

# Delivering learning

This chapter covers:

- the concept of learner-centred learning
- how to deliver a training session
- the use of multi-sensory methods
- how to link parts of the session together
- the use of effective questions
- how to manage groups
- how to engage learners
- managing when things don't go to plan
- how to end a session
- barriers to learning.

## LEARNER-CENTRED LEARNING



Girlguiding's preferred approach to training is 'learner-centred'. This type of learning is based on the understanding that:

- learners develop new knowledge best through building on previous knowledge and experience

- active learning, in which learners are questioning, exploring and discovering, is more effective than passive learning, in which they are being told something
- learners take responsibility for their own learning
- non-directive training methods will be most appropriate.

Therefore, your responsibility as a Trainer is often to create the conditions and environment in which the learner can learn and then allow her the time and space to do so.

However, Trainer-centred learning, in which the Trainer gives the learners the information through a talk or presentation, sometimes has its place too. It could be appropriate when there is specific information such as safety instructions, or how to keep unit accounts. It could also be used when time is running out during a session and there is a need to cover the planned content.

Because of the emphasis placed on learner-centred learning in Girlguiding, guiding resources will usually refer to 'learning and development' rather than 'training', but the use of the word 'training' remains valid in the appropriate context.

### Creating the environment for learner-centred learning



This is about more than making the training space as inviting and comfortable as it can be. It is about your entire approach to planning and delivering the session. Think about how it will be experienced by the learner and what you can do to make it as engaging an experience as possible for her.

If your session meets the criteria below, you will have delivered successful learner-centred learning.

#### Content:

- valid in that it meets the stated outcomes of the session
- authentic and relevant to the learners because it addresses real issues and situations they recognise
- balanced to include a variety of experiences - listening, trying, doing, speaking and reflecting
- reasonable in terms of the amount - not too much to cope with or too little.

#### Activities:

- structured in a coherent way and supporting the desired outcomes.

#### Resources:

- sufficient, suitable, relevant to the session and provided at the right time.

#### Training room or space:

- adapted and adjusted to help concentration - not too hot, cold or noisy, and free of distractions
- room to move around comfortably
- furniture fit for purpose or moved out of the way
- access to toilet facilities and refreshments.

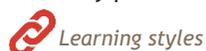


### The learners:

- engaged by what you provide
- challenged appropriately to help you and them test their understanding
- sensing your respect for their thoughts and views on the topics
- having fun, and finding the experience worthwhile.

### You:

- responsive to the learners, listening and providing feedback to help increase their understanding and confidence
- choosing training methods that help them retain knowledge by appealing to different learning styles and sensory preferences.



Learning styles

## DELIVERING THE TRAINING SESSION



### Arrival at the training venue

Arrive at the venue with plenty of time to get organised and fully prepared for your training session. Bear in mind that it could be a venue that is new to you, or there could be traffic issues en route. It is much better to be early for a training session and calm, than rushed and flustered - give yourself that extra 10 minutes.



Once you arrive at your venue and are shown where to set up it is important to make a few initial observations and decisions that are crucial to the overall success of the training session.



Health and safety

- Is the room too hot and stuffy, too cold or just right?
- Is there enough daylight?
- Might the view from windows distract?
- Can bright sunshine be shut out with curtains or blinds?
- Where are the power points?
- Where are the light switches?
- Where are the toilet facilities?
- What areas are you able to use during the session? Is there an outdoor space?
- Where are the fire exits and fire extinguishers?
- Where is the first aid kit? Who is the official first aider for the event?
- Where do the participants go to eat? Where are tea and coffee served?

### Deciding on the room layout



When you have made an initial observation of the facility, you can make decisions about where you want to place yourself. Also, where you want the learners to be, ensuring they have plenty of space, can see and/or hear you clearly and there are no safety hazards.

Take into consideration the placement and availability of power points for computer presentations, plain wall space for projection and so on.



Health and safety

It is much better to organise the space before any of the learners arrive. If you are prepared, you are ready and able to welcome the learners as they arrive.

### Personal impact and communication style



Throughout your training session, how you conduct yourself will consciously and sub-consciously influence the learners' experience of the event, and may also have an influence on how much they learn. If, for example, you fiddle with a pen or piece of jewellery when you are nervous, or constantly walk around while talking, this can become a distraction that becomes a learner's focus rather than the content that you are delivering.

### Barriers to learning

Are you sounding confident? Do you speak slowly and clearly, choosing straightforward vocabulary and avoiding jargon that may confuse learners? Have you any annoying habits such as saying 'okay' or 'you know' too often that you need to eliminate?

Consider your personal appearance. Are you smartly dressed in current guiding wear or wearing appropriate clothes for your training session? Are you standing straight, smiling and looking confident and friendly? Do you look energised, enthusiastic and in control of the training session?

### Body language

The simplest of body movements (non-verbal communication) can make a big difference to how learners receive you and feel about you as the Trainer.

- When addressing a group, you can make everyone feel included and welcome by making brief eye contact with each person as you talk.
- When listening to an individual, having an open posture - arms relaxed and by your sides or resting on your lap if seated, standing steady, turning a little towards the speaker - shows visibly with your whole body that you are listening.
- Know that if you always stand when learners are seated, you could be implying 'I'm in charge'.
- Notice if you often cross your arms across your body when training. It could be because you are feeling cold. Or you are subconsciously protecting yourself from the group by making a barrier between you. What the learners might read into this gesture is that you disapprove or are annoyed with them.

In the 1960s Albert Mehrabian, currently a Professor Emeritus of Psychology, studied the relative impact of

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verbal and non-verbal communication to find out how a message is communicated. Is it through words alone, or do tone of voice and body language convey part of the message too? It led to a widely misquoted theory known as the 7%-38%-55% rule (words, tone, non-verbal behaviour).

### Mehrabian's theory

Gestures and facial expressions convey messages too. Use this to your advantage, for example, match energetic body language to an energetic topic, or help learners to feel relaxed and at ease with your own relaxed body language. Be aware of unconscious gestures or facial expressions that could be conveying a totally different message to your words and your conscious intentions.

### Your voice as a tool

There are five elements to your voice that you can use to change the impact of your words.

#### Volume



If training a group of learners you will probably need to increase the volume of your normal speaking voice to be heard and to engage the learners. But speaking too loudly can have a negative effective and make learners feel anxious, intimidated and frightened to respond. It can also make you appear over-confident, aggressive and unapproachable.

Speaking too quietly can make the session tiring for

learners as they will have to strain to hear what you are saying and you will find it hard to keep learners engaged. Speaking quietly can also make you look lacking in confidence and nervous.

Ideally, vary the volume of your voice throughout your training session. Raise it to add energy or emphasis, to take control or to gain everyone's attention. Sometimes it is appropriate to lower the volume of your voice too, perhaps when you are covering a sensitive issue, responding directly to a learner or to facilitate a more reflective part of the session. Varying the volume of your voice adds interest to the session and helps to keep learners engaged.

#### Pace

The speed at which you talk can also affect the impact of what you say. Speak too fast and it's hard for learners to take in new information as they need time to process and absorb it. Speak too slowly and they become frustrated and easily distracted. As with the volume, the pace of your speech should be varied throughout. Use a steady pace to give instructions, speed it up to spark enthusiasm and participation, and slow it down to allow learners to reflect.

#### Pitch and inflection

We naturally vary the pitch of our speech. However, some people tend to have higher-pitched voices than others. If you are nervous or flustered your voice will often have a higher pitch and this can make you seem less confident and authoritative to listeners. A constantly high-pitched voice can also become irritating and difficult to listen to. If your pitch is too high, try to relax, breathe deeply and take your time, while making a conscious effort to lower it.

Remember that a varied pitch is more interesting to listen to.

Upward inflection at the end of a single sentence implies a question, but using an upward inflection repeatedly will create feelings of anxiety in the learners - they will hear questions that they have no time to answer.

#### Articulation

It is important to speak clearly and not mumble. However, be careful not to over-emphasise your pronunciation as this can make you sound as if you are talking to a group of small children. If you are nervous, you may have a tendency to speed up and this may affect clarity so watch out for this.

## Saying nothing at all

This is possibly the hardest to do as a silence can feel uncomfortable. Pausing after an important point can give it impact and be an opportunity for learners to absorb and reflect on the information.

Not waiting long enough after asking a question before prompting learners is a common reaction. They need time to think so count to at least five before saying anything. You can also signal to learners that there's an opportunity coming to think carefully about their answer by saying something like, 'I'll give you a few moments to think about this'.



*Using effective questioning*

It's important to keep your vocal chords well-hydrated so always have some water handy during training session and sip from it periodically.

## Improving your vocal skills

One of the best ways to improve how you use your voice during training sessions is to record it and listen back. Alternatively, ask your learners for direct feedback about your voice, or consciously try changing different elements as you train and see what impact it has.

## Welcoming the learners



It is important to welcome the learners to your training session with a friendly smile and greeting. Begin to create a relationship with the learning group as soon as they arrive. It's easy to view it as one of the least important parts of your session when creating your plan. However, it is within

these first few minutes the learners will form their opinion of you as the Trainer, the other learners, their expected enjoyment and value of the session. The opening sets the tone for the training session, so make it count!

Here are a few points to remember, they can also be used during the training session:

- try to get the learners to laugh near the start of the session - this will help them to relax and enjoy the learning experience
- be confident, friendly and relaxed, and remember to smile
- remember that some of your learners will be nervous
- let your commitment and enthusiasm for guiding show!



*Icebreakers*

## Welcoming latecomers



Be prepared to welcome latecomers. Have one or two spare chairs near the door so they can simply join the group with little disruption. Do take the time to welcome them too with a smile and a hello. You could give them a quick general recap of what they have missed so far, so that it brings them to the same point as the rest of the group and they don't feel left behind or excluded.

## Confirming and agreeing the learning aim and objectives

Once you have welcomed the learners, start the session by introducing the learning aim and objectives.

Take time to check with the learners that the learning aim and objectives are what they are expecting and reflect their needs, before starting to deliver the main content. If you discover that they are not, try discussing and agreeing some revised objectives that you can accommodate during the session.

If you have ensured that you have interpreted the brief correctly, and discussed the learning aims and objectives with the Training Organiser before the event, then you should not need to make any major adjustments. However, because of learners' different levels of experience or expectations, you may need to be flexible. Try to think about this and plan for this flexibility during the planning stage.

It is also worth asking the learners if they have any additional personal learning objectives for the training session that you have not included, so that you can try and adapt your training session, if possible, to accommodate this too.

When you first start delivering training the idea of offering learners the opportunity right at the beginning of your training session to change the direction of what you have planned to deliver can be terrifying. However, it is much easier to address any potential changes at this stage than halfway through the session. The learners will naturally feel engaged with your session as you have asked for their feedback on the content before you have started, and offered an option to be flexible to meet their needs.

## Checking understanding

It is important to check that everyone has understood each section of the training before you move on. You can do this by asking questions related to the content, asking if everyone has understood and by looking out for puzzled expressions.



*Barriers to learning*

Here are some techniques you can use during the learning event to help the learners' assess the extent of their own learning and the level of interest they have in the content of the learning activity.

**Spoken word:** Ask the direct question - 'Is this useful/ relevant to your situation?'



**Sticky notes:** Provide learners with a few sticky notes on to which they can write their thoughts and ideas. These can be posted all together on a large flat surface and then grouped into themes if relevant. This lets everyone see at the same time how everyone else is responding to the topic in hand.

**Continuous:** At every significant switch in pace, activity or other change in the flow of the session, ask the learners to feed back their response to what they have just done. Use the feedback to help decide what to do next, for example, 'How was that?', 'Would you like to continue with this or shall we move on to...?'

During the session, try using the Five Essentials of guiding as a checklist for diagnosing what's happening in the moment, and then respond to counteract any emerging negative situation.

If you want more interaction from a group of learners than you seem to be getting:

- could it be that the group size is too large?
- might the members of the group be getting fed up because you have been talking to them for too long and they want to be more involved? Could they be bored with listening to one topic for too long, or confused by too many ideas at once?

- are there any individual learners who seem to be deterring others from speaking?
- is there a sense of the group's behaviour being so negative they've forgotten this is a guiding event and what that stands for?

#### **Working together in small groups**

**Issue:** The learners have been sitting in one big group listening to you - not talking to each other, and now are not responding to questions from you.

- Try asking them to form into smaller groups to discuss the questions. The noise level will go up straightaway, and you will get several answers to the questions from the safety of the more private conversations.



#### **Encouraging the learners to make their own decisions**

**Issue:** You have been demonstrating to a group of learners how to make resources to use with the girls, and they are showing signs of being restless and losing concentration.

- It might be that the learners are keen to try out the activities themselves, but just not in the order you have been presenting them, or they can see materials on the table you haven't come to yet that they would rather use. Try a quick summary of everything you have brought and ask the group to choose the activities that most interest them. Or be ready to do something different altogether if none of them are of interest!

#### **A balanced and varied programme**

**Issue:** You have been facilitating a discussion with a small group of learners, about a topic they were keen to work on at the start of the session, but now you can see that enthusiasm is dropping away, and the contributions from participants are getting shorter or tailing away altogether.

- It might be nothing to do with the topic, but just that not everyone is used to sitting for any length of time just talking and listening. Try breaking the pattern with a change of pace - maybe quick conversations with a neighbour, or offer everyone the chance to have five minutes doing something different. Maintain the variation of approach until the end of the session.
- It might be that it is the topic. It may have reached the point of exhaustion and the group would like to change to talking about or doing something else - so have something ready to offer, and/or ask the group to choose what they would like to do next.



#### **Care for the individual**

**Issue:** You notice one participant hasn't spoken to anyone since she arrived in the training room - she doesn't seem to have come with anyone else, or want to talk to anybody new, and is now looking uncomfortable just being there.

- You might approach this by finding a way informally to speak to her and ask her how she is, perhaps once you have given the bigger group an activity to try or they are moving between bases in the room and won't notice

who you are speaking to. She might be feeling unwell, she might be in the wrong session and didn't like to say, or she might be very shy and doesn't know how to start a conversation. Once you know the issue you can help resolve it.

### A commitment to a common standard

**Issue:** In working with a fairly large group of learners, where it matters that everyone can hear the instructions you are giving about the next activity, there's a group of five or six Leaders who are obviously together bantering with each other but in a way that is distracting the others.

■ It could be that you let it go because they are such a fun group and obviously enjoying themselves so it's a shame to draw attention to it and spoil their fun. Or you might feel that this lack of self-awareness of their impact on others might also be in evidence when they are with the girls in their unit too - and needs a gentle mention. You could do this either by drawing their attention to it quietly and privately or by asking the whole group if they are able to hear well enough and let the wider response serve as the feedback the smaller group needs.

The common starting point in resolving each of these issues is looking and listening to what else is happening in the room in addition to what you are doing. Notice the body language, or a loss of energy, hear the comments, spot the sideways glances or bored expressions. With each there is a simple approach to getting the learning event back on track.

What you are doing when you act is to notice and then evaluate in the moment.

## MULTI-SENSORY LEARNING

Using a variety of different approaches during a training session helps to keep learners interested. Engaging the five different senses is a good way to do this. Using music and pictures and having things to touch, taste and smell can bring the whole learning experience to life and the sensory experiences can help jog learners' memories in the future.

### Sensory Stimulation Theory

*Traditional sensory stimulation theory has as its basic premise that effective learning occurs when the senses are stimulated (Laird, 1985). Laird quotes research that found that the vast majority of knowledge held by adults (75%) is learned through seeing. Hearing is the next most effective (about 13%) and the other senses - touch, smell and taste account for 12% of what we know. By stimulating the senses, especially the visual sense, learning can be enhanced. However, this theory says that if multi-senses are stimulated, greater learning takes place. Stimulation through the senses is achieved through a greater variety of colours, volume levels, strong statements, facts presented visually, use of a variety of techniques and media.*

Oxford Brookes University, Learning Theories Briefing Papers



### Music



Music can be emotive and have an impact on your learning environment and how your participants learn. Try using it to welcome your learners to your training session and to help you set the mood for the event. Perhaps consider using music that directly links to the session or choose a particular theme to use throughout. World Music for example could be used during a training session on international guiding to conjure up images of other

countries, customs and experiences. A training session on 'Planning activities for summer' could be enhanced with music about summer, sunshine and holidays.

Different types of music will create different atmospheres. Use upbeat music to increase the energy levels of learners, or relaxing music while reflecting on an activity or exercise.

Always check that your learners are happy for you to play music during activities and exercises and give them the option to turn it down or off if they find it distracting. You may find instrumental music more effective during activities that require thinking as music with words can be distracting. Pop songs can be used when there is more physical activity going on.

Ask your learners for feedback on the music used and the impact it had on the session and on them individually. Also use observation to note the effect it has on activities throughout the session.

Try using music at the beginning and the end of sessions first, and then gradually introduce it during exercises and activities if appropriate to the topic until you are comfortable using it throughout your training session as planned.

Try using music to introduce a topic by asking the learners what it made them think of or how it made them feel.

Musical rhythms can be used to capture and remember facts - tap out a rhythm that fits a particular fact that you need to remember. Consider giving learners the option to capture their learning by creating their own song, or making up words to a well-known tune. Remember that not everyone might want to use this option.

Try playing music that relaxes and energises you while you are getting ready for the training session so that you too can get into the mood!

Always make sure that you are legally allowed to play music at the venue for your training session and that it will not disturb other sessions that might be going on in adjacent rooms. You also need to be aware of and act on copyright issues.



## Pictures and visuals



A picture is worth a thousand words, so the saying goes, and using pictures during your training session can aid learning in a number of ways. At the beginning of the session, pictures on the tables or around the room can provoke interest and conversations between the learners. Pictures can be used to illustrate points and as memory joggers to recall information and learning in the future.

If you are going to use the same pictures regularly, consider laminating them to keep them in good condition.

Consider giving learners the option to capture their learning visually by creating their own picture or if less artistically inclined, making a collage using images cut from magazines.

Try creating some homemade postcards which are linked to your training session. Learners can use them to capture their key learning points on and return them to you for posting back to them a few weeks after the event to remind them of what they learned.

Always ensure that you have followed copyright legislation when duplicating and using visual images.



Copyright

## Touch

Touching things can trigger many different feelings, emotions, thoughts and understanding. It can even directly create a link to a previous learning experience or memory,

or create a new one. Equally it can help to join up auditory and visual learning.

Imagine touching a ball of cotton wool - how does it make you feel and what does it make you think of? Some people don't like the feel of cotton wool but others may feel it is soft and comforting and link it to pampering themselves. Perhaps it makes you think of fair-trade products or the saying 'wrapped up in cotton wool'? Maybe you think of snowballs, rabbits' tails, marshmallows or blowing a dandelion clock. Or maybe you link it to soothing a grazed knee or protecting an earache. Did you imagine a white ball of cotton wool or one of those pretty pastel pink, yellow or blue balls? If you had only ever looked at a cotton wool ball, how many of the things above would you not have experienced, learned about or be able to relate to?

So how can you bring the sense of touch into your training sessions? It's easy if your training session involves handling equipment. And some games or icebreakers may require learners to hold hands.

However, there are other ways for introducing touch into your sessions.

Try using flashcards with key words/images that learners can pick up, hold and use as prompts. You could take this idea one step further by making the flashcards different shapes and/or different textures by using sandpaper or attaching a piece of ribbon, wool or a button. If your learners need to remember facts you could create a memory bracelet with different shaped beads for the different facts to remember.

Modelling clay is a great way to use touch in a training session and can be used to capture and represent ideas. For example, as an icebreaker, try challenging a group to use modelling clay to represent one of the Five Essentials. Maybe you could ask groups to feed back their group work by creating a tactile collage. Asking them to explain their creations will help you to assess how much they have learned and understand.



Health and safety

Balloons can also be a fun way to review a session. (Check that none of your learners has a balloon phobia or latex allergy first.) Get the learners to stand in a circle and hit the balloon to another learner who then has to share their key learning point or answer a review question. Balls or

beanbags can be used for this too. Try running this as a team game, with two teams facing each other, to add an element of competition.

Create a paper-chain of key learning points and hang it up. Ask learners to continue adding to the chain throughout the session as they learn new things.



Health and safety

Having some novelty stress toys on tables for learners to play with during your training session can also aid learning as excess and/or nervous energy is directed to the toy. Some people will find stress toys a distraction, so you need to ensure that everyone knows they are there to be used if they help personal concentration or relaxation, or left alone if they don't. Just add this information to your guidelines at the beginning of the session, and use some antiseptic wipes to keep them clean and germ-free.

Finally, remember that some learners may not want to touch any object so do not insist they do so, and manage pressure from other learners to make someone do something when they would rather not.

## Taste

Learners may have got up early to travel to your training session, or had a long day at work, so a few sweets, fresh/dried fruit or biscuits for them to help themselves to is always welcome. It is an easy way to quickly bring a smile to your learners' faces, make them feel welcomed and help them relax into the session. Treats also help keep energy levels up throughout the session. It is really a personal choice as to whether or not you want to provide this.

However, there are other ways in which you can add taste to your training sessions. You may be running a training session that involves food, such as international traditions, making edible gifts, or outdoor cooking. But even if this is not the case, taste can still be included.

Try using a mixed bag of sweets as a way of selecting questions for an icebreaker. For example, a green sweet means they have to tell you about their proudest guiding



moment or a red one means they have to tell you their favourite campfire song, and so on. You can tailor the question to your training topic. This activity can also work to review a session.

Consider whether you could bring a tasting activity into your training session. For example, at a training session for new Leaders you could introduce them to tea-light s'mores, or a training session on local wildlife could include tasting and rating some local honey. A training session on budgeting for camp could include some taste and cost comparisons.

If you are doing a fireside training (that is, an informal training for a small group of learners, usually held in someone's home) or a training session over a day or longer, you could encourage learners to bring some treats to share, or maybe create a 'learning lunch' by contributing a dish to a group meal. This can add an element of fun and help learners to connect and relax.

Whenever using food you will need to consider dietary and religious requirements and allergy information.

 Health and safety

### Smell

This is possibly the most difficult of the senses to include, but by no means impossible. Firstly, if the weather and temperature allow, it is worth opening a few windows/doors to let in some fresh air as this helps learners to stay alert.

You might want to take a room fragrance with you to scent the room - you could use appropriately scented ones for the time of year or training session, such as cinnamon and cloves at Christmas. Equally scents such as lavender help people to relax and peppermint can help people stay awake. You could also link smell with the taste, for example by providing peppermint sweets.

Scented pens are great for flipchart work and always spark up a conversation among the learners.

As with food, you will need to consider allergies and individual preferences.

 Health and safety

## SIGNPOSTING AND LINKING PARTS OF THE TRAINING SESSION TOGETHER



Signposts tell the learners what is coming up and what to expect next. For example, 'After this exercise we will recap on what we have learned so far' or 'We'll take a break after this video'. It allows learners to prepare for the next learning opportunity, get the most out of current one and manage their energy levels appropriately. Signposts can also help you stay on track with your learning plan and act as memory joggers for the content of the next part of your session.

Clearly signposting and linking parts of your training together can help to provide structure and direction to your session. It also helps to break down the learning into manageable parts for the learners. You can indicate the sections verbally, although you may choose to reinforce this with a visual aid such as a pre-prepared flipchart or PowerPoint slide.

Links help learners join the information, examples, discussions, activities and exercises together so that they can understand how particular parts will help them achieve the learning aims and objectives. For example, 'Now that we have discussed why it is important to have a balanced and varied unit programme, let's move on to look at a few examples to help us design our own'.

It can be useful to consider what signposts and links you could use during your training session while you are planning your session.

## USING EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

During the session, a very valuable tool for the Trainer to keep in touch with the learners is questioning. By asking non-threatening questions throughout the session, she can discover how the learners are feeling, whether they have understood, whether they need a break and so on.

We use questions every day of our lives and for many different purposes:

- to acquire information
- to help someone think through a problem
- to explore feelings and attitudes
- to clarify something
- to stimulate thought and discussion
- to check knowledge or understanding.

### Types of question

There are two broad question types - 'open' and 'closed'.

#### Closed questions definition

*A closed question can be answered with a single word, a short phrase, a 'yes' or a 'no'.*

For example, 'How many girls do you have in your unit?' 'Where do you live?' 'Are you warm enough?' 'Do you understand?'

Closed questions:

- give you facts
- are easy to answer
- are quick to answer
- keep control of the conversation with the person asking them.

#### Open questions definition

*An open question is designed to receive a longer answer.*

Although any question can receive a long answer, open questions are used to deliberately seek longer, more reflective answers, and are the opposite of closed questions.

Open questions:

- encourage the participant to think and reflect

- give you opinions and feelings
- hand control of the conversation to the participant.

Examples of open questions are those that begin with what, why, how, describe, tell me. 'Tell me about a time when your girls really enjoyed activity "x".' 'Why do you prefer this way of making a camp fire to that one?' 'How do you know if this new game will be suitable for your Brownies?'



### Combining open and closed questions

Following an open question with one or two closed questions will help you and the learner be clear about the facts.

Open question: 'Why do you prefer this way of making a camp fire to that one?'

Answer: 'Because this way only needs a few old bricks and that way needs an altar fire.'

Closed question: 'Is it difficult to get hold of an altar fire where you meet?'

Answer: 'Yes.'

Closed question: 'Do you already have the bricks?'

Answer: 'Yes.'

In the context of a training on the outdoors the Trainer would now know that spending any more time on the topic of altar fires is probably of no immediate value to this learner, and she can adapt the content to talk more about other methods instead.

As a Trainer, your questioning skills will help to maximise learning. And by answering your questions learners are participating actively in the session so they are more likely to remember the content.

Try challenging yourself to experiment with open and closed questions in everyday conversations and see what impact they have to your communication. Then try these same question types in your training session and observe and reflect how they work in this type of situation. What worked well? What didn't work so well and why?

The way you ask questions and respond to the answers is equally important. Acknowledge learners' efforts to answer your questions, and say something positive about their response, even if it is not what you hoped. Ask for other learners' opinions or rephrase your initial question. Try not

to answer the questions yourself, but give the learners time to think. Learn to pause after asking a question and build the confidence to wait for a response. Try repeating the question in your head or counting to five. At first this may feel uncomfortable but eventually it will become second nature.

Your training session should also have a good balance between 'informing' learners (giving them information, facts, theories and instructions) and 'inviting' information (asking questions). If you 'inform' too much then the session becomes less participative and learners will find it hard to stay focused. Equally, asking too many questions can make the session feel like an interrogation, which will make learners uncomfortable.

Questioning is a skill that requires practice and experience. Using effective questions can really make the difference between a good training session and a great one.

## MANAGING GROUPS



As a Trainer, you will often be delivering to or facilitating a group of learners. Their ability to learn may be affected by your understanding of what is happening within that group, and your ability to handle what you observe.

### The group model

The Forming - Storming - Norming - Performing model of group development was first proposed by Bruce Tuckman in 1965, who maintained that these phases are all necessary and inevitable for the group to work. Whether the group

is together for an hour or a weekend, you will see the learners work through these stages in some way. Become familiar with these stages and, in your planning and delivery, consider whether time is needed, depending on how long the group will spend together, for the group to work through them.

#### 1. Forming

This stage is when the group first gets together, finds out about each other and the task they are to complete. It is important for group members to introduce themselves to each other if they haven't met before.

At this stage, be prepared to clarify the task if necessary, watch out for groups and individual members who seem confused, and ensure everyone feels included in their group. The group is just starting to gel so don't expect them to make progress with the task immediately.

#### 2. Storming

During this stage, members are beginning to voice their opinions, identify others who share the same beliefs, and find their place in the group. You should watch out for differences of opinion developing into conflict and members who are starting to dominate others or withdraw.

#### 3. Norming

In this stage, members are beginning to share a common commitment to the purpose of the group, its overall goals and how each of the goals can be achieved.

#### 4. Performing

The team is now working effectively and efficiently towards achieving its goals.

In addition some add a further stage to the Tuckman model.

#### 5. Closing and celebration

At this stage, it is clear to members that the team has achieved its goals (or a major milestone along the way toward the goals). It is important to acknowledge and celebrate this so that members are motivated for future efforts.

## Working with large groups

The range of training methods available to use with a large group - say 20 learners or more - is quite restricted. It is most likely that, with a group of this size without using sub-groups, you will be delivering a presentation of some sort.



## Forming sub-groups

There are many ways of forming sub-groups and each has its advantages and disadvantages.

### Groups with a common experience

There are many tasks which will be best achieved if the groups have something in common, and the Trainer will form these by giving an instruction such as:

- 'please get together in your District teams'
- 'all Brownie Leaders together, and similarly Rainbow, Guide and Senior Section Leaders'



- 'will those working on their Leadership Qualification form one group, while those who have already achieved it, form another'.

While such groups may move quickly to the performing stage, particularly if they are acquainted with one another, there may also be some general chat to begin with.

### Random groups

Random groups are normally used to ensure the same people don't work together all the time. Working with different people leads to cross-fertilisation of ideas. Here are a few ways to achieve this.

- Number individual members 1,2,3,4, etc and then all the 1s form one sub-group, likewise 2s, 3s and 4s.
- Take old greetings cards - one for each group you wish to form. Cut each one into pieces corresponding to the number of members of each group. Mix them up and ask each participant to take a piece. Participants have to find other group members by reassembling the card. Other methods are to use playing cards, all the 4s find each other, or wrapped sweets, all of one type get together.
- On arrival in the training room, each participant in turn is directed to a table or small group area.

Group members may initially feel nervous in these circumstances, so a simple introductory task as an icebreaker is a good idea.



### Selected groups

There are a few occasions when you might need to pre-plan the groups. This may be because each group needs to have particular expertise in it, such as if each group needs a member of each section.

## The role of the Trainer in sub-groups

When working with sub-groups, the Trainer has a number of key functions.

- To give clear instructions to the group as to what the task involves, and what the end goal is. It is best to address the whole group and give verbal instructions, following this up with a card or similar with the written instructions on it. Ensure that they know how long they have to complete the task.
- To allow a little time for the groups to settle, watching from the front for possible problems (see 'Storming').
- To visit the groups and ensure that each group is focused and achieving the task. You will need to deal with any problems you may encounter or have observed. Below are some examples.
  - If one or more member is dominating the group. Group leaders will often emerge naturally but a leader will listen to the contributions of other members and draw them together. A dominant member won't listen to others. If a member is dominating, you will need to

join the group, ask the other members about their views and show that you value them.

- If one member is not participating, you will need to try and find out why. It may be that she is thinking about a personal issue which is nothing to do with the session, is just shy, or has been upset by something said previously. Perhaps you could encourage her to contribute by asking her what she thinks - but don't push if she is reluctant. Perhaps you could offer her support in the next break.
  - If the group has totally mistaken what the task is, it might be because of your instructions or because they weren't fully listening. Whichever it is you need to pull them back in the most tactful way possible - perhaps by thanking them for what they have done and asking them to consider another aspect (the original task!).
  - If the team is more interested in general chat, you will need to be firm about avoiding disruption to other groups. Ask them to refocus on the task and let them know there's time coming up to chat in the break. You may need to stay close by this group to help them stay focused.
- To give a two- or three-minute warning that time is nearly up.
  - To take the feedback positively and value all contributions. If an idea is very different or controversial, you might open it out to the whole group and ask what they all think.

## ENGAGING LEARNERS INDIVIDUALLY AND IN GROUPS

As well as following the plan you designed for the training session, once you have met the learners and started to understand their needs as individuals and as a group there are also choices and interventions to be made as the session progresses.

As background to using these interventions, it is recommended that you follow the links to team building, barriers to learning and working with challenging individual learners.



## Acting as a facilitator



A facilitator creates the right condition for others to learn.

When facilitating a group discussion you might just use the lightest of touches - just sitting with them to keep time and perhaps take a note of the points in the discussion if needed.

On the other hand, you might find that a higher level of activity is needed from you to move the discussion on. This might involve:

- paraphrasing what has been said
- involving quieter members by asking them what they think
- drawing people out by asking them to explain their point further
- moving the discussion on
- reminding the group of the time left.

Be careful not to take over the discussion - remember that your role is to be a facilitator.

## Methods for small groups or individuals



### Coaching

'Coaching' can mean a variety of things. In the Girlguiding context the term means helping someone learn a new skill or apply learning in their day-to-day guiding.

This could mean:

- sitting alongside one or more learners as they practise a new skill and giving them feedback on how they are doing
- having a conversation with a learner to help draw out and develop her learning.

Coaching can be provided in a single session, or over several occasions until the new learning is mastered.

### What is the difference between coaching and mentoring?

Although the descriptions of 'coach' and 'Mentor' are sometimes used interchangeably, the role of the Mentor differs in that:

- a Mentor's role is to support a learner to develop her skills and knowledge and grow in experience and confidence over time
- it usually involves a longer-term relationship than that of a coach, lasting from a few months to a couple of years or more.

### Tutoring

The act of tutoring is specifically to provide instruction and guidance to another. In this situation there is still learner-

centred learning at the heart of it, but added to it is the element of direct instruction when needed, combined with friendly encouragement and advice.

In Girlguiding being a Tutor is a specific role relating to the development of prospective Trainers.

## MANAGING WHEN THINGS DON'T GO TO PLAN

Sometimes, no matter how carefully you have planned, your training session doesn't run as you had hoped. Certain activities overrun or take less time than you expected, there may be a lack of response from participants, equipment may fail to work, or you may forget to include a part of the training.

Whatever happens, don't panic. It happens to all Trainers at some point. The more experience you gain, the more confident you will be when responding to such situations.

Be flexible with your training plan - it is not a problem to omit an activity if the session has overrun or to extend an activity if it has sparked good debate and discussion. You just have to make a decision, and be confident in doing so.

### Negotiating the learning agenda

#### With a group

In some situations, as a more experienced Trainer, you may be asked to work with a group of learners who aren't yet sure what it is they want to learn but would like some support with deciding what it is. Or in the middle of a well-planned and designed training session the signs are clear that what you are providing just isn't working for some or all of the learners present.

In both situations the core response is the same. All you will have to hand is your skill in facilitating groups, your questioning techniques and the ability to actively listen and interpret body language.

In the first example you will have been invited into the group explicitly with the agenda of there being no training brief for you to fulfil. You may have been able to ask questions beforehand to help you decide if this is something you want to do or are able to do.

- Is this a new group, or a well-established one?
- Why is the group asking for this help at this point?

- What else have the learners done to identify their learning needs?
- What is it they feel you can offer them?
- What is the overall outcome they are looking for?

You could also pose these questions to the group as part of the session itself. You can use them as the starting point for framing an agreed agenda for the rest of the time you have with them and choosing activities and/or discussion questions that is relevant to them and that they have the energy to follow.

If you know something of about the group before you meet them for the first time, for example, the section they work with or the length of time in the role, you may be able to bring some previously prepared equipment with you. Have them in reserve in case they prove helpful on the day.

### Working with challenging individuals

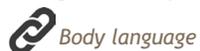
Sometimes during a session it is clear that one or two of the participants are not engaged and not connecting to the topic, or to you. This may become apparent through active or passive behaviour.

#### Active behaviour

- Directly challenging you and/or your role by asking difficult questions in front of the whole group.
- Frequently interrupting to tell you/the group that her experience is greater and your input incorrect.
- Disruptive behaviour such as giggling, fidgeting etc, while you or other learners in the group are speaking.
- Openly challenging Girlguiding policy in front of the bigger group.

#### Passive behaviour

- Appearing to be engaged but when in smaller group discussion straying off the topic.
- Remaining seated when the bigger group has been invited to look at resources and activities around the room.
- Texting etc on her phone.
- Negative body language.



#### What to do

The individual may or may not be aware that her behaviour is making it difficult for others to learn.

If you believe she is not aware of the impact she is having, there are ways that you can manage her behaviour without directly challenging it. For example, you might choose to reply to the difficult question by saying it is difficult and asking her why she is asking it, to help you better understand how to respond. You could quickly split the bigger group into smaller groups to reduce the opportunity she has for airing her views or disrupting the concentration of others.

If you feel she is doing it intentionally, you may need to find a quiet moment with her when you can explore what the issue is and if necessary suggest she leaves the session.

### Working with a challenging group

Even in a well-planned training session, it sometimes becomes clear that what you are providing just isn't working for some or all of the learners present. You may find that learners are:

- chatting to each other even though you are making it clear you want to address the whole group
- reluctant to leave their seats to try out any of the activities you have brought for them
- turning their chairs away from you, or leaving the room without explanation
- openly challenging you - for example saying: 'This isn't what we want to do'.

#### What to do

Unless you are within a few minutes of the end it is rarely the right response to carry on regardless.

Do not get upset or cross - deal with the situation in a calm and pleasant manner.

- Analyse the situation by asking yourself the following questions.
  - What am I seeing, hearing, feeling that tells me this session is not working?
  - How many members of the group are involved?
  - At what point did this start to happen?

□ Might it be the choice of activities, or something I have said or done or didn't do?

□ Could it be the result of an underlying issue for the group not connected to me at all, or a conflict within the group?

□ Do they need a break or change of activity?



■ The action you take will depend on your answers to the above and changing the activity may be all that is needed. If you can't resolve the situation, stop the training to try to make sense of what is happening with the learners by addressing the issue directly. For example: 'I notice that some people don't seem to be interested in trying out the activities. Why is that?'

■ Aim to identify whether the situation can be resolved by you, and/or those in the room or whether a third party, such as the Training Organiser, is needed.

Discuss with the learners how committed they are to getting the session back on track, and how this could be achieved.

Then either:

- renegotiate the agenda with them to make best use of the time remaining
- end the session, explaining why this option is the better one, and outlining proposals for what follow up there will be.

Afterwards, talk over the session with an experienced Trainer or someone else you trust. Try to work out what you, and the person who organised the event, can learn from what happened.

As background to using these interventions, it is recommended that you follow the links to team building, barriers to learning and working with challenging individual learners.



[Team building](#)



[Barriers to learning](#)



[Working with challenging individual learners](#)

## ENDING THE TRAINING SESSION



Make sure you leave time at the end to:

- summarise the key learning points
- allow questions and answers
- distribute handouts
- provide the learners with an opportunity to plan how they can put their learning into action after the event
- review whether the group and individual learning aims and objectives have been met
- capture learners' initial evaluation of the training
- thank the learners for their attendance, participation and time.

The key learning points can be summarised in a variety of ways, not just verbally. For example with:

- an activity that includes all the key learning points
- a visual aid or a computer presentation that summarises the points
- a verbal recap that is then followed by a short reading, quote or poster with captions that encapsulate the key learning points
- a goal-setting activity that will focus on implementing the learning points after the training session.

Once the session is over, it is important that you pack up and leave the training venue as you found it. This may

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include stacking chairs and returning borrowed tables and other items. Ask the learners to help if there is a lot to do. Check your own equipment and resources, making a note of anything damaged or needing replacement before the next session, so you don't forget.

### Health and safety

There may also be a few learners who will want to ask further questions - maybe they were too shy to ask them during the group question and answer session. Try to answer these questions but be aware of time limitation - there may be a group waiting to use the room after you or the venue is due to be locked. If there are questions you don't have time to answer, you could offer to follow up by email.

It is also very important to feed back to the Organiser on any areas where support was needed but because it is a local matter you were unable to provide it in the session. Do give consideration to the best way of giving the feedback, there and then, face to face, or later that evening or week over the phone or via email.

## BARRIERS TO LEARNING

This section is about understanding that learning may not have occurred in the session if there was a barrier or block which prevented it. These barriers may occur for many reasons, but it is incumbent on the Trainer to try to identify when a barrier exists, and to help resolve the problem to allow learning to take place.

### How to identify that a barrier exists

As a Trainer, you will be observing the learners as you deliver your material and facilitate the responses. If there is a barrier between one or more learners and you, or your subject, the learners will usually give it away in one or more ways, including their body language. Here are a few examples of what might be displayed.

### Body language

- Yawning, which is usually a sign of tiredness or boredom.
- Fidgeting, which can again mean that the learner is bored, or is not understanding, or that she is physically uncomfortable.
- Distracted, staring fixedly at a point, or looking out of

the window. This can indicate that something has caught her attention, or that she has something on her mind.

- Being flustered or upset will often indicate that someone or something has caused this learner a problem. It may be you, something you said, or nothing at all to do with the training session.
- Aggressive behaviour, including glares, frowns and folded arms clearly shows that the learner is unhappy. Maybe someone has invaded her physical space, or has offended her.

What learners say might give you an indication too. Often they say nothing! That is, they have nothing to contribute to the session. Or what they say may seem not seem relevant to the session. Perhaps they have not been paying attention, or they have not followed what has been happening. Another option is that something is bothering them and they need to get it off their chest.

What learners do can also give you a clue. They may chat to other learners while you or a group member are speaking, they may be texting on their phone, they may doodle on their paper.

Any of these is a sign that something may be wrong.

### What causes barriers to learning?

There are many possible causes for barriers. This section gives some examples.

- Baggage that the learner may bring to the session.
  - Was her last learning experience difficult, unsatisfactory, too reminiscent of school?
  - Did something go wrong at home before she set out? Did she have a row with a family member? Did the babysitter let her down?
  - Did she have a bad journey? Was the train late, could she not find the venue, is there a funny noise coming from the car engine?
  - Is she a wheelchair user who had no help getting to the second floor?

### Inclusivity

- Did her District Commissioner tell her she must come?
- Is she in the right session

- Experiences that happen to her in the session.
  - Is she the only one not in guiding wear?
  - Has she an undisclosed need (learning difficulty, impaired hearing)?

#### Inclusivity

- Has the session continued for too long without a comfort break?
- Is the room too hot, too cold or just stuffy?

#### Health and safety

- Is the sun in her eyes?
- Is there a hockey match through the window?
- Is she beginning to feel unwell?

- Barriers that you as a Trainer induce.
  - You fiddle with your glasses, your hair, a pen.
  - You use jargon with no explanation.
  - You speak too loudly, too quietly, too quickly.
  - You are reading each slide from your PowerPoint presentation.
  - You pick on her to feed back.

#### What to do to remove the barrier

The most important factor on noticing that a learner appears to have a difficulty is to ensure that you don't make it worse by exposing it in front of the group. However, you should try to address it at the earliest opportunity. If there is a break approaching, use it. If not, create one! This may be by simply offering a five-minute comfort break, or introducing an activity that leads to the learners mingling, so you can speak to her. You can ask her politely if everything is alright, but she may not be able to tell you. Offer her the opportunity to leave the session if you think it will help, or refer her to someone else for support. If she is able to explain, then you can try and help. If it something you have done unwittingly, a simple apology will often suffice. Otherwise, steps such as moving groups around so she is with different people, or explaining some point to her, may be the answer.

Whether or not you feel you have dealt with the situation, it is good practice to report the incident to the Training Organiser, who may wish to follow up on it.

## USEFUL REFERENCES

### Learner-centred learning

[www.vccaedu.org/inquiry/inquiry-fall2000/i-52-reynolds.html](http://www.vccaedu.org/inquiry/inquiry-fall2000/i-52-reynolds.html)

### Facilitation

[www.ica-uk.org.uk/what-is-facilitation/](http://www.ica-uk.org.uk/what-is-facilitation/)

### Coaching

[www.coachingnetwork.org.uk/resourcecentre/whatarecoachingandmentoring.htm](http://www.coachingnetwork.org.uk/resourcecentre/whatarecoachingandmentoring.htm)

### Body language

[www.businessballs.com/body-language.htm](http://www.businessballs.com/body-language.htm)

[http://changingminds.org/techniques/body/body\\_language.htm](http://changingminds.org/techniques/body/body_language.htm)

### Barriers to learning

[www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/r-and-s-stats/research-reports-2/removing-the-barriers-to-learning.htm](http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/publications/r-and-s-stats/research-reports-2/removing-the-barriers-to-learning.htm)