

Training Design and Content

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The 55-Minute Training Series has done much of this work for you. However, I strongly encourage you to adapt the material to the needs of your organization or to develop new topics that may be of particular use to your staff. The following are a few recommendations as you prepare to design and/or select your content:

1. Good training design begins with the assessment of the learning needs of anticipated participants. Your content should be built around the gap between what staff needs to know to be successful and what they already know.
2. After the topic(s) are chosen, it is important to specify key learning objectives that deal with knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Learning objectives basically describe what a participant should be able to know or do or feel at the conclusion of the seminar.
3. Select a moderate level of content. There is a tendency to throw in everything you know about a given topic, and the result is a rushed session where little is retained. The best approach to developing a lean curriculum is being selective - choosing the need to know before the nice to know. When the content level is kept moderate, the trainer can lead activities that experiment with and reflect upon what is being presented.
4. Provide printed resources that will be utilized and/or shared (e.g., handouts, activity sheets, training manuals for participants, in-house forms, information to be brought by participants). These resources greatly enhance learning if they are well done and tie closely to the presentation. If handouts are distributed and no acknowledgment is given to them, they are infrequently read or utilized.

A typical sequence for training is:

Beginning of training:

- Purpose of session
- Learning objectives and key concepts
- Climate setting, ice breakers

Middle of training:

Content developed around key concepts, done in logical fashion and building from theory to application, knowledge to skill. Selected training activities/learning methods vary from passive to participant phases:

- Lectures
- Role Play
- Slides
- Flip Chart
- Group Dyad Activities
- Panel Discussions
- Brainstorming
- Case Study
- Dramatization

Occasional breaks and energizers if session is longer than 90 minutes.

End of training:

- Review and summarize content
- Have participants process experience ("What will I do differently when I return to my job?")
- Conduct an evaluation to get a sense of the perceived value of the session to the participants. True evaluation occurs if you can arrange a follow-up form whereby actual impact can be recorded. For example: "As a result of the workshop in interviewing, I now see its value and have arranged to give half-hour screening interviews to volunteer candidates in my department."

Excerpted from Training Busy Staff to Succeed with Volunteers: The 55-Minute Training Series, by Betty Stallings, 2006, Betty Stallings and Associates.

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