

Engage your Audience!

Adults typically have a low attention span (some reports suggest 10-15 minutes or even less). Further, they often retain little (20%?) of what they hear. Engaging people in the learning adds value to your lessons and increases their information retention.

Ways to engage your group

Reduce talking at people and use a combination of methods to engage people. You might consider:

Individual and group activity options

Mixed media. Lecture, write on a board or flipchart, ask questions, use PowerPoint or show a picture or Video. Change about every 10 minutes.

Question the group and give (individual or group) exercises. Questions, exercises and activities encourage discussion and physical movement and provide you with feedback on participant understanding. Have participants work in groups of 4-8 members and then present (more than 8 and individuals participate less).

Summarize previous activities. For longer courses, start sessions or the day with participants leading a brief discussion of the previous activities - e.g., topics covered,



Outdoor activities provide variation and engage your group

lessons learned, etc.. Set a strict time limit (e.g., 5 or 10 minutes).

Team competition. Design activities that evaluate performance on a team basis - e.g., teams discuss before answering as a team. An option is to score and keep track of performance - e.g., have a tally sheet on the wall. Give small prizes afterwards. Keep teams the same or change (e.g., each week). Try to give at least one prize or award to every team.

Group dynamics. Have a team or team member lead a "group" exercise (e.g., lateral thinking, team building, etc.). Note: This takes extra effort because the team member(s) likely need some training.

Always make sure proposed activities are culturally and audience appropriate.

Other Tips to be Effective

Be clear. For each class, provide clear learning objectives.

Breaks. Take regular breaks to allow people to stay fresh.

Relevance. Ensure your content is relevant to your group (their needs and interests). Tell a story. Teaching is really about storytelling. Think of your content this way. Does it tell a story? If not, structure the content into smaller bits that are linked together in a logical flow.

Visibility. Ensure learners can see any visuals. Ensure text is readable from the back of the room.

Establish rapport. Comfortable people learn more. Use participants' names and never embarrass or criticize anyone.

Be a good conversationalist. Look your participants in the eye and talk with them, not at them. Look at body language. Are they engaged? Move a little as you present.

Media. PowerPoint – more slides are not necessarily better. (See other fact sheets for suggestions on preparing PowerPoint presentations.)

Reflect. Self-evaluate at the end of each class to determine what went well or what could be improved. This will improve your next lesson.