

**Legal Services Training Consortium  
of New England**

**Training Tips**

## Prerequisites for Effective Adult Learning

---

Much has been written over the years comparing “andragogy” (the art and science of helping adults learn) to “pedagogy” (the art and science of teaching children). Malcolm Knowles, who popularized the term “andragogy”, had a profound influence on the last generation of adult educators who believed strongly that adult education was a significantly different experience than that of children. Since then, educators have come to realize that children and adults are actually *not* dissimilar in the ways they learn (e.g., intrinsically motivated, self-directed, based on experience.) *The key difference seems to lie mainly in the quality and quantity of experience the learner draws from.* Thus, we have learned that andragogy and its principles provide more of a *model* of effective *human* learning rather than a *theory* of adult learning. The prerequisites of effective learning listed below apply equally to adults as well as children.

1. **Respect:** The learner must feel heard, honored and respected as a person - not for what he or she knows but for themselves.
2. **Immediacy:** Learners must see how they can use their new knowledge, skills and attitudes immediately. A question we can offer at the end of each learning session is: “How can you use this new skill or information most effectively?”
3. **Relevance:** Learners learn best when what they are learning is directly related to their own life experience. The trainer’s task often is not to change what we wish to teach but to make it relevant by connecting the content to the themes and knowledge of the learners.
4. **Retention** Learners retain:

**20%** of what they hear

**40%** of what they hear and see

**80%** of what they do

Adapted from *The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy v. Pedagogy* by Malcolm Knowles (1970, Prentiss Hall)

## **Roles & Characteristics of an Effective Trainer**

### **As a Presenter:**

- Provides new information, offers feedback, summarizes what was covered.
- Makes certain material is delivered in such a way that participants understand how it is relevant to their real world experience.

### **As a Facilitator:**

- Draws information and past experiences from participants.
- Gets others talking and participating
- Involves the group in the learning process
- Controls the flow of discussion
- Creates and maintains a safe learning environment

### **Beginning your session**

- Post learning objectives for the session and refer to them as you begin.
- Present an overview of what you will cover in the session and how the session is structured, e.g., large groups, small groups etc.

### **During the session**

- Engage the participants by asking questions of them and inviting their questions of you.
- Refer to visuals at key points during your presentation.
- Make eye contact with participants
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" or to refer a question back to participants or to other trainers.

### **At the end of your session**

- Summarize main points of your presentation
- Ask participants to identify remaining questions about the subject matter

As trainers and facilitators, we are responsible for managing group process so as to ensure learners are able to express themselves and interact fully with both the training content as well as with the trainer and other learners. Inevitably tensions will arise and our responsibility is to work with the discomfort in the group rather than to simply create a productive workshop.

### **Key Strategies for Dealing with Difficult Situations:**

- Regain focus: remind people what the task is
- Accept and legitimize
- Refer question back to person who asked
- Name what you see; clarify what you think you are seeing
- Don't be afraid of silence

### **Purpose of Questions**

The discussion leader's skillful use of questioning techniques is a primary tool of effective instruction. There are multiple purposes to be met by asking questions.

#### **When starting a session:**

- to define and validate the topic or session
- to arouse participant interest
- to determine prior experience
- to build relationship

#### **During a session:**

- to promote assimilation of material
- to maintain interest and attention
- to build two-way communication and get feedback
- to take the focus off the trainers.

#### **When ending a session:**

- to determine if objectives have been met
- to identify areas of confusion
- to support integration and application of learning

### **Tips for Asking Questions**

- Focus on a single idea or point
- State question clearly without ambiguity
- Allow adequate time for response
- Accept and legitimize responses.



Feedback is the process of describing specifically what behaviors are effective in a person's performance and what changes could strengthen future performance.

### **The Value of Feedback**

- Effective feedback provides the learner with usable information that can enhance and strengthen his or her skills in the future.
- Effective feedback reduces the learner's need to look for other subtle, non-verbal forms of communication in order to get information about performance.

### **Guidelines for Effective Feedback**

- Offer specific and descriptive phrases rather than general or evaluative comments.
- Direct feedback towards a changeable behavior.
- Make clear statements, then check for comprehension.

### **Feedback Process for Practice Sessions**

- After each participant has participated, stop the action and ask:
  1. "What worked well?"
    - From the participant/actor's perspective?
    - From the other participants' perspective?
    - Fill in any other valuable observations.
  2. "What could have been improved?"
    - From the participant/actor's perspective?
    - From the other participants' perspectives?
    - Fill in any other valuable observations.

Each feedback process should take around 5 minutes.

## **Suggested Flip Charting Techniques**

Facilitators demonstrate their ability to listen and in the process help groups communicate more effectively by recording comments on flip charts.

- Print legibly and big enough so everyone can see.
- Write down exactly what people say. Avoid the temptation to edit.
- If you feel you must edit, ask permission to do so first. Check to see that your edit matches the intended meaning of the speaker.
- Write down everyone's comments. Don't screen out or be selective.
- Alternate colors on long lists. This is especially helpful during brainstorming
- If the group is shouting out information faster than you can write it down, ask someone to help you.