	<p>Rush through the training session. Not only does rushing through a training session make you appear nervous, it also makes the training session awkward and less effective. When participants feel hurried, it may cause them to feel uneasy and tune you out. As you deliver a training session, be sure to take your time, make natural pauses, and enunciate your words clearly. This makes it easier for participants to follow along.</p>
<p>Build skill at effective questioning. Use open questions to invite sharing of thoughts and experiences. Indirect questions such as "I wonder what would happen if..." encourage discussion and applying what was learned. Pause after asking a question and allow time for participants to process the question. A helpful technique is to repeat or rephrase the question if there is silence.</p>	<p>Provide all the answers yourself. Silence feels awkward and it is easy to take over if the participants don't immediately answer your question. Also avoid asking several questions at a time as this generally causes confusion. Taking time to discover your participants challenges, successes, and solutions enriches their learning and makes them the focus of the training experience.</p>

Do...	Don't...
<p>Share your experiences. By sharing your own experiences with the participants, you make the training session more interesting and personable. You also make it more relevant by relating discussion topics to real-life events. Consider sharing your own observations, an interesting story, or an article you recently read. These are all great ways to capture participants' attention and promote open communication among the group.</p>	<p>Lecture excessively. Using lecture as your primary training method can cause boredom and a lack of interaction among participants. When you lecture, participants assume passive roles. It's best to avoid this dynamic in the training environment. Make it a goal to keep participants engaged by using learning activities such as brainstorming, small group discussion, and role-play. These activities allow participants to play an active role in their learning, which increases the likelihood that they will remember information and apply it to their roles.</p>
<p>Show respect and concern for the participants. Showing participants that you care about their questions, opinions, and contributions will make them feel valuable and respected. When participants feel like you are listening to them with genuine interest, they are more likely to participate and maintain a positive attitude throughout the training session. Even when participants are off-topic or incorrect, do your best to acknowledge their contribution. Treating all participants equally is an easy way to win their approval and foster a cohesive learning environment.</p>	<p>Believe you're the only expert in the room. Acting like you're the only one who knows anything about the training material can irritate participants and cause them to feel deflated. Avoid boasting about your knowledge or undermining participants when they contribute ideas. These behaviors may cause participants to tune you out or even become hostile. Keep in mind that in addition to being a trainer, you are also a facilitator—so be sure to tap into the knowledge and experience of others in the room. Not only does this help participants feel valuable, it also helps them feel empowered.</p>

When preparing for a training session, refer to the table above to help you implement the dos and avoid the don'ts. As a rule of thumb, behaviors that connect you to participants are valuable, while behaviors that alienate you from participants are not.



Section 6

Dealing with Difficult Participants

You may face difficult participants from time to time. To prepare yourself to deal with participants who are disruptive or reluctant to participate, it's important to develop strategies to manage various situations and personalities. Below, you'll learn some common behaviors of difficult participants and how you can address each behavior effectively and professionally.

The Talker

Behavior

The Talker comments too often and for too long, dominating the discussion.

Strategies

- ▶ Recognize the Talker's contribution; then assert that others must have the chance to speak.
- ▶ Target questions to other participants by name.
- ▶ Avoid making eye contact with the Talker after asking a question. Look at another section of the room instead.
- ▶ When the Talker pauses, immediately thank him or her and call on another participant to comment.

The Interrupter

Behavior

The Interrupter may believe he or she has something to contribute—this participant wants to agree, disagree, or make another point. Some Interrupters are impatient for information and ask questions about topics that will be discussed later on; others simply want attention.

Strategies

- ▶ Early in the session, tell participants to record all comments and questions on a piece of paper and that you will address them at the end of the session.
- ▶ Keep participants busy by asking them to complete an interactive learning activity.
- ▶ Write a broad outline on a flip chart or whiteboard showing the order of the topics you will cover; check each one off as it's discussed.
- ▶ Ask the Interrupter to complete a specific task, such as recording other participants' responses from a brainstorming activity on a flip chart.

The Chatterer

Behavior

The Chatterer engages in individual conversations with other participants. He or she might comment on something being discussed or talk about an unrelated subject.

Strategies

- ▶ Invite the Chatterer to share his or her topic of conversation with the group.
- ▶ Stop talking and look at the Chatterer until he or she is quiet.
- ▶ Restate the point being discussed and ask the Chatterer for an opinion.

The Arguer

Behavior

The Arguer might be a know-it-all, someone with incorrect information, or someone who enjoys correcting others. He or she may also have difficulty stating suggestions in a constructive manner.

Strategies

- ▶ Acknowledge the Arguer's main points and thank him or her for contributing.
- ▶ Find merit in one of the Arguer's comments, express your agreement, and move on.
- ▶ Paraphrase the Arguer's comment in objective terms. Then ask the Arguer to explain the reason for the comment or ask someone else for a comment.

The Silent Type

Behavior

The Silent Type finds it difficult to speak in a group setting. He or she may shut down when questions are posed due to shyness, insecurity, indifference, or uncertainty.

Strategies

- ▶ Ask the Silent Type a question you are confident he or she can answer easily.
- ▶ Ask a question; then suggest that all participants take a turn sharing their opinions.
- ▶ Respond positively and enthusiastically when the Silent Type does contribute.

The Electronic Device Enthusiast

Behavior

The Electronic Device Enthusiast is attached to his or her electronic device. He or she may use the training session as a time to check emails, browse the Internet, or post status updates on Facebook.

Strategies

- ▶ Tell participants that breaks have been built into the training session. Ask participants to refrain from using their laptops or smartphones until the group goes on a break.
- ▶ Kick off a learning activity such as a small group discussion to trigger the Electronic Device Enthusiast to put down his or her device and start interacting with others.
- ▶ Casually walk near the participant and stay close by until you regain his or her attention.

Most often, you can manage difficult participants by changing direction, catching the offender off guard, attracting attention to another person, or using positive feedback. Be sure to maintain a calm, neutral, and confident demeanor as you attempt to bring order back to the group. The more you stay in control, the more likely you are to diffuse the situation effectively.

Putting Participants First

In reading this manual, you've learned which qualities define a trainer, how adults learn, how to prepare for a training session, and how to make training content effective. You've also learned the dos and don'ts of training, and how to manage difficult participants. Armed with this information, you can feel confident that you have the right tools to deliver a rewarding and memorable training session.

As a trainer, your role is invaluable. You have the responsibility of imparting new knowledge, skills, and opportunities to participants. When preparing for a training session, pinpoint what participants need to gain from their time with you. Putting participants first and tailoring training content to their unique needs foster a rewarding learning environment for all.

Use this manual as a resource as you familiarize yourself with the training materials. It can help you provide a quality learning experience that engages participants and compels them to use their new skills to achieve better outcomes in their roles.

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